



PRESS RELEASE

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LIFE UNIVERSITY WOMEN'S WRESTLING FINISHES SEVENTH AT NAIA NATIONALS - CROWNS THREE ALL-AMERICANS

Jamestown, North Dakota, March 22, 2019 – The Life University Women's Wrestling team finished seventh at the 2019 NAIA Women's Wrestling Invitational, as the program crowned its first three All-Americans.

The 2018-2019 competition season marked a historic milestone for women's wrestling in the United States. The NAIA introduced women's wrestling as an invitational sport, marking the first time a collegiate governing body officially recognized women's wrestling as a sport.

A sport in Invitational status is different than a Championship sport in several ways, including eligibility, qualification procedures and awards systems.

As a first year NAIA Invitational sport, athletes who placed 1st through 4th are considered All-Americans, while those who finish 5th through 8th are considered Honorable Mention All-Americans. When the sport gains Championship status, these awards will shift to mirror other Championship sports.

The Life U Women's Wrestling team had nine women make the podium (this is tied for third most in the tournament) with three All-Americans and six Honorable Mentions. Each of these ladies has earned a place in women's wrestling history as one of the first to take the podium.

Tyesha Topps (109 lbs.), Zoe Wight (143 lbs.) and Erica Sotelo (136 lbs.) earned the first NAIA All-American honors for the program. Sotelo advanced her way to the finals, which also marked the first finalist in program history.

Wight earned a fourth place finish at nationals. She started the day with a pair of pins in the opening rounds, but fell in the quarterfinals to eventual national champion Marilyn Garcia 6-2. Wight responded with three technical falls before falling in the third-place match to claim fourth. Wight was awarded the Manuel Gorrarian Award, which recognizes the athlete who records the most falls in the least accumulative time. This marks the first time in women's wrestling history that this award has been given.

Topps placed third in her bracket. After a tech fall victory in the quarters, Topps also fell to the eventual national champion, Alleida Martinez, in the semifinals of the invitational. She responded with a tech fall and then a 6-2 decision in the third-place match. She has been with the program since its initial season.



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Sotelo ended the year as the national runner-up in her weight class. Her day started with back-to-back tech falls, and a 7-0 decision in the semifinals gave the Running Eagles their first national finalist. Sotelo fell in the finals by decision.

Destinee Rivera (5th, 155 lbs.), Jordan Nelson (5th, 170 lbs.), Faye Cherrier (7th, 101 lbs.), Amber Garriga (8th, 101 lbs.), Aysia Cortez (8th, 130 lbs.) and Morgan Shines (8th, 143 lbs.) each earned Honorable Mention All-America honors at the tournament for their efforts.

"While the seventh-place team finish isn't as high as we had anticipated, nine women making the podium speaks to the depth of our program, as well as their tenacity and ability to overcome adversity," Women's Wrestling Head Coach Ashley Sword stated.

The Running Eagles finished with a total of 102.5 points in the event to finish seventh. Menlo College claimed the national title with five individual champions and 230.5 total points.

About Life University

Founded in Marietta, Georgia in 1974, Life University is a health sciences institution most known for its chiropractic program, the largest single campus chiropractic program in the world. Life University is regionally accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to award baccalaureate, master's and Doctor of Chiropractic degrees, and also has programmatic accreditation through the Council on Chiropractic Education (CCE), the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND) and the Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education (CAATE). The mission of Life University is to empower students with the education, skills and values necessary for career success and life fulfillment, based on a vitalistic philosophy.

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