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WYOMING

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Cowboys' Season Comes to a Close at NCAA Championships

PITTSBURGH, Pa. (March 22, 2019) – The Wyoming wrestling team wrapped up its 2018-19 season on Friday at the NCAA Wrestling Championships at PPG Paints Arena. With 9.5 points, Wyoming is in 26th in the team standings following the first three sessions.

Wyoming wraps up a successful campaign in which it qualified seven wrestlers for the NCAA Championships for the first time since 2013, tying the most qualifiers in a season in the Mark Branch era. During the dual season, the Cowboys racked up 16 dual wins for the first time in the Branch era. The Pokes' 16 dual wins this season were also the most since winning a school-record 17 during the 1966-67 season.

“It was a really good season and gives us a lot to be optimistic about and a lot to build on,” head coach Mark Branch said. “I can’t think of a time when we’ve had six NCAA qualifiers returning and that’s a lot to really figure out some of the things that are keeping us from getting in those All-American rounds. It was really a surprising season. These guys really showed a lot of heart and a lot of fight all year.

“I was actually really proud of the way they competed today. At most weights, I thought our toughest performances were today, but we fought hard and we’ve got to find ways to get over that hump, but our backs were against the wall in some of these matches but these guys fought hard and battled. They need to hold their heads high and be motivated about what they can do to elevate their wrestling so that they can get in that upper echelon.”

The day also brought an end to the outstanding collegiate career of Cowboy senior Branson Ashworth, who finished his career in the Brown and Gold with 121 wins—tying himself in sixth on the program career victories list. Ashworth wraps up his season at 33-7. That win total is good for 16th on the program’s single-season wins list, joining his sophomore and junior totals that both rank 15th.

“Branson is an amazing young man with an amazing family,” Branch said. “Your heart breaks for him because you know how much he has put into this and how he’s always done things right. He’s a success story no matter what. We all wanted him to finish his career on the podium, but at the same time he has nothing to be ashamed about

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“We’re lucky to have him and he’s done so many wonderful things for us. I think about a scrawny kid coming to camp that caught our attention, and he turned out to be one of the best guys that ever suited up for the university. Hopefully we can have him involved in the program in one way or another for the rest of his life because in these situations you hope that the program means as much to him as he means to us.”

The day started with consolation second-round matches, as Montorie Bridges and Sam Turner both picked up wins to advance further into the wrestlebacks.

Bridges handled Campbell’s No. 22-seeded Noah Gonser in his consolation second round match to advance. Bridges tallied three takedowns in the first period of the bout to seize control early. After another takedown to lead, 9-3, heading into the final frame. At the beginning of the third, Gonser scored a reversal in the final 10 seconds to get back to within four, before a Bridges escape and near takedown just after the final buzzer. Bridges took the decision, 11-5.

In the following match, Bridges faced a rematch of the Big 12 semifinal match earlier this month, as Iowa State’s Austin Gomez awaited in the next round. Bridges led, 2-1, early in the third following a reversal from the down position to open the frame. Gomez was able to escape with 39 seconds left to tie up the match and send it to sudden victory where the Cyclone would come up with the winning takedown with three seconds left.

Sam Turner came up with a nice win over No. 24 Mitch Moore of Virginia Tech in his bout of the day. Turner racked up a 3-0 lead into the third period with riding time secured before a Moore reversal with 18 seconds left. Moore released Turner before scoring another takedown with 14 seconds on the clock; however, Moore wasn’t able to score on Turner again, as the Cowboy came away with a 5-4 decision.

In the next bout, Turner was to face Oklahoma State’s Kaid Brock. The two had split matches earlier in the season, with Brock coming up victorious in the Cowboys’ dual at Oklahoma State in November and Turner taking the win at the Reno Tournament of Champions. Friday’s bout, however, was all Brock who defeated Turner, 10-4.

At 125 pounds, junior Cole Verner faced a tough test in a match against No. 12 Michael McGee of Old Dominion. The Cowboy hung tough, but a takedown in the final minute by McGee was the score to put Verner at bay and end the Green River, Wyo., native’s run. Verner’s two losses this weekend were both to top-12 opponents and both were by only one point.

Ashworth dropped a tough battle with No. 9 seed and Big 12 Champion Demetrius Romero of Utah Valley on Friday to end his tournament. After being tied at two at the end of regulation, the two wrestlers went to sudden victory to decide the winner. It was Romero that would notch the winning takedown and advance with 26 seconds to go in the first sudden victory.

