

# University of Iowa Wrestling Media Conference

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Iowa City, Iowa, USA

## Coach Tom Brands

### Men's Wrestling Press Conference



**Q. I want to start this thing off just to honor this guy right here, Wyatt Schultz. I know that our hearts were all heavy when he passed, and I want to just say that, Kirsten, we're with you.**

This guy was -- look at that face. I mean, I wrote her a letter, and I said, he knows more than everybody, because that's how he operated.

My opening statement would be that we have work to do. This is a place where wrestling is important, it is understood by our fans, our administration, our coaching staff, and most importantly, it is understood by those guys on the roster right there, and because they know how important it is and because it's important in their lives, they know we've got work to do, and we've got work to do, and there is no automatic.

I have some concerns as always going into seasons, and that doesn't mean that those concerns are like something like an earthquake is happening, but it's just the natural concerns that there is no automatic.

This NIL stuff, COVID relief year -- we have some seventh-year seniors. Who would have ever thought that. We have a lot of sixth-year seniors, a lot more than we've ever had.

Combine the age with some NIL, combine that with some just automatically crowning you the champion in Detroit. We have to put that aside and we have to go to work and keep things front and center what need to be front and center, and that is that we get better every day.

We do it in a way that is exciting. We do it in a way that we are performance minded, that we are entertainers, that it is about scoring points and about getting the job done at the end of the day. Any way you've got to get the job done, you do that with attitude, accountability, work ethic, pizzazz and all the things that go with Hawkeye wrestling.

That would be my opening statement. We're going to be in Carver-Hawkeye Arena. We have sold a record number of

season tickets. I don't think that's a secret. That is not because of this guy or our staff; that is because of these guys and their teammates. Over 10,000 season tickets sold, unheard of maybe to some people.

Does it surprise me? I mean, we'll just say Spencer Lee and company, but the "company" may be a little bit anonymous. My message to them right now would be start to compete with your teammate a little bit, not in an unhealthy way, but he is running away with the hardware, and he's after more.

Like we talked about last year, and Terry Brands said it best at a banquet that we had, is we left nine titles in St. Louis. We took one home, and we left nine in St. Louis.

Any questions?

**Q. You talk about last spring or whatever, because not everybody had to come back. Can you talk about the process, how it was that they all came back?**

TOM BRANDS: I think these guys can speak for themselves, and I'll speak for them a little bit right now in that it was not easy probably for all of them. For some of them it was easy. The ones that maybe it wasn't easy for, it was quick.

I thought that it might take a little bit longer, but remember that when you use the word "brotherhood" and "culture" and "camaraderie" and things like that, those words that are all synonyms of togetherness, I think it probably made it easier than if they weren't together.

You'll have to talk to them about those decisions, but we love it. We love it.

**Q. Because this team is so experienced, is it any different coaching these guys? Is it almost like coaching graduate students as opposed to undergrads?**

TOM BRANDS: Anytime you close your mind and you know everything and you close your mind to wisdom and getting better every day and you think you get to a certain age, you're setting yourself up and you're violating excellency because an open mind, open ears, open eyes is important to getting better.

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No matter what you do, whether you're a husband, father, no matter how you're operating, you want to get the best grades in your classes, you want to operate the best way socially, those types of things, you've got to have an open mind. It doesn't matter how old you are.

We talk about that. We talk about that in some of our young guys, where sometimes there's a know-it-all attitude in there, and we love know-it-alls if they really do know it all, but they've got to know it all and then they've got to want to know more and hunger for more and more and more, and that's the know-it-alls we like. The ones that are hungry for more.

**Q. Since you have some sixth- and seventh-year guys, did you learn anything last year with a shortened season that maybe we see some of these guys on a match count this year?**

TOM BRANDS: You bring up a really good point, and it's a point that we talk about amongst ourselves as a staff. This season is different, and I've had some pointed conversations with some of these veterans over here that are pretty credentialed in that this is not like last year. You do not have until January 10th to get ready to step on the mat. We're going early November in an intersquad, we're going middle of November with a dual meet right here in Carver-Hawkeye Arena.

