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Colbray tries to focus on the positive amid COVID-19

Former Hermiston state wrestling champion had qualified for the NCAA championships

By ANNIE FOWLER
SPORTS EDITOR

AMES, Iowa — Sam Colbray had punched his ticket to the NCAA Championships, so injury defaulting the third-place match at the Big 12 Championships seemed the smart thing to do to make sure his hip would be ready for an All-American run two weeks later.

For the former four-time state champion at Hermiston High School, and junior at Iowa State University, it was his second time qualifying for the NAAs, and he was excited.

Then, in a matter of days, it was gone. The NCAA canceled all postseason tournaments, from basketball to wrestling.

“They told us at practice,” Colbray said. “I was upset, but there’s nothing you can do about it. We just have to keep our spirits high and remain hungry for the next opportunity. Getting upset puts energy in the wrong place.”

When news of the coronavirus first started to circulate, Colbray, his teammates, and the rest of the sporting world were prepared to compete without fans.

“We went from no fans, to school getting canceled until further notice, to having our coach tell us it was over,” Colbray said. “It was shocking. Some guys were emotional. There is no way to mentally process it or make it feel better. If it was my senior year, it would

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Sam Colbray, on learning that the NCAA canceled all post-season tournaments

have hit me harder, but there is nothing I can do about it. You have to find the humility in it.”

The NCAA Championships typically are held during the college spring break. Colbray had gone to watch in the past, and competed in 2019. This year, he drove home to Oregon to see his parents, Delta and Leroy.

He will return to Iowa at the end of the month to finish the school year online, and he also has work opportunities.

Colbray said he has been careful of where he goes and who he sees while he’s been home. “I don’t want to bring anything home to my parents,” he said.

A successful season

Colbray finished the season with an 18-9 record, wrestling at 184 and 174.

Going to 174 was a big cut for Colbray, who competed at 195 in high school.

“It was a matter of trusting the process of whether I wanted to go to that weight or not,” he said. “There were outside factors — the guys in my weight class, what’s best for the team. I had to weigh whether the sacrifices meant more.”

The move proved to be a good one.

“The 174 Sam Colbray was better than Sam Colbray at 184,” he said. “My coaching staff deemed it a viable choice. Your ambitions change. I had to trust they knew how to get me to that weight. Wrestling is truly the only sport in Div. I that has a weight cutting proponent that is monitored.”

One of Colbray’s biggest wins of the season came at 174, when he upset fifth-ranked Bryce Steiert of Northern Iowa 7-6 on Feb. 16.

Colbray, who finished fourth at the Big 12 Championships at 174 pounds, was one of eight Cyclones who earned a trip to the NCAA Championships.

Iowa State finished second in the team standings behind Oklahoma State.

“Everything I did in the process, even though the NAAs got taken away, I know I put in the work,” Colbray said.

“Our guys had an awesome season, and we need to be proud of the work we put in. We have to realize the fun, the blood, sweat and tears was part of the process.”



Iowa State Photo/Wesley Winterink

Iowa State University junior Sam Colbray celebrates his 7-6 victory over Northern Iowa's Bryce Steiert on Feb. 16, 2020, in Ames, Iowa.

PET OF THE WEEK

Little Meno is just a little over a year old. He was born blind. He is super loving, funny, playful and needy. His forever home will need to be with someone who is always home or can take to work with them. No children under 12, as he is only 4.8 pounds and can get hurt easily. Can not be left unattended outside. We will require that he has at least 3 visits with someone before he goes home with them.



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