

# 2023 NCAA Wrestling Championship

Friday, March 22, 2024

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

## Jesse Mendez

### Semifinals Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: Jesse Mendez has joined us for the 141 Championship. Jesse, if you could start with general comments about your bought.

JESSE MENDEZ: Going into it, I knew he was going to be tough, super strong, but I just had to get to my offense and I probably shutdown a little too early but, you know, I had no intent of wrestling in the wrestle-backs. I wanted to be in that finals match and take it home.

#### Q. How much better are you than last year?

JESSE MENDEZ: You know, I like to think about wrestling myself from a year ago to like three years ago and just thinking about how the match would go. I think I've grown so many levels just with mentality and wrestling techniques. I think there is a flip in my brain. I want to stop wrestling these close matches and start blowing them open. It's a little harder to do in the semi-finals, but in the early rounds getting bonus points for my team is huge and that's just like a flip in my mindset and getting to talk to Sasso a whole bunch this summer. That guy is so knowledgeable and I wish he was here with me, but it's all under circumstances he isn't, but that dude stuck by my side through the whole thing and I'm grateful for him.

**Q. So you and Beau wrestled a couple times this year and something he mentioned is when you lose you feel like you have more to work on and when you win you feel like you have less. Do you feel like after beating him you changed your mentality of what you need to do and how are you going to prepare for him between tonight and tomorrow?**

JESSE MENDEZ: I don't think there is much of a change of mindset from the last time I went up against him. This time it's trying to widen that gap. I train the same way no matter what. When a loss does happen it stings and I will think about it, but I train the same way all year-round.

**Q. So you had a barn burner of a match there in the semifinals, obviously a guy you know was ultra**



**dynamic and he's getting into a position where he's very comfortable. What were you doing to make sure you were in position to defend the things he was really good at late in the match?**

JESSE MENDEZ: I mean, I know where my strengths are at, and I'm pretty good at upper body, and I can kind of feel when a throw is going to come. I was just waiting patiently, and when I saw the opportunity for a leg pass I took it, burned a little bit of clock and, under. That's just kind of where it took me. I'm pretty dynamic in my defense so, you know, just got to stay composed, wrestle through the position and once you stop wrestling that's when you let points come up so just keep wrestling for position.

**Q. Why do you have such a good connection with Sasso? What are the things he was helping you with?**

JESSE MENDEZ: I've always looked up to coaches and adults as a kid, and I never really had a peer, someone my age, someone on my team that I could look up to, and I think it has a lot to do with mentality.

I just don't feel a lot of people have the same mentality as I did. Sass is one of the main reasons I came to Ohio State. I want to win titles, I don't want to just take part in it. I think me and Sass gravitated toward each other. He kind of took me under his wing, and I think I have become a better man, a better leader and a better wrestler because of Sass.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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