

University of Minnesota Athletic Communications



244 Bierman Field Athletic Building • 516 15th Avenue SE • Minneapolis, MN 55455
(p) 612.625.4090 • (f) 612.625.0359

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Pat McCabe (mcca0512@umn.edu / 612-203-3028)

WRESTLING UPDATE

November 11, 2009

Wrestling Season Outlook 2009-10

High Expectations as Gophers Celebrate 100 years

The first season of Golden Gopher Wrestling, was 1910. The first conference title for Golden Gopher Wrestling, was 1910. Since its inception 100 years ago, the wrestling program at the University of Minnesota has been synonymous with winning. And the greatest run of success, has undoubtedly been during the tenure of current head coach J Robinson.

Now is his 24th season, Robinson has assembled a team that can rank among his best by season's end. For a coach who has already won six Big Ten titles, and three NCAA titles, that may seem like a lofty statement. However, with the culture of the winning and the long history of success that has been Gopher Wrestling throughout the years, high expectations and lofty goals come with the territory.

The consensus for the Golden Gophers in the preseason polls is No. 5 national ranking, including in the USA Today/NWCA/InterMat preseason Top-25. A talent laden line-up will be led by five returners with NCAA meet experience, three of which who have been named All-American. The head of that class are seniors and three-time All-Americans Jayson Ness and Dustin Schlatter, while sophomore Zach Sanders has already earned All-America status.

There is ability in the line-up from top-to-bottom, and quality depth in every spot. Add to the mix, the nation's No. 1 ranked recruiting class and the Gophers look as strong as ever, ready to make a run at the Big Ten and NCAA titles.

125

Already an All-American, Zach Sanders (Wabasha, Minn.) enters his sophomore season as a staple at the top of the Gopher line-up. His 39 wins in 2008-09 led the team while his 19 in dual meet action were tied for the team lead. He broke on to the scene in a big way in his rookie campaign, winning his first 15 matches with the first six by either, fall, tech fall, or major decision. With six falls last season, he was among the team leaders while his nine major decisions and five technical falls were each the Gophers' best mark. He also had a win streak last season of 12-straight, which came after his first loss and left him with a 23-1 record as Big Ten play opened. With five wins over ranked opponents last season, Sanders begins his sophomore season ranked fourth in most preseason polls at 125 pounds.

"He is a young leader for us," head coach J Robinson said. "He has a great motor and is a great example of Minnesota wrestling. He's very exciting, aggressive and intense."

Sanders leadership will be called upon this season, as he heads a young group at 125. Backing him up will be freshman Thane Antczak (Prairie Farm, Wis.) and Austin Waliullah (Rockton, Ill.).

133

For one final season, Jayson Ness (Bloomington, Minn.) will take the mat for the Golden Gophers. In his already brilliant career Ness has been named All-America three times and won the 2007 Big Ten title. He opens his final season ranked second at 133 in every preseason publication.

"The goal for Ness is to return to the finals and put it all together for a National Championship," Robinson said.

Coming off a good summer of training, the high expectations are more than warranted. In his first season at 133, he racked up 38 wins as well as 19 falls to lead the team and set a new career pins record with 54 at the end of his junior season. His chase for an NCAA title in his final season will coincide with his quest, along with teammate Dustin Schlatter, to become just the sixth and seventh four-time All-Americans in team history.

After missing an entire season due to injury last season, sophomore Cody Marcicki (Lapeer, Mich.) will add valuable depth this season. Meanwhile freshmen Tom Giaino (Appleton, Wis.) and David Thorn (St. Michael, Minn.) get their first taste of college wrestling. Thorn is the younger brother of current Golden Gopher junior Mike Thorn.

141

After a breakout campaign as a sophomore, Mike Thorn (St. Michael, Minn.) enters his junior season ready to build on his first career appearance at the NCAA Championships. Entering the season, he is ranked as high as ninth at 141 pounds in some publications.

"He got in a lot of good work over the summer," Robinson said of Thorn. "He is bigger and stronger and has really shown some great improvement."

continued...



WRESTLING OUTLOOK 2009-10 CONT.

In his first season as a regular starter, Thorn went 12-10 in dual meets and 5-3 in the Big Ten. His season began with 12 consecutive wins, with six of the first seven by fall. He closed the season with 10 pins which was second on the team among starters. Now as an upperclassmen, he will be asked to lead a very deep and talented group at 141.

Freshman Austin Enoch (Redmond, Ore.) had an impressive season last year as a redshirt with 10 wins, as did sophomore David Zilverberg (Wayzata, Minn.) with nine wins. Zilverberg, however, may spend time at 149 this season. Jake Mellmer (Dickinson, N.D.) and Ryan Blake (Chicago, Ill.) as a junior and sophomore respectively will add more experience to the group. As the younger brother of former Gopher three-time All-American Mack Reiter, freshman Bart Reiter (Gilbertville, Iowa) begins his collegiate career with four state titles on his resume.

149

In his first season with the Golden Gophers last year, Mario Mason racked up 14 wins against just two losses. Now, after his redshirt year, he is slated as the starter at 149 pounds.

