

MLB

Buchholz joins Blue Jays after another uncertain offseason



AP photo

In this Aug. 16, 2018, file photo, Arizona Diamondbacks starting pitcher Clay Buchholz works against the San Diego Padres during the first inning of a baseball game.

DUNEDIN, Fla. (AP) — Clay Buchholz had reason to wonder if his major league career was coming to an end. For a second straight offseason, he entered spring training without a job.

"It was almost like last year," Buchholz said Wednesday. "Where you didn't know if that was it, and you weren't going to play anymore, or what was going on."

It turned out there was still some interest in Buchholz. The 34-year-old right-hander has pitched brilliantly at times in his career — but he has also dealt with injuries and even spent time in the minors last year. Now he's with the Toronto Blue Jays on a one-year, \$3 million contract that includes plenty of inning-related performance bonuses.

Buchholz pitched a decade with the Boston Red Sox, showing flashes of greatness but struggling with consistency. He threw a no-hitter in 2007 in his second major league start, then went 2-9 with a 6.75

ERA the following year. He was an All-Star in 2010 and 2013, and in the latter of those two seasons, he went 12-1 with a 1.74 ERA, eventually helping the Red Sox to a World Series title.

But even that 2013 season included injury problems, and only four times has Buchholz made more than 18 starts in a season. The Red Sox traded him to Philadelphia after an unimpressive 2016, and he made only two starts for the Phillies before an arm injury that required surgery.

He reached a minor league deal last March with the Kansas City Royals. Then he was released and signed a minor league contract with the Arizona Diamondbacks. He made six starts in the minors in all.

"I had to swallow a lot of pride last year to do that," Buchholz said. "Sort of felt sorry for myself there for the beginning part of it, but got over that pretty quick, and I'm glad I did it. It helped me. I learned some things last year about myself that I

didn't really know, and became a little bit different pitcher."

Buchholz made it back to the majors and pitched well for the Diamondbacks, going 7-2 with a 2.01 ERA in 16 starts. Then he went down in September with more arm trouble and faced another offseason of uncertainty.

His deal with the Blue Jays means a return to the AL East, where his former team is coming off another World Series title. The New York Yankees are also formidable. It's a division Buchholz is familiar with — but now he's at the other end of the spectrum, with a Toronto team that lost 89 games last year.

"You have to have a short memory in this division, with the good or the bad, because there's always tomorrow, and each game that you play in division in the AL East, it's a tough game," he said. "You have to know how to take the good with the bad, and go about your business the next day."

PREP TRACK AND FIELD

Wabasso's Carl Swedzinski signs letter of intent to compete in track and field at SMSU



Photo courtesy of Joe Kemp

Wabasso's Carl Swedzinski poses for a photo with his family and coaches after signing his National Letter of Intent on Tuesday to compete in track and field at Southwest Minnesota State University.

NCAA MEN'S BASKETBALL

Northwestern snaps 10-game skid, beats Ohio State 68-50

EVANSTON, Ill. (AP) — Dererk Pardon had 20 points and 13 rebounds as Northwestern snapped a 10-game losing streak with a 68-50 win over Ohio State on Wednesday night.

Vic Law and A.J. Turner had 10 points apiece and Pardon was 8 for 10 from the field as the Wildcats (13-17, 4-15 Big Ten) won for the first time since beating Indiana 73-66 on Jan. 22.

Keyshawn Woods had 15 points and seven rebounds for Ohio State (18-12, 8-11), which lost its second straight without

Kaleb Wesson. The Buckeyes have dropped five of seven.

Wesson was suspended indefinitely by Ohio State last week for an unspecified violation of athletic department policy. The 6-9 sophomore leads the team in scoring (14.6 points) and rebounding (6.7). He had 22 points and eight rebounds in the Buckeyes' 63-49 win over Northwestern on Feb. 20.

Ohio State was blown out 86-51 by Purdue on Saturday in the first game of the Wesson suspension. Things weren't any better at

the start of this one.

The Buckeyes missed their first 14 field-goal attempts on Wednesday before C.J. Jackson scored on a driving layup with 11:09 left in the first half. Still, they trailed only 12-4 at that point.

Ohio State was 4 of 27 (14.8 percent) from the field in the first half for a season-low 17 points.

Northwestern wasn't lighting up the scoreboard either — 11 of 28 (39.3 percent) from the field — but took a 28-17 halftime lead.

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Osing said. "There's good wrestlers here and it proves that Cortez and I can't do it alone, there are good wrestlers in our room and good guys to practice with and it's a great honor to represent SMSU but it's an even better honor to represent them in Cleveland in front of 62 other Division II schools."

Arredondo, who will be competing in his second consecutive national tournament, had a similar approach but different result to qualifying as he did a season ago. At the NCAA Super Region 3 Tournament on Feb. 23 in Moorhead, Arredondo used a pair of pins in the first two rounds before earning a 5-4 decision victory against Augustana University's Colin Ayers in the semifinals to set up a bout in the championship. Going against St. Cloud State University's Jake Barzowski, Arredondo was able to earn a hard-fought sudden victory in overtime to take home his first regional title.

Arredondo said he knew it was going to be challenging going against Barzowski, but it was exciting to be able to have another opportunity to wrestle with him after falling to him in the beginning of the year.

