



COWBOYS

## Wyoming finds motivation to compete in CBI



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At the beginning of every season, college basketball players fill their heads with postseason aspirations, of legacy-setting March moments in a certain widely discussed collegiate tournament.

It isn't the College Basketball Invitational.

No, in the hierarchy of postseason basketball invitationals, the NCAA Tournament houses the elite, the NIT picks off the heralded snubs, and the CBI scrounges for the leftovers. Coaches don't enter a season by telling their team, "It's CBI or bust."

In fact, Indiana athletic director Fred Glass went as far as saying, "[We're Indiana. We don't play in the CBI.](#)"

Maybe the Hoosiers don't, but the Cowboys sure do -- three years in a row.

The question, then, is how does a team motivate itself for a tournament that certain others wouldn't even consider entering? It isn't the best field, or even the next best. So does it even really matter?

Ask the Cowboys, and it's a matter of perspective. It may be the CBI, but it's also another basketball game -- an opportunity to step on a court with particular guys one more time and deliver.

For Nathan Sobey, this tournament is about last chances. The senior guard sat on a stage after Wyoming's loss to UNLV in the Mountain West Championships last Thursday and said another game as a Wyoming Cowboy was all he prayed for.

He didn't specify that it had to be in the NCAA tournament or the NIT. Sobey enjoys playing this game with these guys, and he isn't ready to give it up.

"It's great that we're back on the practice floor, getting ready for another game, another opportunity to play with this group of guys," Sobey said Monday. "I couldn't be happier right now."

For Jerron Granberry, this tournament is about a long-awaited debut. In four seasons at North Florida prior to transferring to Wyoming, Granberry never got the opportunity to play in the postseason. Seasons went by, and each year ended with a disappointing thud.

It may be late, but at least it's not never.

"It's awesome. Our whole goal was to make the postseason," Granberry said. "Unfortunately, we didn't make the NCAA or the NIT, but this is the third-best tournament to go to and you're playing against quality opponents. It's great that I get to play again and Nate gets to play again, and hopefully we'll get these guys ready for next year."

For Josh Adams, this tournament is about a mindset. Wyoming's sophomore guard, who has scored at least 20 points in four consecutive games, understands the way other teams may categorize the CBI.

They see it as a consolation prize, a cliff note, or even less if you're Indiana.

To approach it that way, however, would be a disservice to Wyoming's seniors. It would represent a disrespect for the rest of the field, including the Texas A&M team Wyoming will go against Wednesday at 6 p.m.

Win or lose, this season's ending hasn't matched the visions dancing in the Cowboys' heads a few months ago. They're disappointed with the result, but unwilling to let it affect the future.

The season isn't over, and Wyoming won't stop fighting until it is.

"We have two seniors, and we're just going to play as hard as we can as a team," Adams said. "These are the last games they might ever play, and this is the first time a Wyoming team has gotten a postseason bid three years in a row. It's a great privilege to be able to play there, and it's an honor.

"We're just going to play hard and take it as an opportunity, rather than a downfall."

## Cowboys Tracker

**NEXT:** Wyoming at Texas A&M, College Basketball Invitational, 6 p.m., Wednesday

**MOTIVATION:** Despite the disappointment of not being invited to the NCAA tournament or the National Invitation Tournament, Wyoming's players are finding motivation to continue playing in the CBI.

**HE SAID IT:** "It's great that we're back on the practice floor, getting ready for another game, another opportunity to play with this group of guys. I couldn't be happier right now." -- UW senior Nathan Sobey.

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