

2023 NCAA Wrestling Championship

Saturday, March 23, 2024

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

Jesse Mendez

Finals Media Conference



JESSE MENDEZ: Bartlett, I have respect for him. I know every match will be a scrap. Just trying to find my offense. I knew this match wasn't going to be settled on the mat. We're both pretty good on bottom. Just finding that one score.

He got real close at the end. But I wanted it too bad. Wanted it too bad to give it up. And I almost got taken down, kept wrestling ended up getting the takedown later in the third period.

Q. How much does your family mean to you?

JESSE MENDEZ: This is my party. This is my biggest support system. I wouldn't be sitting here without them. They've sacrificed so much to me. I'll be forever grateful.

Q. What does it take to win these close matches? How did you develop the skill that you are successful at winning these close matches?

JESSE MENDEZ: I think I was just raised this way. I grew up competitive. I have worked so hard at such a young age to lose matches like that. It would be a waste to lose a match in a period like that and not wrestle through it.

I think I put too much effort into the room. I do every little thing right. Just keep wrestling hard and that's what I do.

Q. It was apparent from the start of the season that you were going to be ultra competitive. You looked great up at 141 after coming up from 33. What was the change in you that allowed you to let your offense go? And how did that transition into that match in your final match of the season?

JESSE MENDEZ: I think it's just mentality. Leaving that national tournament last year, wrestling the most minutes in the tournament -- I think I wrestled something like 65 minutes with four triple-OT matches -- I think I just took some time to sit down and be, I've never been a guy that wrestles close matches.

I want to be dominant. I want to be wrestling for a Hodge Trophy. You can't get a Hodge Trophy winning it by one point. I think that was just a mindset switch.

Q. You lost to Beau back in February, but you beat him at the Big Tens. Now you beat him in NCAAs. What did you learn from that match-up that got you these past two wins in these two matches against him?

JESSE MENDEZ: Let my gun sling. I put too much work into not wrestling to my full capability. I said it in an earlier interview, I fear no man. Regardless if he's got a Penn State singlet on. Whatever singlet, I've got to wrestle the same. So that's what I've been saying.

Q. In the semifinal interview you talked about Sammy Sasso. Now that you've won could you reflect on what Sammy Sasso meant to you?

JESSE MENDEZ: That was my main training partner when I first got here. He took me under his wing pretty early on. He's super like-minded as me. I really do wish he was sitting up here with me at the top of the podium in another weight class. But he's going to be back. We're going to be back to back. It's a scary sight to see.

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