"Of course it was exciting, I wrestled Barzowski at the beginning of the year in the first tournament. I knew what he was going to bring and that it was going to be a war, and of course beating someone who beat you earlier in the year is exciting," Arredondo said. "I can't really put it into words right now, it's just been exciting."

Osing's path to the national tournament was just as challenging. After receiving a first-round bye, Osing fell in the quarterfinals and into the wrestlebacks. From there, he started to piece together a string of victories, winning three straight to reach the third-place match, where

he would go on to defeat Wisconsin-Parkside's James Lehman — who Osing had lost to in the quarterfinal earlier that day — with a 7-1 sudden victory to clinch his spot in Ohio.

Osing said he knew if he put himself in a good position and continued to battle, he'd have a great chance to avenge his loss to Lehman and added it was a great feeling after he realized he qualified for the national tournament.

"Just watching him throughout the day, I knew he was starting to get tired whereas I have a good gas tank and am able to hang in matches that guys usually don't think they should be able to, so I just kept battling and battling and took a great shot in overtime," Osing said. "He tried doing a little roll out of it and I caught him on his back. Looking back, I probably should have gotten the pin but at that point, I was going to nationals. It was one of the best feelings I've ever had in athletics; I've had a lot of great memories, but punching my ticket to nationals to avenge a loss is a great feat."

Coming off the mat, Osing said Arredondo was one of the first there to congratulate him.

"Cortez is a great leader and our captain and he's more of a silent guy, he'll really only say something to you when you really need it," Osing said. "After that first loss I had at Regions, he didn't say much to me, he just came over and slapped me on the chest and said, 'Battle back.' He was one of the first people after I ran off the mat to come give me a hug and he texted me the next morning and said 'I'm going to remember that bloody smile for the rest of my life,' because I was bleeding in my mouth and I had given him a big smile and hug. I gave him a big hug after he won his region title, so it's awesome."

For Arredondo, his first trip to the national tournament was about gaining as much experience as possible. With that under his belt, he's handling his second stint just like any other match he's prepared for hundreds of times before.

"Last year was obviously my first year, so I didn't know what to expect, I was just going in and letting it be another tournament," Arredondo said. "This year I have a little more experience and with it being my last year, I have an understanding that yes, it is the national tournament but it is just another tournament at the end of the day and I've been wrestling my whole life, so it's nothing new."

Going into the national championships, SMSU coach Jesse Nelson said they're not really changing anything up in practice and are just trying to maintain a sharp focus and keep things loose with their routines.

"Honestly, it's been pretty upbeat and short practices, but obviously we're working on staying strong and just keeping our conditioning in check," Nelson said. "There's not a lot to do, making sure our weights in check and it's more mentally focusing and keeping them moving and bodies loose."

Arredondo said Nelson does so much for his wrestlers on and off the mat and it's constantly shown on a day-to-day basis.

"It's been great. It never

goes unnoticed; I mean, maybe people outside of the room people don't really see it, but Jesse's instilled a lot of confidence in me," Arredondo said. "He's never really given up on me and he's pushed me to the best I can be and he's just constantly working on his end to get better for himself, which correlates to us, so it's just a trickle-down effect of getting better every day."

Osing added that Nelson has taught him so much throughout his time at SMSU and is thankful for helping him get to where he is today.

"I can't even count how many lessons he's taught me. He's just built me more as a man and a wrestler than anything else, he's always talked about putting your academic life first because we're here for our academics, and then social life and wrestling," Osing said. "In the past, I've put wrestling before everything and now I'm starting to figure it out and have figured it out that it's academics, then social life and wrestling. It's pretty easy to buy into his program you've just got to jump 'All In'. We have that on the back of our shirts this year and it's something pretty important to I know him and us seniors, to jump 'All In'. We jumped 'All In' this year and so far, it's worked out for us."

On the other side, Nelson said both Arredondo and Osing have had a tremendous impact on him and they'll be incredibly

hard to replace after this season.

"They're both seniors and I love them both to death like they're my own kids. They're going to be very hard guys to replace; not only are they great in the room, but in the classroom, off the mat, high character individuals both of them," Nelson said. "We're going to miss them a lot, they both have a pretty special place as all of our guys do, but these guys leaving our program this year is going to be a tough one on us and myself. We've built a very good relationship over the last five years."

Arredondo will begin his national championship quest on Friday morning and will face Skyler Lykins from Colorado School of Mines, who enters with a record of 11-6. The first session begins at 10 a.m. on Friday, followed by another session at 4 p.m. Session III will start on 9 a.m. on Saturday followed by the finals at 6 p.m. later that day. All times are Central.

Arredondo said he's

looking forward to going against some of the best around the nation one final time and giving it his all on the mat.

"I'm looking forward to wrestling great competition and know you're always going to run into the best of the best," Arredondo said. "It's always exciting to see how you end up at the end of the year, especially closing out my career. I'm looking forward to putting my best effort out and whatever happens, happens."

Osing will face Pitt.-Johnstown's Brock Biddle (23-2) in the first round. Osing said he's looking to reach the podium at the end of the day.

"Standing on the podium," Osing said. "A national title would be great, and it's not that I doubt myself, but it's a long tournament and things happen but I'm really excited to get on that podium and have an All-American asterisk next to my name in the room. It's going to be a special feeling to celebrate with coaches and family."



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