



WYOMING

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Cowboy Wrestling to Open 2017-18 Season

LARAMIE, Wyo. (Oct. 7, 2017) -- The Wyoming wrestling team will open the door for a new season with the first of its scheduled practices on Tuesday. UW will kick off the regular season with the Cowboy Open on Nov. 4.

“We hit a few tournaments right off the bat where guys are wrestling five or six matches in a day,” UW head coach Mark Branch said. “We want our guys to be prepared for that and we will stick with the same emphasis we have had throughout the preseason. We have a lot of young guys on our team as well as some experienced and talented guys. I like how they’ve been eager to get after it so far.”

Tenth-year head coach Branch and his squad feature a trio of returning NCAA qualifiers in seniors Bryce Meredith and Archie Colgan as well as junior Branson Ashworth. Branch’s 2017 recruiting class, an 11-member group of newcomers, will also hit the mat amongst the 20 other returners. Of those returners is a solid and experienced senior class. Meredith and Colgan are joined by Luke Paine, Chaz Polson, Kyle Pope and Ronnie Stevens.

“We have more depth this year,” Branch added “We’ll have guys wrestling closer to their weight classes. I also feel the team chemistry is as good as it’s ever been. That chemistry can help you push through the tough practices, tough duals and tournaments that we have scheduled. But it is exciting and we have plenty of good things in place to help the development of this team and nurture this group as the season progresses.”

In what will be a busy day for Wyoming Athletics, the Pokes will open the year with the 40th annual Cowboy Open in the War Memorial Fieldhouse on Nov. 4. UW will look to improve off its five individual titles from last year’s Open. Wyoming will then start the dual season at Nebraska on Nov. 17 before heading to the University of Nebraska-Kearney Holiday Inn Open on Nov. 18. UW will once again make an appearance at

the highly renowned Cliff Keen Invite (Dec. 1-2) and Reno Tournament of Champions (Dec. 17).

Other highlights of the 2017-18 schedule include an outreach event in Cheyenne on Dec. 19. It will be the first UW hosted dual in Cheyenne since 2013, as the Pokes meet up with Oklahoma State at Storey Gym. OSU took runner-up honors as a team at Nationals a year ago where eight Cowboys earned All-American status. Wyoming will also hit the road for the North Carolina Duals on Jan. 5 before its first dual in Laramie against CSU Bakersfield on Jan. 12.

Four of the last five duals will be at home for Wyoming this season. The Brown and Gold will welcome Fresno State (Jan. 27), Oklahoma (Feb. 4), Utah Valley (Feb. 9) and Northern Colorado (Feb. 10) before closing out the regular season at Air Force on Feb. 16. The Big 12 Championships will once again take place at the BOK Center in Tulsa, Okla., on March 3-4, while the NCAA Championships are set for Quicken Loans Arena in Cleveland on March 15-17.

In Review

Led by Meredith's fourth-place finish, Wyoming tied for 21st at last year's NCAA Championships with 20 total team points. Meredith, who became the seventh Poke to earn All-American honors twice in a career and first since Alfonso Hernandez (2012-13), went 4-2 during the three-day tournament in St. Louis. Ashworth came away with a 1-2 mark, while Colgan shined during the second day of the championships, advancing to the blood round and falling just short of All-American status.

Rankings

With many of the collegiate preseason rankings set to be announced in the coming weeks, Wyoming currently owns the 19th-spot in the WIN Magazine's Preseason Tournament Power Index and Rankings, which was announced in September. In the individual rankings, Meredith is ranked third at 141-pounds, Colgan is 13th for the 157-pound weight class with Ashworth 14th at 165.

The Big 12 is sure to have a number of talented wrestlers make their way to Cleveland for the 2018 NCAA Championships. The FloWrestling Big 12 Conference Rankings were announced earlier this week with Wyoming holding the tenth spot as a team. Meredith is second in his weight division, with Colgan ranked third at the 157 weight class. Additionally, Ashworth and Pope are each placed fifth at the 165 and 174 weight classes, respectively.

Fans are encouraged to follow @WyoWrestle on Twitter for more information and updates throughout the season.

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