"He'll be taking over the spot held by Dustin Schlatter," Robinson said. "We have high expectations for him, after his redshirt season last year."

His career started in dominant fashion with a 20-7 win in his first match, which he then backed up with a 15-3 win later the same day. At 149 pounds last season, he posted a 12-1 record, losing only in the championship match at the Kaufman-Brand Open, by just one point. His ability to compete with top competition was further proven as he ended the season wrestling up a weight class, and posting a 2-1 mark at 157 pounds.

The rest of the field at 149 brings a wealth of experience including sophomores Joe Grygelko (Greenfield, Minn.), Luke Mellmer (Dickinson, N.D.) and Brian Peterson (Richmond, Minn.). Grygelko and Peterson split time in the starting line-up last season, appearing in 16 and seven dual meets respectively. Grygelko, who also may see time at 157, and Peterson each won seven total matches last season. Competing in open meets, Mellmer enters the season off a 4-4 campaign. Finally freshmen Wesley Richard (Dillingham, Alaska), Pat Smith (Chaska, Minn.) and Danny Zilverberg (Wayzata, Minn.) join the group. Richard was a redshirt last year while Zilverberg (the younger brother of current Gopher David Zilverberg) begins his college career fresh off an undefeated state championship season as a high school senior.

157

There will be a major hole to fill at 157 this winter, with the graduation of Tyler Safratowich, who posted 32 wins last season on his way to All-American laurels. The leading candidate to replace Safratowich is freshman Jake Deitchler (Anoka, Minn.). Deitchler gained notoriety in 2008 when he became the first high school wrestler since 1976 to qualify for the United State Olympic team. After the 2008 summer Olympics he put college off for a while and spent the next year training full time at the US Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colo. Now after a year of training full time, he has decided to come back to the University of Minnesota, and the Gophers are excited to have him.

Coach Robinson describes Deitchler's style as aggressive, offensive and intense, and he has the ability to pick up right where Safratowich left off. Sophomore Joel Hill (Overland Park, Kans.) will back up Deitchler and will gain more experience after appearing in four open tournaments last season.

165

The 165 spot will be in good hands this winter, as three-time All-American Dustin Schlatter (Massillon, Ohio) makes the move up two weight classes. After redshirting last season, Schlatter will join teammate Jayson Ness in the quest to become four-time All-Americans in their senior year. The 2006 NCAA Champion at 149 pounds, a bigger, stronger, and rejuvenated Schlatter will also chase his third Big Ten Championship, but his first at 165.

"He's finally healthy after taking a year off," Robinson said. "We're looking for him to recapture National Championship form this season."

Despite moving up two weight classes, he is still garnering national respect, as he is ranked No. 1 at 165 in the preseason by InterMat, and has earned a No. 2 ranking by Amateur Wrestling News.

Backing up, and gaining valuable experience, behind Schlatter this season will be freshman Alec Ortiz (Grand Ronde, Ore.). Ortiz is a heralded recruit who earned multiple All-America honors in high school on his way to four undefeated state championship seasons.

174

The race for the top spot at 174 is as wide open as any, but has several strong candidates. Among the leaders heading into the open season are senior Matt Everson (Mitchell, S.D.) and junior Scott Glasser (Bismarck, N.D.). After splitting time between weight classes, Everson ended last season as the starter at 174 pounds. He placed seventh at the Big Ten Tournament and was just a match away from the NCAA Tournament in his first season back from a two-year tour in Iraq. He won his first two matches last season, as well as his last and will try to ride that momentum into his last season.

Glasser was the top Gopher at 165 last season and, despite fighting through injuries, won 19 matches and started every Big Ten dual. He won 15 of his first 17 matches as a sophomore, and now bigger and stronger he will look to return to that form as he battles for the top spot at 174.

Also in the mix are Kaleb Young (Tenstrike, Minn.) and Cody Yohn (Alamosa, Colo.) after posting 17 and 14 wins respectively last season. Young earned the start in 18 dual meets as a freshman, winning his first three and seven overall.

"Kaleb wants to get better," Robinson said. "He's always striving to get better, and as a starter last year he'll be looking to start again."

Yohn was a redshirt a season ago and claimed championships at the Kaufman-Brand Open and Flash Open as well as runner-up honors at the Bison Open and the Minnesota West Open. After a summer spent improving, he will only add to the interesting competition at 174 this winter.

continued...

WRESTLING OUTLOOK 2009-10 CONT.

Adding even further depth at the spot is senior Nate Matousek (Glencoe, Minn.) who returns after a year away from wrestling, as well as freshmen Steven Avalos (Mundelein, Wis.) and Kevin Steinhaus (Pennock, Minn.).

184

The spot at 184 is just another in the Gopher line-up that should be in good hands this season. Sonny Yohn (Alamosa, Colo.) returns for his sophomore season after starting a majoring of the Gophers' matches last season. "Sonny broke into the starting line-up late last year," Robinson said. "He had a great spring, he's diligent, and he's a great example of what you want in an athlete."

