

2023 NCAA Wrestling Championship

Friday, March 22, 2024

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

Rocco Welsh

Semifinals Media Conference



THE MODERATOR: We have with us from the 174-pound Championship, Rocco Welsh from Ohio State. Can you start us with general comments about your match?

ROCCO WELSH: It was hard for me to get to my attacks, you know. I had to butter him up a little bit, wait till the end. I probably should stop doing that because the whole match I knew I could get to my attacks so I need to get over that hump of waiting to the end. I think that's happened five times in the last two weeks so, yep.

Q. Rocco, you started the season out in redshirt. You weren't going to be in the lineup. How did that mentality switch really change for you going throughout the year when you realized it was go-time and you needed to step up for Ohio State?

ROCCO WELSH: I don't think my mentality changed too much. Ever since I was in high school, my goal was to win a national title as a true freshman. For the last couple of years that's been my focus. So when I got to campus in June, my focus was on winning a national title even though Carson was in the spot. Obviously he's my teammate so I was just going to help him get prepared, but if it was my turn then I'm ready to win a national title. So I don't think my mentality changed too much. It was just like the opportunity became reality.

Q. Rocco, last year when we talked after the Pittsburgh Wrestling Classic, you were ready for college. How have you been able to transition into college so smoothly? We looked at Ty Watters. He was able to get through as an All-American. How were you able to transition so well?

ROCCO WELSH: Ever since I was in middle school going to Young Guns, Quest, the training in Pennsylvania is just top notch. Ever since I was young, my mom and dad always gave me the best opportunities to always be my best so I was blessed with that. It's like a college style practice, so it was pretty easy to be prepared. And when I got to Columbus in June, I was getting beat up pretty good.

I was in my own head because I've never really been beat up like that. But after being consistent for a couple weeks I started to get some takedowns; so just consistency.

Q. Jesse Mendez talked about the influence of Sammy Sasso, how about for you?

ROCCO WELSH: Sammy Sasso is one of my biggest role models and the main reason I came to Ohio State. Since I was young, we have always been friends and he wanted me to come to Ohio State and Columbus. And he's a huge influence. And after the tragedy that happened to him, he's still giving back to the team just as much as if he was competing for the Buckeyes. Before every match, he's giving us tips and stuff, and it helps me a lot. So Sasso is the man.

Q. In the finals you're going to have Carter, a guy that you've been able to see a lot of, but you also got your hands on him this year. How much do you take away from that first meeting you had with him?

ROCCO WELSH: Yeah, before the match, I remember being super nervous. Like, can I hang with a three-time national champ? I remember like watching matches on him. I think he majored Hayden Hidlay in the national semis. So I had to definitely get out of my own head and be like, screw what he did in the past, but obviously I respect him a lot. So definitely got a lot out of it, but this time I'm looking to make the right changes and get to victory.

Q. Speaking of that match, you were his only match during the year that he did not get bonus points against somebody. You were pressuring him late in the match. What did that mean to you mentally that's going to help you prepare for tomorrow?

ROCCO WELSH: It definitely gave me a lot of confidence, because like I said, he majored on everyone. So keeping it close, I was like, dang, I can hang with the best guys in the country. So my confidence is definitely up and after Big Tens and this tournament, my confidence is up. I know what I need to do differently to win the match so I'm ready to do it.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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