

Sun Devil wrestling building momentum on world stage

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By Craig Morgan, [theSunDevils.com](http://thesundevids.com) writer

TEMPE, Ariz. – Zeke Jones was hoping to establish momentum for the Sun Devil wrestling program at the NCAA meet in March. Backed by a national championship from Zahid Valencia (174 pounds) and All-American finishes from Jason Tsirtsis (149) and Josh Shields (157), ASU posted its first top-10 finish since 2010-11.

The Sun Devils have a chance to raise the bar another notch this summer. ASU has three wrestlers (Valencia and freshmen Brandon Courtney and Chad Porter) who have secured or are one step away from securing spots on Junior and Senior World Teams.

“We’re having a breakout summer with our Olympic program,” said Jones, the Sun Devils’ coach.

Leading the charge is Valencia, who will face four-time NCAA champ Kyle Dake (Cornell) at 79 kilograms (174 pounds) at Final X in State College, Pennsylvania on Saturday for a spot on the Senior World Team. It’s a major step for Valencia, the Pac-12 Wrestler of the Year, after a dominant redshirt sophomore season in which he went 32-0. Valencia has a chance to become just the 19th wrestler and the third Sun Devil in Team USA history to make the senior team while still holding college eligibility.

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