You've got to speed things up in your head. Weight control, those types of disciplined things, getting your doggone academics in order and keeping them in order. You don't have maybe as much time because we will travel and so on and so forth, and those things that come in that can be distractions if you're not managing them.

You've got to have that foresight that it is a different year. Really important point.

**Q. 184 pounds, do you know what's going to go there?**

TOM BRANDS: We have a returning starter there from a year ago and we have a returning all-American there from a couple of years ago. Myles Wilson probably will end up there. Myles Wilson is a 74-84. We have a lot of depth there, and I'm not a predictor, never have been, and we give them all neck-and-neck-and-neck. Whoever else wants to throw their hat in that ring at that weight class. And talking about Myles Wilson, we have two guys going to the U23 worlds in Belgrade, Serbia, and they leave Monday and they'll compete a week from this weekend, and that's Tony Cassioppi and Myles Wilson at 86 kilo in the U23 worlds. They're kicking it off for us.

**Q. When do you expect Tony back in the lineup or Myles after their return?**

TOM BRANDS: I mean, early November is our season, so we just moved things up a couple of weeks. I don't think they'd disagree with that, but you can ask them -- are you guys going on vacation to the beach or something after you get back from Serbia? You see that smile? He loves the mat.

Every one of these guys, they love the mat. These guys love the mat. That's the difference between maybe some years in the past where we've had guys that they tried to get out of practice as soon as possible, and these guys, we've got to kick them out of the room. We love it. It's a blast. It's a blast up there in second floor Carver-Hawkeye Arena.

**Q. Last year before some of those duals, I know it was a different year, and I don't want to call them preview matches but matches before, is that something that might continue or was that because of last year?**

TOM BRANDS: Extra countable matches is a discussion in the Big Ten Conference. Coaches have met on that. We are very much in favor of that. Don't know where it is at the administrative level. It's a good idea, and it's also a good idea to follow the football model where these freshmen get limited competitions where they don't trigger a year of eligibility. Only makes sense. It only makes sense.

**Q. What's the latest on the new facility?**

TOM BRANDS: New facility going to the board of regents in February. We're very excited about that. Fundraising, design and planning are together. We still have some work to do in both those areas, but costs are coming together. We're going to know how much it costs, and we're going to put a bow on it, and then Bobby Telford is going to run out there with a shovel and he's going to stick it in the ground right over there.

**Q. I'm not asking you to speak for your guys specifically, but how is a year after a national championship where you have the target on your back different than when you're the predator, now people are chasing after you?**

TOM BRANDS: If you're not a predator in this sport all the time, if you're not hungry for more and you're complacent, it's probably time to take your shoes off at center mat and kiss the mat goodbye. I want to say that we operate the same -- we try to win a national title every year.

But there's differences. There's differences. I have some things that go on in our room with some of the new rules that have come up with NIL, and just because somebody is going to pay you money to be a spokesman does not mean that you have arrived forever. You have to continue to earn it. The riches that you have earned will only grow -- and I'm not talking about material riches, I'm talking about all riches. You know, thinking bigger. Like why not win two Sullivans and three Hodges? That's not calling Spencer out. I think he's thinking that way, and I know he's thinking that way.

I'm not singling him out, but that's how you've got to think. And when you're a predator, you don't think about, oh, there's a target on our back now. You're still on the prowl.

**Q. The women's program, the application process has ended. Do you have a timeline or anything looking forward on the women's program, maybe when a coach will be named?**

TOM BRANDS: I think preliminarily we are in that stage that you talked about, and we'll go through it and then we'll bring a couple, three, four, five on campus, whatever it takes. Then we'll figure it out. It's close. Probably the clocks will change by the time we make (a decision), but that's a question for Barbara Burke. She's the lead on all this, and we're excited. I'll tell you that, we are really excited about what's on the horizon.

But today is about these guys. Today is about these guys. But there is excitement with the women. It's awesome.

Thanks, appreciate it.

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