

University of Iowa Wrestling Media Conference

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Tom Brands

Iowa Wrestling



Q. You got Gilman and Clark as your leaders for the seniors coming in so far?

TOM BRANDS: You said Gilman. You see that? This goes on all his gear. It's a warning to his opponents, in the practice room, and it's serving a national message that says, "stay clear while machine is in use." We love Gilman. Gilman is the leader of this team. He does things right from a practice point of view, lifestyle point of view, the way he competes, the way he represents the team. The locker room is his. And that's a full partnership in what we're doing.

Q. Was that your idea or his?

TOM BRANDS: It's his idea, of course. He doesn't shy from words.

Q. What about Clark? Is he taking ownership?

TOM BRANDS: Cory Clark is a veteran. He's our best credential guy, and he's a full partner as well. They're just different. They're different in approach. They're different in how they may march on a daily basis. And they're two different people. Gilman is more of a militant type guy that if you don't pick up your towel when you leave the locker room and it's laying there, you're going to hear about it and you're going to pick up your towel. And that's not a bad thing. That's a good thing. And we sometimes say, you know what, mamma is not around anymore, so you're going to have to pick up after yourself. Things that don't seem like they're a big deal add up to a big deal. But Clark, absolutely, and Sorensen, absolutely. Vital. Brooks, Meyer, absolutely. Stoll, returner.

Q. How about 141? Who do you like? Is it close?

TOM BRANDS: Here's the thing with a couple of weight classes. It's the same theme, and maybe it's why we're not where we want this program to be. And we need somebody not to just be in the lineup or even have that mentality about being in the lineup. We need somebody to take ownership of it. That's a word I use a lot, ownership; and if you're going to define it and have a clear understanding of what ownership is, it's not about wearing the insignia as a member of the Iowa wrestling team or as a guy who broke the lineup. It's about ownership of the weight class where you're competing for the top spot, every time, every time out.

Q. What about 197?

TOM BRANDS: 197 vacated by Burak. We love Nathan Burak. He's finishing up his degree. He represented our program in every way that was positive, the way he lived his life, those types of things. And then he wrestled pretty tough, too. So now we got a vacated spot there. We got Wilcke and Bowman. Holloway could go down there. And we'll see what shakes out. We're going to know a lot more after this weekend. We'll know a lot more after a week from this weekend, and as we go into it, hopefully we're not doing things by committee where we're trying to decide who the best guy is and we gotta flip-flop. That's not a fun job to have. Let's get this thing solved early, take ownership of it and away we go. And then we've got good depth there for backup, but the biggest thing is that we got a guy that's a whirlwind.

Q. Could you move Brooks up?

TOM BRANDS: Brooks is an 84 pounder. We could move him up, but he'll be at 184.

Q. What's the plan with Sam Stoll this season? Is he going to be ready to go or do you have a timeline on him?

TOM BRANDS: Timeline is pretty much day to day. Is he practicing? Yes. Is he on the mat? Yes. Is he ready to go right now today? No. Is he making progress? Absolutely.

Q. So will Steven Holloway open the season at that weight then?

TOM BRANDS: Holloway is up at heavyweight right now, Steven Holloway, yes.

Q. Last year at Nationals you said your team was a long ways away from Penn State, which I can't imagine was easy for you to say. What's the off-season been like for you, for the program and how have you advanced it in the last six, eight months?

TOM BRANDS: You have to look at and analyze where you're at, and that's on a lot of different fronts. One of the things that's a common theme, I talked about it already, is weight classes. You cannot give weight classes away and win a national title, especially when Penn State has the bonus point capability, and they've got the same bonus point capability this year. They got three guys that can score bonus points, and we have to match that and exceed it. And we exceed that by getting guys to get on board, kind of like Gilman.

Gilman, the difference between his sophomore year and his junior year is he opened things up. He had a lot more bonus points last year than he did two years ago. That has to continue, and we have to have guys get on board with that with him. In addition to that, we need to have these three weight classes, and really every weight class to be in that mold, where it's not just about eking things out. And that starts in the practice room. So you said six or eight months. That's what you're talking to guys about. And you know what, winning and dominating is very simple to talk about; it's a simple philosophy. But finding those ingredients in somebody every day that's consistent, that's the challenge, and that's what everybody's challenge is. And we're in this the same as everybody else. We have the same problems as everybody else. We have the same challenges as everybody else. We're moving forward every day. We're addressing them, and it's a matter of how much this guy can communicate and drive that home and how much these guys display it in their competitiveness.

Q. And you see Gilman taking that leadership?

TOM BRANDS: Yeah, Gilman has. Gilman is what we need more of. He's what we need more of. And that's not a shot at Clark or Brooks or Meyer or Sorensen. And you know, you look at last year. You mentioned that press conference. I remember that press conference very well. At that point team wise we were fighting for scraps, because anything less than the champion is fighting for scraps in my mind. And you know, I remember that press conference was not so frustrating that way because we were already out of the team race. It was frustrating because we were 0 for 3 in the championship round, with Sorensen, Clark and Gilman. And you gotta have champions; plural, not singular.

