

2023 NCAA Wrestling Championship

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T-Mobile Center

Aaron Brooks

Semifinals Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: We have with us now in the 197-Championship match, Aaron Brooks.

AARON BROOKS: Felt great, praise the Lord. I put my faith in Him. Just wrestling; another day of work and it doesn't define you. It's peaceful.

Q. Aaron, you have transcended a lot of your goals that you wanted. One of them, obviously being a world champion that you've done, and that's probably the next thing on your list, but you also went up in a weight class this year. How does that help you with accomplishing your goals in going up in a weight class?

AARON BROOKS: It's been a blessing. I grew, so people were like, well, 97 must be nice, but you want it but it's not like that. Wrestling new guys, new competition. Going up a weight class makes you stronger. These guys are harder to move, but I've gotten a lot stronger doing it so I love it. It's been a blessing.

Q. Aaron, how has -- you've been through this tournament many, many times. How has your preparation changed throughout the years?

AARON BROOKS: I think just my mindset. Once again, I know it's a simple answer, but it's the truth, my faith. Doing things with God is my favorite thing to do. He puts me in situations where it tests my faith. Each year, different season, He's showing me something new and that's exciting. I think if you look at it from a worldly perspective, I don't know, right, it's a lot of pressure on yourself. But when you're like, okay, what is God showing me this season in my life? Not just season in wrestling. So taking leaps of faith this year.

Q. We asked Carter this same question, but you're on the brink of setting some history here, not only for collegiate wrestling but Penn State, as well. How do you keep that out of focus while keeping focused on what you need to do?



AARON BROOKS: I think you just don't really think about it. You don't let things consume you. Like the world want to consume you; labels, titles, accomplishments. When you're not defined by that stuff and you're not chasing that, it sets you free once again. I'm here to serve the Kingdom, not this world. So it sets me free.

Once again, it is a battle, right? Because it's constantly being pushed in your face on social media. It's always someone trying to remind you what you're doing, but it's like, hey, I'm just blessed to be doing this.

Q. Obviously you have faced Trent three times in the past and will face him tomorrow night, you guys both moved up weight classes this year. What is exciting about that match tomorrow night?

AARON BROOKS: Wrestling, you know? Wrestling.

Q. There has been a lot of champs that are all around this entire weekend, a lot of champs in your room as well. Everybody has a chance to talk to different champs. I talked to a few and they said when they wrestled in this tournament they wrestled free because they knew they were going to win. You talk about your mentality and your faith. Is that how you feel when you go out on the mat and it allows you to push for more points because you know you're putting yourself in the best positions?

AARON BROOKS: Everybody has something that works for them. Whatever you believe in, you know, if your faith is wholeheartedly in it, you know, you'll take risks. For me, it's the Lord. I know He abides forever. But for some, it's confidence in training, confidence in preparation, and coaches, which I have all that, but for me, going out there, I don't expect to win, I don't expect to lose. I focus on being present. I know I say it a lot. You never know what's going to happen. I've lost matches and grown closer to God and I've won matches and strayed from Him. And that sets me free. I don't like to put expectations on myself. Just from the past, I would do that stuff and if it wasn't 8-0, 7-1, I'm squeezing more than I need to. So just enjoying it, because it comes and goes.

Q. How much do your parents mean to to you?

AARON BROOKS: My parents brought me into this world. My parents have meant a lot to me when it comes to my upbringing, first and foremost. We didn't have much, and I was blessed to have a stepmother that came in and was willing to help my father out. And just seeing how all three of my parents, even my mother, always taught me hard work. Never let me quit. There were many times I wanted to quit wrestling, after Super 32, like that week. Seventh grade I'm cutting ten pounds and I lose and I want to quit, they don't let me quit. But just looking up and seeing them in the stands, it's been a journey. So being a part of this with them is something that I would like to take it in as a blessing.

Q. Aaron, you guys have clinched another team title again here. What does this mean, anything to you, your final hurrah?

AARON BROOKS: These are my brothers. We work hard together, we laugh together, it's a brotherhood. I've been blessed to be a part of a lot of teams like that in this Penn State program, and we work hard and we put trust in our coaches when it comes to our training so it's a blessing.

Q. Aaron, one thing that separates wrestling from other sports is the mental toughness aspect. What's one thing you've learned about mental toughness throughout your career at the college level?

AARON BROOKS: Honestly, I had a coach back in middle school. I talk about him a lot. His name is Coach Chris Bentley. He passed away. People ask me what's that tattoo on your left arm. That was his club. And many coaches, I think about, Coach Rusty, Coach Adam. That's something they taught me at a young age. We didn't have a lot of technique, but we did a lot of hard work. Mental tests; you know, I'm beating a guy in the room. I get at takedown. He's like, next takedown goes home. I take him down and he's like no takedown. And I freak out, as a youngin', but I've been put through that stuff my whole life. That's why I said, it's all Glory to God. He's been molding me for these moments. Coming to college it let us you practice more and more.

Q. You and Trent, outside of college, have had a long history, back to Fargo finals. What's it mean to look back on the rivalry that you and him have had, how it's gone full circle, high school, 152 to 197 and you finishing your college career?

AARON BROOKS: I've always said this, Trent is a great competitor, but it goes to show that he went the distance. I

think a lot of guys, they're really good in high school, and this is never me dissing anyone, but if things don't pan out in college, whether it's lifestyle, injuries, training. So I think it's cool to see he's also been around and still doing his thing and he's a hard worker.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much.

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