

2023 NCAA Wrestling Championship

Friday, March 22, 2024

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

Richard Figueroa

Semifinals Media Conference



THE MODERATOR: We have with us now Richard Figueroa, and would you like to give us opening comments about your semifinal match.

RICHARD FIGUEROA: A lot of good positioning, be selective, go at the right time, went at the right time. So it all planned out.

Q. There were times this year we didn't know if you would be in the starting lineup. Could you describe what this year was about? Was it health reasons? What were the details how this year progressed?

RICHARD FIGUEROA: I would say health reasons and mental, I would say. Just, you know, from last season going undefeated and then having tweaks on my body that I'm not used to. Just kinda put me in a downfall, I would say, which is my fault. I should never do that because that's just me beating myself when I lost to those guys.

Got over that, got help, went to rehab, and started being myself again, "stunner man," you know?

Q. Obviously watched you in California and everything else. You've been around a lot of top-level guys especially at ASU, having Zahid Valencia. What does it mean to you to follow in somebody's footsteps also from California doing the same thing at the same school?

RICHARD FIGUEROA: It's great. His dad coached me in high school for the award teams, and I made every award team with his dad. So just having that discipline and seeing it at the college level, it helped me tremendously and being able to follow in his foot steps. He's like a big brother to me, so it means a lot.

Q. Your finals opponent is going to be Drake Ayala. You guys wrestled in high school. What will you take from those matches that you'll apply to the finals?

RICHARD FIGUEROA: It don't matter. We're in college

now. It's a different story. My goal is to dominate, win and win.

Q. What was your game plan going in, obviously you know Noto is an aggressive guy, he does a lot of great hand fighting. What was your game plan going in? What did you see that opened up that takedown for you?

RICHARD FIGUEROA: Being myself, my Coach said when you let it fly, let it fly, and I was like, you're right, let's take this guy down as much as I can. That was my plan and it worked.

Q. Who helped you get over those things or did you just adjust yourself with these doubts you had this year, these tweaks?

RICHARD FIGUEROA: I would just say my coaches. Pritz, Perry, Zeke, Frank, Thompson, our athletic trainer, being supportive, having a family and my teammates bringing me up. These guys know when we lose they know how to kickback and I asked them a lot and by asking that it made me believe again.

Q. Richard, your first tournament at the NCAA. What are your thoughts on not only being an All-American but making the finals?

RICHARD FIGUEROA: Feels great. My whole life I've been a winner, and my mom instilled that into me since a young age, going to Tulsa at seven years old, going for Trinities, Arena Worlds and making teams on the Worlds. Go out there with confidence and being myself and, you know, I got to represent the Sun Devil family, and that's what I came here to do.

THE MODERATOR: Okay, thank you very much.

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