Q. When you look at the landscape of the NCAA, realistically where is this team?

TOM BRANDS: The polls have us second, third and maybe fourth in one poll. Mostly it's second and third, I would say. Oklahoma State is No. 1. I know FloWrestling really likes Penn State as a champion. I read something they put out just recently where they like their bonus point capability. I happen to agree with the bonus point advantage. I agree with that. That's how you put good teams on the mat. That doesn't mean that we're in admiration of Penn State or we're envious of them. That's the philosophy that I was raised with, coached by Gable with, and the way that I competed. The challenge is to drive that home to these guys. And these young guys also have to buy in and it has to be driven home to them as well. It's not just our veterans getting on board with that. It's also Wilcke, Bowman, Holloway, even Stoll, coming back from a knee injury, he might be a little bit of a question, even though I like what he's looking like right now. But he

doesn't have to go and reinvent himself, but he does have to look at this thing. He was a pinning machine in high school. Continue that. Continue that.

Q. How about the roster? You really like the way they've competed over the last few weeks?

TOM BRANDS: We like our guys. We always say that. We need to grow up in some areas, and those guys know who they are. And there is more help from the roster than maybe in the past, at least the recent past where there's accountability. That's a good thing.

Q. What has Marinelli shown you in the time he's been on campus and in what way will he start the season out?

TOM BRANDS: Marinelli likes to wrestle hard. He likes to wrestle with a big motor. He prides himself in that. He's very hard on himself. He wants to be the best all the time. That's a quality that's not lost on me or something that he strives for. That's not lost on me. I can relate to that, being hard on yourself and being a perfectionist. And those are good things, and we'll see where he's at this weekend. He'll be wrestling in the Grand View Open along with the rest of our freshmen, and we'll see. And our timeline with him is see how he goes and make progress and then make the decision. I like where he's at in his thought process, and I'm reading his mind, but I'm also talking to him and I have a pulse on him as well. There's just little signs where he's kind of maybe gone more toward this might really happen this year. This isn't just something where we're going to talk about it. So giddy up, giddy up and get going. It's like things in his locker, how he talks, how he's talking to the rest of our coaching staff, things you're hearing, good and positive.

Q. Has there been a philosophy change?

TOM BRANDS: Not a philosophy change. Guys are whipping tail and taking names, they're going to be in the lineup, but it has to be right for them, it has to be right for us. Sometimes the family factors in. If you have a family that is very invested in their son's wrestling career, you want to also include them in that. We want to make sure that all parties feel good going forward. The thing about Alex Marinelli is that he has an open mind. He has an open mind, and that's one of the things that to me is a vital ingredient in winning wrestling matches. No matter how good you are, you're getting better every day.

Q. What about Michael Kemerer?

TOM BRANDS: He's been tough all the time. He's growing up more. I think the way he talks to himself in frustrated situations, he took some good steps this spring or last June, I guess, at the University Nationals. And there is a lot of good there. We knew he could wrestle. He was always a high-level wrestler. We

didn't recruit him as a wild card. We recruited him to do a job, and he embraces that as well. The funny thing about him and Sorensen is it never even came down to two guys going the same way. And I don't know if it matters really, but it probably makes things a little bit easier going forward because you're not worrying about a guy maybe getting down a weight and having to go back up or whatever. So how that worked itself out, I don't need to know. That's just something where it ended up that way, and the two of them seem to have worked it out pretty good, and they scrap in the room.

Q. I notice Penn State's back on the schedule this year. Has there been any discussions with the Big Ten about trying to protect more rivalries, especially among the wrestling giants?

TOM BRANDS: I think the rivalry thing is they give you their rival, which is like Minnesota for us. That's the traditional rival, Nebraska geographically. Wisconsin is only two and a half hours away now. And so that's probably what they're going to stay with, those regional rivalries, but you might even see wrestling go to a division. I'm not saying it will. I'm just saying there's been discussion of that. But our focus is whatever match is coming up, that's what we get ready for. Iowa wrestling is always in a unique situation with our schedule because, number one, we do wrestle the best every year, and number two, everybody gives us their best. So you know, you talk about what's our schedule going to look like, it's going to be packed every year. And this year we are at Stillwater. Five days later we come back and we have Penn State and seven days later we come back and wrestle Ohio State. So we got Oklahoma State, Penn State and Ohio State right in a row. So that's exciting for us. We're going to find out a lot about our team.

Q. And is that for the good of the sport to see Iowa, Penn State?

TOM BRANDS: Yeah. We addressed that when it's worked. It's not like when they're not on the schedule, we say, okay, they're not on the schedule. When they're not on the schedule, we work to get them back on the schedule. As a matter of fact, I made a deal with Sanderson this year. It was a different deal, but it was a side deal. He wants four pristine tickets for four of his fans. I don't know who they are. But I said, no problem. You reciprocate and we'll do it. And he said, no problem, man. So we're getting along. So we'll work it out. If it works out for both teams, and I think they owe us a charter, by the way, now that you say it. We chartered them in. Maybe the next time we're not on the schedule they charter us out.