Yohn has caught eyes nationally already in the preseason, gaining a No. 18 ranking by Amateur Wrestling News. He ended last season by going 3-2 at the Big Ten Tournament to earn seventh place honors. He began his run with a win over the No. 13 ranked wrestler it country, his second win over a ranked wrestler on the season. Now with a ranking of his own, he will be one of the many young leaders for the Gophers in 2009-10.

197

Another spot that opens the season with competition for the starters role is at 197, and at the forefront are a pair of wrestlers that were in different weight classes last year. Junior Brent Eidenschink (Detroit Lakes, Minn.) was a part-time starter at 184 as a sophomore while fellow junior Joe Nord (Waconia, Minn.) found himself in the starting line-up at heavyweight at times last season. Eidenschink won six total matches and Nord won 11 last season.

"He has great experience after starting as a freshman and sophomore," Robinson said of Eidenschink. "He's bigger and stronger now, and moving up a weight class will help his strength and size."

On the flip side, a trimmed down Nord will provide quality competition for the top spot. He was 11-3 against Heavyweight competition last season and 5-1 in dual meets. He closed last season with four wins in five matches, including two over ranked opponents. That momentum should carry over nicely to his new spot at 197.

Providing the youth at 197 this year will be freshmen Greg Antonson (Eau Claire, Wis.) and Jake Filkins (Prescott, Wis.).

HWT

Finally, at heavyweight, the Gophers can look to another quality veteran and expect great results. Junior Ben Berhow (Hayward, Minn.) made his second consecutive NCAA Tournament last season and is ranked among the best heavyweights in the country in the preseason.

"He's been close and this could be a breakthrough year," Robinson said. "He gained confidence last season, he knows what to do and he'll take his shots."

Berhow has been known to take chances and is one of the most offensive heavyweights in the Big Ten, if not the nation. His chances paid off last season as he went 8-0 in Big Ten dual meets, on his way to 27 total victories and a fourth place finish at the Big Ten tournament. Now as an upperclassman, the goal is to improve and make deep runs at both the Big Ten and NCAA Tournaments.

Learning behind Berhow this winter will be a pair of freshmen in Jake Kettler (Ramsey, Minn.) and Tony Nelson (Cambridge, Minn.). Each begin their Gopher careers fresh off Minnesota state titles, Kettler at heavyweight and Nelson at 215, giving the Gophers a very talented group of big men.

SCHEDULE

It will be a daunting schedule, as always, for the Golden Gophers as they celebrate their 100th year. This year's slate is highlighted by seven home dual meets while the complete schedule includes three of the top four teams from last year's NCAA Championship meet, as well as 10 teams that placed in the top-20. Eight opponents can be found on the NWCA/InterMat Preseason Top-25, paced by the preseason number one and defending national champion Iowa Hawkeyes.

For the fifth straight year, the season gets underway at the Bison Open as the Golden Gophers head to Fargo, N.D. on Nov. 14. A week later, on Nov. 21, they head to the Kaufman-Brand Open hosted by Nebraska-Omaha. The Gophers host their first home meet of the season on Saturday, Nov. 28 when Cal State Bakersfield visits Williams Arena.

December begins with a road trip to perennial power and No. 6 ranked Oklahoma State on Friday, Dec. 4, before a home match with No. 7 Nebraska on Thursday Dec. 10. On Sunday, Dec. 13, Minnesota is back on the road as they travel to Northern Colorado, before taking some time off for the Holidays. After the break, the Golden Gophers close out the month in Greensboro, N.C. for the Southern Scuffle on Dec. 29-30.

On Jan. 3, Minnesota returns home to the Sports Pavilion and opens 2010 with their third top-10 team in No. 2 Iowa State. The following weekend, it's off to Cedar Falls, Iowa for the National Duals on Jan. 9-10. The next action for the Golden Gophers is a weekend swing to Michigan to open the Big Ten season. As for the Big Ten slate this season, it will not include Northwestern or Ohio State as they are the two league teams the Gophers do not face in 2009-10. On Jan. 22 and 23, Minnesota travels to No. 21 Michigan State and Michigan respectively.

January then closes with the season's first set of back-to-back home duals. On Friday, Jan. 29 No. 11 Wisconsin visits Williams Arena, and then on Sunday, Jan. 31 Minnesota hosts Purdue.

After Big Ten road duals at Illinois and No. 15 Indiana on February 5 and 6 respectively, the Golden Gophers get the luxury of closing out the regular season at home. On Sunday, Feb. 14, in one of the most anticipated matches every season, Minnesota hosts No. 1 Iowa in Williams Arena. Then the regular season comes to a close at the Sports Pavilion on Friday Feb. 19 in a meet with No. 14 Penn State.

With March, comes tournament time and Minnesota will be on the road at the Big Ten Championships on Mar. 6-7 in Ann Arbor, Mich. and at the NCAA Championships in Omaha, Neb. on Mar. 18-20.

It will be another exciting season on the mat, as the Gophers carry the tradition of the last 100 years, into the next century of Minnesota Wrestling.