At 174, redshirt freshman Hayden Hastings dropped a tough one to Oklahoma State’s No. 7-seeded Jacobe Smith. Following a second-period where Hastings nearly got the defensive fall from the bottom position, the Cowboy was able to score a takedown in the opening minute of the third frame to cut Smith’s lead to 4-3. Hastings cut Smith loose. but

couldn't get the final takedown and dropped a 5-4 decision.

Freshman Tate Samuelson saw his first NCAA Championships come to an end with a 6-5 loss to No. 16 Corey Hazel of Lock Haven. Samuelson took a 3-2 lead into the final frame, but a reversal and takedown by Hazel in the third were too much to overcome.

Heavyweight sophomore Brian Andrews fell in his match against No. 13 Matt Voss of George Mason. Andrews scored the first takedown of the match in the opening minute, but it was all Voss from there, as he took the 11-4 decision over Andrews.

2019 NCAA Wrestling Championships – Results Through Session III

March 21, 2019 | PPG Paints Arena | Pittsburgh, Pa.

Cole Verner – 125 pounds

Round of 32: No. 11 Travis Piotrowski (ILL) dec. No. 22 Cole Verner (WYO) 4-3
Conso. First Round: No. 22 Cole Verner (WYO) dec. No. 27 Dack Punke (MIZZ) 4-2
Conso. Second Round: No. 12 Michael McGee (ODU) dec. No. 22 Cole Verner (WYO) 6-5

Montorie Bridges – 133 pounds

Round of 32: No. 12 Montorie Bridges (WYO) dec. No. 21 Cam Sykora (NDSU) 3-2
Round of 16: No. 5 Luke Pletcher (OHST) dec. No. 12 Montorie Bridges (WYO) 5-3
Conso. Second Round: No. 12 Montorie Bridges (WYO) dec. No. 22 Noah Gonser (CAMP) 11-5
Conso. Third Round: No. 13 Austin Gomez (ISU) dec. No. 12 Montorie Bridges (WYO) 4-2, SV1

Sam Turner – 141 pounds

Round of 32: No. 23 Sam Turner (WYO) dec. No. 10 Nicholas Gil (NAVY) 4-2
Round of 16: No. 7 Mitch McKee (MINN) dec. No. 23 Sam Turner (WYO) 7-4
Conso. Second Round: No. 23 Sam Turner (WYO) dec. No. 24 Mitch Moore (VT) 5-4
Conso. Third Round: No. 15 Kaid Brock (WYO) dec. No. 23 Kaid Brock (OKST) 10-4

Branson Ashworth – 165 pounds

Round of 32: No. 10 Branson Ashworth (WYO) MD No. 23 Zach Finesilver (DUKE) 9-1
Round of 16: No. 7 Isaiah White (NEB) dec. No. 10 Branson Ashworth (WYO) 5-4
Conso. Second Round: No. 9 Demetrius Romero (UVU) dec. No. 10 Branson Ashworth (WYO) 4-2, SV1

Hayden Hastings – 174 pounds

Round of 32: No. 8 Taylor Lujan (UNI) MD No. 25 Hayden Hastings (WYO) 15-7
Conso. First Round: No. 25 Hayden Hastings (WYO) MD No. 24 Lorenzo De La Riva (NDSU) 13-4
Conso. Second Round: No. 7 Jacobe Smith (OSU) dec. No. 25 Hayden Hastings (WYO) 5-4

Tate Samuelson – 184 pounds

Round of 32: No. 15 Chip Ness (UNC) dec. No. 18 Tate Samuelson (WYO) 8-2
Conso. First Round: No. 18 Tate Samuelson (WYO) MD No. 31 Kevin Parker (PRIN) 14-2
Conso. Second Round: No. 16 Corey Hazel (LH) dec. No. 18 Tate Samuelson (WYO) 6-5

Brian Andrews - Heavyweight

Round of 32: No. 19 Brian Andrews (WYO) dec. No. 14 AJ Nevills (FS) 9-2

Round of 16: No. 3 Gable Steveson (MINN) MD No. 19 Brian Andrews (WYO) 21-8

Conso. Second Round: No. 13 Matt Voss (GMU) dec. No. 19 Brian Andrews (WYO) 11-4

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