

NU WRSTL: Three-Time All-American Welch Rejoins Wildcats as Assistant Coach

Coaches Welch, Howe, and Brewer were NCAA Champions or Runners-Up

EVANSTON, Ill. — Jason Welch, a three-time All-American at Northwestern, has joined the program as an assistant coach, head coach Matt Storniolo announced today.

"I'm extremely excited to welcome back Jason Welch to his home here at Northwestern," Storniolo said. "Jason had one of the most exciting careers that our wrestling program has ever seen and we could not have a better ambassador representing Northwestern or the sport of wrestling."

Welch joins Andrew Howe and Cody Brewer to round out the Northwestern coaching staff and all three were NCAA Champions or NCAA Runners-Up in their collegiate careers. Brewer will work with the lightweights, Welch with the middleweights, and Howe will train the upperweights.

"Joining the staff at my alma mater is a dream job for me. I'm excited to give back to a place that I'm so fond of," Welch said. "I think that there is a huge potential here at Northwestern and I'm looking forward to helping our student-athletes realize that potential."

The Walnut Creek, California, native had one of the most decorated careers in the program's history.

He came to Evanston as a three-time California state champion, the winner of the Junior Dan Hodge Trophy for the nation's best high school wrestler, and the nation's top-ranked recruit and left an NCAA Finalist, a Big Ten Champion, and a two-time Ken Kraft Midlands Champion.

Welch was also the last high-schooler to place at Midlands, taking sixth in 2007.

He had some strong performances at NCAAs in his sophomore and junior campaigns, placing sixth and fourth, respectively. In his sixth-place trip to NCAAs, he was seeded eighth and

sixth and fourth, respectively. In his sixth-place trip to NCAAs, he was seeded eighth and delivered one of the biggest wins of the Championships by knocking off No. 1 seed Adam Hall of Boise State.

In his final year in Evanston, he was the national runner-up at 157 pounds. In his run-up to NCAAs, he captured his first conference crown with a come-from-behind win as the No. 2 seed in Big Tens. With his victory, he became the 30th-different Wildcat wrestler to win a Big Ten title.

In all, Welch was four-for-four in reaching NCAA Championships during his NU career. His .841 winning percentage was the seventh-best in program history and he is the seventh three-time All-American in NU history.

He has had recent post-graduate wrestling success, taking bronze in the 154-pound division at the Canada Cup in July 2014 and winning bronze at the 2017 Paris International.

He graduated from Northwestern with a degree in English. Since 2014, Welch has been the resident athlete at the Chicago Regional Training Center, which trains elite-level wrestlers in pursuit of Olympic competition. He was the head coach of Loyola Academy's wrestling team from 2015-16 and graduated from Bennington College with a Master of Fine Arts degree.

Storniolo was one of the Wildcats' assistant coaches during Welch's tenure, hired before his redshirt season in 2009. They had a strong rapport on the mat ("He's my favorite to wrestle because our styles are really similar," Storniolo told *Intermat* in 2009. "We're like two ferrets attacking each other."). Now, the pair will build their rapport as fellow coaches.

Welch is coming full-circle at Northwestern. He was quoted in the *Chicago Tribune* in his preparations for NCAAs in 2013 as saying, "Coaching is something I have a passion for." With his hiring, his passion will be realized back at his alma mater.

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