

2023 NCAA Wrestling Championship

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Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

Greg Kerkvliet

Finals Media Conference



GREG KERKVLIIET: I feel good. The one thing I kept telling myself over and over again is, I want to be tough, but God doesn't just make you tough. He puts you in positions and gives you opportunities to be tough. I just told myself, it's another opportunity to go get tough and prove to myself that I can be tough. I think I did that.

Q. You used the word "tough." I'm not sure people would doubt that in you. Why would you think that you were not tough enough?

GREG KERKVLIIET: Just because I know that I can be tougher than I've shown in the past. Maybe not by myself, but through God I can be.

Q. When you came out of high school, you were like a 220-pounder. I'm not sure what your size and dimensions are. Could you talk about literally your growth into this heavyweight?

GREG KERKVLIIET: It's been slow and gradual. I think I put good weight on over the years. But I didn't want to stack on too much fat. I think I've been able to grow and put a good amount of muscle on.

Q. What is your weight?

GREG KERKVLIIET: 250, 255.

Q. This has been a few years in the making. First you were seventh. Then you went to fourth. Then you were runner-up last year. Now you won. When you talk about being tough, over the last few years, what was the toughest challenge you had to overcome to get to where you are today?

GREG KERKVLIIET: Well, there was some growing I had to do. And not necessarily growing in wrestling, but I had to grow in my faith. Like, I've always been religious, but there's a difference between being -- having faith and then living faith.

I'm not perfect, but I think I'm doing a better job of at it. I'm just going to continue to keep trying to grow.

Q. Looked like you got to his ankles a couple times early on. You've wrestled him before. Is that something that you came in knowing that you could maybe exploit? Or was it just what he ended up giving you?

GREG KERKVLIIET: It just ended up showing itself. He's a tough opponent. He's a great wrestler. I just had to be on my A game.

Q. As you know, a lot of people think that the heavyweight class at this time of the world, whatever, in the sport, it's never been better. Have you ever seen how you place yourself amongst these heavyweights currently? And what do you want to do to separate yourselves from the Stevesons and the one we've had in the past couple of years?

GREG KERKVLIIET: No, I never really thought about that. Those guys are all great wrestlers, but I'm not really trying to -- I don't really want to be remembered as a great wrestler. I want to be remembered as, like, a good person who tried to do right by people. I'm not too concerned about that.

Q. In a previous question, you documented the previous years and how close you have been. What does it mean now to understand that you're at the top of the podium?

GREG KERKVLIIET: I think those previous years just make this that much better for me. It feels good.

Q. Do you have any plans in freestyle now that college is done?

GREG KERKVLIIET: The Olympic Trials is coming up soon. Throw my hat in there. See what happens.

Q. Last time you guys wrestled, it was a closer score. It was 5 point. This time you widened the gap. What was the difference for you? Was it preparation? Was

it something you were feeling from him? What would you attribute to that?

GREG KERKVLIIET: I was just trying to pressure him more, work on my hand fight and make sure he doesn't get to his ties. I think I did a pretty decent job of that. I think it fell into place.

Q. How did you like wrestling first, right out of the gate?

GREG KERKVLIIET: It's awesome. I couldn't have planned that any better. Having to wait until the end, it kind of blows a little bit. Just get in and get at it.

Q. You used to be preparing for your match while your teammates are wrestling. What's it like without the pressure of knowing you don't have to compete coming up?

GREG KERKVLIIET: It's awesome. Usually I have to control my emotions and hold it in. But now I get to just be free, be happy and cheer those guys on.

Q. You have one more year left. Do you plan on coming back?

GREG KERKVLIIET: We'll see. We'll see.

Q. With this national title, is there a sense of relief finally achieving this? Or does it feel like a new beginning, or just everything you worked for and you're just happy to be where you are right now?

GREG KERKVLIIET: I think in the past it would have been a sense of relief, but I kind of went into the match with the mindset of it doesn't really matter if I win or lose because I have a platform. And I'm going to use this platform to glorify God. So win or lose, I think I did my best to do that. It just happened that the cards fell my way.

Q. Why was Penn State the best place for you to go?

GREG KERKVLIIET: That's where God had me. That's where the cards fell. Started at Ohio State. Those guys are great. I don't have anything bad to say about those guys, but one thing led to another and I found myself here. And I'm thankful for it.

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