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## Augsburg announces inaugural women's wrestling class

For full story with individual details on each wrestler, go to this link:  
<https://athletics.augsburg.edu/news/2019/8/28/wwr081919.aspx>

MINNEAPOLIS -- Augsburg University's inaugural season of women's wrestling will feature a class of student-athletes which rank among the most formidable in the country, if preseason rankings are any indication of the team's potential prowess.

Of the nine first-year wrestlers that will be on the 2019-20 Auggie women's wrestling squad, six are ranked among the top 100 women's wrestlers, regardless of weight class, of the high school Class of 2019 by The Open Mat, an amateur wrestling website. Two of the top three in The Open Mat's listing -- No. 1-ranked Emily Shilson (FY, Maple Grove, Minn./Mounds View HS) and No. 3-ranked Vayle-Rae Baker (FY, Benton, Pa./Wyoming Seminary) -- will headline the class, along with No. 12-ranked Gabby Skidmore (FY, Spooner, Wis./Cumberland HS), No. 26-ranked Kaylee Moore (FY, Yakima, Wash./Naches Valley HS), No. 51-ranked Faith Tuttle (FY, North St. Paul, Minn./North St. Paul HS) and No. 89-ranked Marlynn Deede (FY, Springville, Utah/Springville HS).

All six are also ranked in the top 10 in their individual high school weight classes in the most recent USA Wrestling National Girls' High School Rankings (June 27), with Shilson ranked No. 1 at 106 pounds, Baker ranked No. 1 and Skidmore No. 2 at 122, Moore No. 2 at 132, Tuttle No. 3 at 180 and Deede No. 9 at 164.

"This is a special group of girls coming to campus this year. Not only are their accolades on the mat outstanding, they boast strong academic accomplishments and have given back to their respective communities. This shows by the amount of Tricia Saunders Excellence awards that these ladies have earned," said Max Mejia, who will lead the Auggies as their inaugural head coach in 2019-20. "We have a lot of national and international success that will translate to success at the WCWA level. We're excited to get these ladies on campus and see what a positive impact they will have on our Augsburg community."

Shilson, a six-time Minnesota girls' state champion and three-time Minnesota high school state tournament qualifier in boys' wrestling, was named the national winner of the 2019 Tricia Saunders High School Excellence Award from the National Wrestling Hall of Fame, honoring the nation's outstanding high school senior female wrestlers for excellence in wrestling, scholastic achievement, citizenship and community service.

Shilson (Midwest, Minnesota) and Baker (Northeast, Pennsylvania) were two of the five regional winners of the Tricia Saunders award, and each won the awards for their respective states. Moore earned the state honor for Washington, and Deede earned the state honor for Utah.

At the USA Wrestling/U.S. Marine Corps Junior National Championships in July in Fargo, N.D., Shilson became just the second woman ever to win all six junior and cadet national titles available in a youth wrestling career, after claiming the 2019 junior freestyle title at 106 pounds. She was one of three future Auggies to win Fargo titles in 2019, with Skidmore taking the crown at 122 pounds and Moore winning at 132. Tuttle was also a Fargo All-American in 2019, finishing sixth at 180 pounds.

In addition to Shilson's six Fargo titles, Baker was a three-time Fargo titlist, including back-to-back junior titles in 2018 (117) and 2017 (106), and was a four-time All-American. Moore earned five Fargo All-American honors, while Skidmore and Tuttle earned three All-American honors each in their careers.

On the international level, Shilson earned a reputation as one of the most accomplished young female wrestlers in American history. In 2018, she became the first American wrestler ever to earn a gold medal at the Youth Olympic Games (ages 15-17), when she won the 43-kilogram title in Buenos Aires, Argentina. She also claimed the United World Wrestling Cadet World Championships title at 43 kilograms (95 pounds), after finishing second in the event in 2017. She also earned UWW Pan-American Cadet championships in 2018 (43 kg) and 2016 (46 kg), earning the Golden Boot award as the tournament's outstanding wrestler in 2018. Competing at the 2019 UWW Pan-American Junior Championships in June in Guatemala, she finished second at 50 kilograms (110 pounds).

Baker finished seventh in the 49 kilogram (108 pounds) class at the 2017 UWW Cadet World Championships. Shilson, Baker, Skidmore, Moore and Deede have also competed at U.S. World Team Trials events this year, with Shilson earning champion honors at the U-23 World Team Trials at 50 kg. The UWW U-23 World Championships will be held Oct. 28-Nov. 3 in Budapest, Hungary.

Three wrestlers are transferring to Augsburg this season. Savannah Vold (SO, Rochester, Minn./Rochester Mayo HS), who competed for NIAA program Waldorf (Iowa) in 2018-19, will be an Auggie, while Melissa Jacobs (FY, Belle Plaine, Minn./Belle Plaine HS (Scott West)) transfers from Umpqua Community College (Ore.), where she was a redshirt last season. Bel Snyder (FY, Wadena, Minn./Wadena-Deer Creek HS) transfers to the program after spending a redshirt season at NIAA program Jamestown (N.D.).

Kahlea Jolly (FY, Lincoln Lakes, Minn./Centennial HS), a multiple-time Minnesota state champion in various disciplines, will also join the

... named only (17, Eric Lanes, Minn./Central Minn.), a multiple time Minnesota state champion in various disciplines, will also join the Auggie squad this season.

"This year, being the inaugural season, there is much to be excited about," Meija said. "As a coach, I am excited to get our wrestlers on campus and get to work in the wrestling room. I am confident in everyone's abilities in the classroom. I am excited to see how much better we can get before the WCWA tournament. This is also an Olympic year, so I am excited to see these girls go after their lifelong dreams and give it their best shot at making an Olympic team."

Augsburg's inaugural season will begin this winter, with women's wrestling the 22nd varsity sport offered by the Minneapolis school. It's anticipated that Augsburg will be one of 12 NCAA Division III programs to offer the sport this season, among 25 overall programs in all three NCAA divisions, 30 NAIA programs and six junior college programs on the varsity level.

In June, the NCAA's Committee on Women's Athletics recommended that women's wrestling, along with acrobatics and tumbling, be added to the NCAA Emerging Sports for Women program, a significant step in the sport's push to gain varsity championship status. In July, the NCAA Division III Management Council forwarded the proposal with its recommendation to a vote of the Division III membership at the 2020 NCAA Convention.

Until the NCAA adds women's wrestling as a championship sport, Augsburg will compete as part of the Women's Collegiate Wrestling Association (WCWA), which holds a national tournament each February. The Auggies will also compete at the National Wrestling Coaches Association National Duals in Louisville, Ky., in early January.

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