

Written by John Crumlish  
Monday, 08 October 2018 07:18

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**Colin Van Wicklen, Akash Modi and Alec Yoder** had never been to a World Championships, but they were selected at a training camp at the U.S. Olympic Training Center for the 2018 World Championships in Doha, Qatar, later this month.

**Sam Mikulak**

and

**Yul Moldaur**

, Van Wicklen's former teammate at Oklahoma, will be their teammates in Doha. Van Wicklen told IG that he and his teammates are primed for medal-winning performances. "I thrive on big moments," said Van Wicklen, who placed eighth all-around, third on vault and third on high bar at the U.S. Championships in Boston in August. "I dream of high-pressure situations because that is where the competitor in me comes out. I was born for this team, this competition and this moment. I'm ready."

Van Wicklen, who turned 23 on September 22, said he is equally eager to hit the Doha podium with the rest of the U.S. team. The team has the physical and emotional cohesiveness needed to challenge the world's best, he said.

"We are the underdogs, with a lot to prove," Van Wicklen said. "This is a young team with tons of experience competing in the NCAA. We know what it means and feels like to be a part of a team. If we can go out and hit 100 percent, we are going to put pressure on a lot of teams. And when pressure is applied, anything can happen. This team has heart. Each and every one of us fully believes that we can win a medal. And that belief can take you a long way."

The U.S. men's team finished third at the 2014 Worlds in Nanning, fifth at the 2015 Worlds in Glasgow and fifth at the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio. Mikulak is the only member of any of those three U.S. teams slated for Doha; he competed in Nanning and Rio.

No team competition took place at the 2017 Worlds in Montreal, where Van Wicklen was an alternate for the U.S. team.

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Van Wicklen said the U.S. squad for Doha includes a formidable mix of all-arounders and gymnasts whose best apparatuses should assure an optimal team total.

“With Yul and Sam, we have two of the best all-around gymnasts in the world,” Van Wicklen said. “Both have the potential to win an individual all-around medal. Akash, Alec and I are strong all-around gymnasts, but will be used on our strongest events to provide the highest team score possible. Every guy brings something special, and that is what makes a team competition so incredible to watch and be a part of.”

Van Wicklen said he is content to perform where and as needed in Doha.

“I believe that while I am an all-rounder, I will be used on my strong events,” he said. “I am looking forward to bringing solid scores on floor, vault and high bar to help the team as much as I can. I am also excited about potentially competing on rings for Team USA in prelims and hopefully the team final.”

With team success a priority, Van Wicklen is also keen to achieve at least one personal objective in Doha.

“My main goal is to win a team medal and make a statement to the rest of the world that this U.S. team is for real,” he told IG. “Another big goal I have is to get into the vault final and win a medal. I firmly believe that I challenge for a position as one of the top vaulters in the world and this is my time to prove it.”

IG will be on hand in Doha, where competition begins October 25 with men’s qualifications.

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