



# WYOMING

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## Cowboys Set to Invade The Land

[Brackets](#) | [Notes](#)

**LARAMIE, Wyo. (March 12, 2018)** -- It doesn't get any bigger than the NCAA Championships and six University of Wyoming wrestlers are set to match up with the best of the best in Cleveland this weekend. The 2018 NCAA Wrestling Championships will take place inside the Quicken Loans Arena beginning on Thursday and will conclude on Saturday night. ESPN will broadcast every match on every mat again this year on WatchESPN, in addition to coverage of all six sessions.

Live results can be found on TrackWrestling. Fans are also encouraged to follow @WyoWrestle on Twitter for updates throughout the weekend.

### March Matness Rundown

UW will send six wrestlers to the NCAA Championships this weekend in The Buckeye State. Four of the six Pokes received seeds for the National Tournament.

#### 133 Pounds

No. 8 Montorie Bridges (32-4) v. Ben Thornton (Purdue)

Bridges has had a strong redshirt freshman campaign for the Pokes. In and out of the rankings early in the season, Bridges really hit the scene by knocking off No. 3 Kaid Brock of Oklahoma State in Cheyenne on Dec. 19. He has been ranked within the top-15 ever since. He has seven wins against ranked opponents this season, and most recently brought home third place from the Big 12 Championship. He'll be attending his first National Tournament.

On Thursday, Bridges, the No. 8 seed, will face Ben Thornton (Purdue) in the opening round. Thornton is also competing in his first NCAA Championships. He was one of five at-large bids at 133 pounds. He took eighth at the Big Ten Championships and has a 26-11 record.

#### 141 Pounds

No. 1 Bryce Meredith (29-1) v. Colton Schilling (Cal Poly)

Meredith has been nothing short of impressive during his final season wearing the Brown and Gold. The Cheyenne native has held the top spot at 141 pounds since December after defeating two-time NCAA Champion Dean Heil for the first time. It snapped Heil's 55-match winning streak. Also during that month, Meredith picked up

wins against three-straight top-five opponents and has currently won 25 consecutive matches. After defeating Heil once again in Tulsa, he was joined by teammate Archie Colgan (157 pounds) as the first Cowboys to win Big 12 titles in Tulsa.

Meredith will enter the National Tournament as the top seed at 141 pounds and will face Colton Schilling of Cal Poly. It will be the second NCAA Championships for Schilling, who has a 14-5 record and captured the Pac-12 title at 141 pounds a couple weeks ago. Meredith is the first Cowboy to enter Nationals as a top seed since Joe LeBlanc (184 pounds) in 2012.

#### 149 Pounds

Sam Turner (26-15) v. No. 16 Alfred Bannister (Maryland)

Turner will be making his first appearance at the Big Dance after taking fourth at Big 12s. Turner has held steady at 149 pounds for Wyoming this season. He has four wins against ranked opponents on the year, including an upset over No. 10 Geo Martinez of Oklahoma State. Turner will enter the National Tournament unseeded and will take on No. 16 Alfred Bannister of Maryland in the opening round on Thursday.

Bannister, a redshirt junior and now two-time qualifier, took fifth-place at the Big Ten Championships and has a 23-8 mark on the year.

#### 157 Pounds

No. 9 Archie Colgan (32-7) v. Hunter Willits (Oregon State)

After being one win from All-American status last season, Colgan has shown he belongs during his senior campaign. The Westminster, Colo., native has been ranked all season and has eight wins against ranked opponents this year, including three top-ten opponents. He joined Bryce Meredith (141 pounds) to become the first Cowboys to earn Big 12 titles last weekend at the conference tournament.

This will mark his second National Tournament. As the No. 9 seed, he'll face Hunter Willits (Oregon State) in the first round. Willits, a freshman, holds an 18-14 record and placed second at the Pac-12 Wrestling Championships. Colgan earned a 3-1 decision over Willits on Jan. 14 earlier this season.

#### 165 Pounds

No. 14 Branson Ashworth v. Connor Flynn (Mizzou)

Ashworth will be making his second trip to NCAAs, as the junior took part in the event a year ago in St. Louis. He placed third at Big 12s last weekend and will enter the National Tournament with the No. 14 seed, which is the same seed he earned a year ago. Ashworth, who has also been ranked all season, has impressed with nine wins against ranked opponents and also a team-best 11 tech falls this year. He leads the team with 34 wins on the season. Additionally, Ashworth has won 23 of his last 24 matches.

Ashworth will wrestle Connor Flynn (Mizzou) in the opening round on Thursday. Flynn will enter his first NCAA Tournament with a 24-7 record after capturing the MAC title this past weekend.

