



CBI notebook: Cowboys eye deep postseason run

By **ERIC SCHMOLDT** Star-Tribune staff writer | Posted: Thursday, March 15, 2012 12:00 am

LARAMIE — A senior-laden Wyoming team entered the College Basketball Invitational knowing it was one of the top teams in the field. But the program hadn't won in the postseason in nearly a decade.

North Dakota State started a roster full of underclassmen hoping to surprise.

It's not shocking, then, that the two went toe to toe for 40 minutes before the veteran team held on and advanced.

"It's awesome," UW senior center Adam Waddell said. "I've played in the Mountain West tournament, I've played in the CBI and I've only won one postseason game.

"To get this one under our belt and to potentially go on the road and maybe get another and maybe run the table even — who knows? — it's a good feeling."

Waddell was referring to a Cowboys' victory over New Mexico in the conference tournament in 2009. They hadn't won a postseason tournament game since the 2003 National Invitation Tournament.

And the last time they took part in the CBI, they lasted just 40 minutes in a loss to Northeastern.

On Wednesday, despite the fact that the Pokes uncharacteristically allowed more than 70 points and turned the ball over 17 times, felt different.

"You're coming in and you don't really know what kind of competition you're going to see, especially a team you haven't seen all year," Waddell said. "It can be a little nerve-racking, but it's good to get this one off our chest."

The Bison didn't go so far as to simply say they were simply happy to be here, and they weren't taking consolation in scoring more points on the Pokes than any other team. But the CBI appearance is just the beginning.

"What you saw there ... is a junior-college team, eligibility-wise," Bison coach Saul Phillips said. "They're going to be good, and they're going to be heard from again. You saw them here first.

"We're sitting up here probably a little less crushed than most teams. We know what's in front of us."

The Cowboys do, too.

They'll head to Washington State on Monday to play a Cougars team that topped San Francisco to get to a .500 record on Tuesday.

The Pokes entered the tournament with the top ranking of the bracket in terms of Ratings Percentage Index. And with a postseason win under their belt, they can't help but aim high as the tournament moves on.

"We obviously gave up a lot of points, but teams didn't want to play us in our conference this year," Waddell said. "We're going to come out and compete. I know we are."