

COLLEGE WRESTLING



Photo courtesy of Iowa State University, File
Iowa State's Sam Colbray gets his hand raised after beating Oklahoma's Kayne MacCallum 14-4 in a Jan. 25 Big 12 match. Colbray will compete at the NCAA Wrestling Championships on March 21-23.

Never in doubt

Hermiston's Sam Colbray headed to NCAA Championships

By ANNIE FOWLER
East Oregonian

There was never a doubt Sam Colbray would one day punch his ticket to the NCAA Wrestling Championships.

One of the most successful and dominant high school wrestlers in Oregon history, Colbray qualified for the NAAs on Sunday by finishing second at 184 pounds at the Big 12 Championships in Tulsa, Okla.

"It's exciting," said Colbray, who is ranked 10th heading into the NAAs. "It was a goal. Coming out of high school, I was a top-ranked recruit. Our coaching staff has brought out the best in me."

The Cyclones were second in the team standings at the Big 12 tournament with 114.5 points. Oklahoma State won the title with 158 points.

Iowa State will send nine men to the NCAA Championships on March 21-23 at PPG Paints Arena in Pittsburgh.

Tournament brackets were released Wednesday, and Colbray, 21, finds himself against a familiar foe in Fresno State's Jackson Hemauer. Colbray beat Hemauer 8-7 in a dual on Jan. 13.

Colbray and fellow 2016 Hermiston High grad Bob Coleman, who is at Oregon State, are on opposite sides of the bracket. In fact, Cole-



Photo courtesy of Iowa State University, File
Iowa State's Sam Colbray (right) wrestles Fresno State's Jackson Hemauer in a Jan. 13 match. Colbray won 8-7.

man will wrestle the pigtail match against Chris Kober of Campbell to get into the 32-man bracket.

Should Coleman win, he would face top-ranked Myles Martin of Ohio State.

The top eight in each weight class at the end of the tournament will be honored as All-Americans.

A redshirt sophomore, Colbray opened the Big 12 Championships with a 7-1 win over Jake Thompson of Air Force. He followed with an 11-5 decision over Kayne MacCallum of Okla-

homa, then beat Tate Samuelson of Wyoming 5-2 in the semifinals.

Colbray, the top-ranked man at 184, fell to No. 2 Drew Foster of Northern Iowa, 4-1 in the finals.

Foster had an escape, a takedown and 2 minutes of riding time in the match.

Cobray had previously beaten Foster 8-5 in a Big 12 dual Feb. 21.

"I knew he was tough on top," Colbray said of Foster. "I needed to make a small adjustment. It came back to bite me."

Colbray has twice gone to the NAAs as a spectator, and says he doesn't expect any jitters when it comes time to step on the mat.

"It's not much different than Fargo," he said. "It's just you and the other guy. I don't really think about my opponent, I just focus on myself. There is no pressure."

Colbray's parents, Delta and Leroy, were at the Big 12 Tournament, and already

See Wrestling, Page B2

COLLEGE SIGNING

Dawgs' Navarrete headed to BMCC to play soccer

Hermiston goalie will be the first in his family to attend college

By ANNIE FOWLER
East Oregonian

Blue Mountain soccer coach Austin Shick was on hand Wednesday when Hermiston's Juan Carlos Navarrete signed his letter of intent to play for the Timberwolves. He was not going to let this recruit get away.

"I'm pretty excited about it," said Shick, who made sure he left with the signed documents. "He reached out to me about this time last year, and we watched him play. We have loved the Hermiston kids we have had."

Navarrete, a goalie, said he is excited to join the BMCC team.

"It's close to home, and I want to stay close to my family," he said. "They have something going on up there that I really like, and I want to be part of that team."

Heading to college also is a sense of pride for Navarrete, who plans to major in agricultural business.

"I am the first one in my family to go to college," he said. "I was the first one in my family to speak English. My motivation to go to college is to give my family a better future."

Navarrete and the Bulldogs are coming off a 2017 season where they finished second in the Columbia River Conference with a 3-0-3 record. They lost in the Oregon 5A quarterfinals to Bend 3-0. They finished the season 10-4-3.

He was named a first-team CRC goalie.

With the move to the Mid-Columbia Conference this season, the Bull-

dogs have been idle for 18 months.

With a little time on his hands, Navarrete played football in the fall, kicking and punting for the Bulldogs.

"I loved it," Navarrete said. "The atmosphere is awesome every game. I wish soccer would have been in the spring since I was a freshman so I could have played football. I really loved it."

And, it has helped his soccer game.

"We lifted weights, which I liked," he said. "It was discipline for me. I had to wake up at 6 to lift. I'm stronger and I can jump higher, which is good for me. I'm still lifting. I don't want to be weak. As a goalie, you need strength to jump and kick."

Shick also appreciates Navarrete putting in the extra work. "For him, getting into football and staying active in the offseason was the best thing he did," Shick said.

A lifetime of soccer

Navarrete began playing soccer when he was 4 years old. He started as a defender, but moved to goalie when he was 12.

He and his mother, Lisandra Navarrete, moved to Hermiston from Mexico, when he was in the eighth grade.

He did not play soccer his freshman year, but he has been a regular on the pitch ever since.

"I am enjoying my last season of high school soccer," he said. "We are playing a higher level of competition, and we could tell that yesterday (against Walla Walla)."



Staff photo by Annie Fowler
Hermiston goalie Juan Carlos Navarrete signed a letter of intent on Wednesday to play soccer for Blue Mountain Community College.

Japanese phenom returns to Tokyo Dome for Mariners start

Yusei Kikuchi's goal was always to pitch in the major leagues

By TIM BOOTH
Associated Press

PEORIA, Ariz. — Yusei Kikuchi's journey started in northern Japan, in the prefecture of Iwate, about 300 miles from the Tokyo Dome.

This is where Kikuchi became a star. Where he was a prep phenom. Where his left arm was so good he seriously considered skipping playing professional baseball in his home country to immediately go where



AP Photo/Darron Cummings, File
Seattle Mariners' Yusei Kikuchi throws during the first inning of a spring training baseball game on Feb. 25 against the Cincinnati Reds in Peoria, Ariz.

he always wanted to be: the major leagues.

"When I was smaller I

was watching all the Japanese players play well in the major leagues and that was

the time all these Japanese players were coming to the major leagues and I was saying, 'Even if I'm Japanese I will be able to make it to the majors if I work hard,'" Kikuchi said recently through an interpreter. "I was given that dream by all these former players and that is why I wanted to come to the states."

Kikuchi was determined from the time he was 15 years old to be the next great Japanese import to dazzle American fans and befuddle major league hitters. That dream is now the reality for the newest starting pitcher for the Seattle Mariners.

In a twist, his debut will come a few hundred miles

from where he first made a name for himself at Hanamaki Higashi High School. He will start the second game of the 2019 season against the Oakland Athletics inside the Tokyo Dome next week.

While his MLB debut is coming in Japan, Kikuchi has been preparing to make America his home for more than a decade. He studied English and answered the majority of questions in English at his introductory news conference. He scouted the best left-handed pitchers in the majors to see what made them successful. He visited the U.S. on numerous occasions to begin learning the culture.

"I went to a couple of ballgames and I looked at the atmosphere and said, 'Hey, this is the place I want to play,' and I set that goal when I came to the states," Kikuchi said. "And during the offseason I worked out at the gyms over here to get used to the American workouts, get used to the American food here."

The Mariners, as much as any team in baseball, are keenly aware of how much Kikuchi wanted to be in the states. They were in the middle of the conversations in 2009 when Kikuchi nearly bypassed playing professionally in Japan to sign with a major league club then.