#### 184 Pounds

Chaz Polson v. No. 7 Taylor Venz (Nebraska)

Polson went 4-2 and brought home fifth-place at Big 12s last weekend. He was then selected at an at-large bid for Nationals. He went 6-2 in Big 12 duals and has really

selected at an all-time high bid for National. He won 2 in Big Ten and has really turned up the heat late in his senior season, including six of his last seven during the regular season. This weekend will mark his first trip to the National Tournament.

Polson is unseeded and will face No. 7 Taylor Venz (Nebraska) on Thursday morning. Venz finished in fifth at the Big Ten Championships and has a 23-7 record on the year. In the lone matchup between the two earlier in the season, Venz came away with an 18-2 tech fall.

### **Cowboys at the NCAA Championships**

In the 86-year history of Wyoming wrestling, the Cowboys boast 22 All-Americans and one individual national champion. Dick Ballinger won UW's lone title in 1960. Last year in St. Louis, the team finished tied for 21st, as Meredith led the Brown and Gold with a fourth-place finish and second All-American selection. Wyoming's 22 All-Americans have earned All-America status 33 times, including one four-time, two three-time and four two-time honorees.

### **Cowboys Lone Champion**

Dick Ballinger was inducted into the Wyoming Athletics Hall of Fame in 1993. The Cody native won the 1960 NCAA Wrestling Championship at 167 pounds as a senior. He placed second as a sophomore in 1958 and fourth the following year as a junior. To quick note, Meredith finished the 2016 NCAA Championships as runner-up at 141 pounds as a sophomore and fourth last season. Ballinger guided Wyoming to a sixth-place national team finish in 1959 and a Wyoming all-time best third-place team finish in 1960.

### **NCAA Finishes – Last Five Years**

2017: T21st | One All-American  
2016: 18th | One All-American  
2015: 39th  
2014: 53rd  
2013: 23rd | Two All-Americans

### **Qualifiers**

UW has sent at least four athletes to the NCAA Championships in nine of head coach Mark Branch's 10 seasons. The Pokes had seven in 2013, when Tyler Cox (125) and Alfonso Hernandez (197) were All-Americans. This season became the first time since 2015 UW had six qualifiers. It's also the 25th time Wyoming will send at least five wrestlers to the National Tournament.

### **Championship Experience**

Meredith may be one of the most popular athletes in college athletics. It's well known in the NCAA wrestling world that he was runner-up at 141 pounds as a sophomore in 2016, and finished fourth last season. He leads UW to Cleveland with what is his third trip to Nationals. Ashworth and Colgan will be competing in the Big Dance for the second time, while Bridges, Polson and Turner are first timers.

### **Streaking**

Meredith, a native of Cheyenne, continues the streak of a Wyoming native qualifying for the NCAA Championships making it six-straight seasons. Tyler Cox made three-straight trips to the NCAA Championships from 2013-15.

### **When One Ends, Another Begins**

For the past nine seasons, the Pokes had been represented well at 125 pounds. Former Cowboys Drew Templeman, Tyler Cox and Michael Martinez had put together nine-straight NCAA appearances at 125 pounds. This season is the first since 2008 UW won't have a wrestler at the National Tournament competing at 125 pounds. Bridges will look to begin a stretch of consistent wrestlers at 133 pounds, as he is the first wrestler since Zach Zehner in 2012 to qualify at 133 pounds.

### **2017 NCAA Wrap-up**

All five Cowboys that qualified to NCAAs a year ago made it past the first day of the event. Meredith was the lone Poke to compete in the third and final day. He claimed fourth place at 141 pounds going 4-2. Ashworth (165 pounds) and Cole Mendenhall (149 pounds) each went 1-2, as Drew Templeman (125 pounds) closed out his career going 2-2 and Colgan (157 pounds) went 3-2.

### **Wyoming Opening Round 2018**

133: No. 8 [Montorie Bridges](#) v. Ben Thornton (Purdue)  
141: No. 1 [Bryce Meredith](#) v. Colton Schilling (Cal Poly)  
149: [Sam Turner](#) v. No. 16 Alfred Bannister (Maryland)  
157: No. 9 [Archie Colgan](#) v. Hunter Willits (Oregon State)  
165: No. 14 [Branson Ashworth](#) v. Connor Flynn (Mizzou)  
184: [Chaz Polson](#) v. No. 7 Taylor Venz (Nebraska)

### **TV Broadcast Information**

#### **Thursday, March 15**

**First Round** – 10 a.m. MT – ESPNU

**Second Round** – 5 p.m. MT – ESPN

#### **Friday, March 16**

**Quarterfinals** – 9 a.m. MT – ESPNU

**Semifinals** – 6 p.m. MT – ESPN

#### **Saturday, March 17**

**Medal Round** – 9 a.m. MT – ESPNU

**Finals** – 6 p.m. MT – ESPN2

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