

# 2025 NCAA Wrestling Championship

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Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Wells Fargo Center

## Jesse Mendez

### Semifinals Media Conference

141 Lbs

THE MODERATOR: We are here with Jesse Mendez, a 2-1 victory to advance to the national championship match. Jesse?

JESSE MENDEZ: Yeah, give a shout out to Beau. It's been one of my favorite rivalries I've had in college, and he's helped me jump a lot of levels, just knowing I'm going to have to go to war with him every time, the Big Ten's nationals. Having a competitor like that, it helps me. It's a tough one. It's a war out there.

**Q. Describe that rivalry a little further. You know you're probably going to face him, like you said, three times a year. When you're in it, how does that feel to know you've got this guy that's going to be tough every time?**

JESSE MENDEZ: When you wrestle a guy like that many times -- I don't even know what the score on the rivalry is at at this point, 3-3 or 4-4. I know what he's going to do, he knows what I'm going to do. So it's trying to find an edge.

It's going to be a war every time. It's a battle of attrition, technique. And I've got to be really disciplined and focused on those matches against him.

**Q. Looked like we had a takedown, maybe, and then it didn't happen and you had to go into overtime. How do you approach that? It doesn't always go your way, but it certainly looked like it was an attempt that looked like you had what you might have needed.**

JESSE MENDEZ: Yeah, immediately after that you kinda got to expect that they're going to take the takedown away. There is no point in celebrating because my hand hasn't been raised yet so.

Immediately I walked to the corner, and Jagers said, They're not going to give it to you. That's fine, I'll go get the next one. It's keeping that mentality that even if they



don't give me this one, I'm going to go get the next one. If it goes to OT or ride-out, I'm going to ride him, he's not going to ride me.

That's the mind-set that you have to have. You can't go skipping out the arena just because you kinda had a takedown. It's gotta be set in stone, your hand getting raised.

**Q. You won the NCAA title last year. Tough to do it the first time. Obviously a different thing to do it this time. What motivates you to get back?**

JESSE MENDEZ: Yeah, this is just a goal I set out when I was super young. Nobody goes into high school saying I want to win one state title. I want to win multiple.

Same thing with college. I wanted to be a four-timer. I wanted to win some Hodge trophies. But I didn't do it my freshman year. And I didn't have a lot of respect for being an All-American until I did it.

This tournament is a meat grinder. There's guys that are really, really good wrestlers that don't place at this tournament. To be able to make it to the finals again, two years in a row, it's a blessing. I'm super grateful.

**Q. You talk about not wanting to do it once. Looking at the next level, you've had high goals in freestyle and at the world-type level. How does that help as a person going through the college years that you have goals outside of just this season?**

JESSE MENDEZ: Yeah, it helps a lot. I mean, I want to be an Olympic champion. I want to be a world champion. I want to have more national titles than Jagers, hold it above his head a little bit. I want to be the best in the world, and the NCAA title is a good step in that direction.

**Q. How do you define Jesse Mendez as a wrestler?**

JESSE MENDEZ: I would say work ethic. My guys over at RWA, they're the ones that instilled this tough work ethic in me, you know my parents. I'm gritty and I'm technical. I'm not going to give up, no matter what. I had six seconds

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and I did it. There is no task too tall. I just put my head down, and I go do it, no matter what it is.

**Q. Would you take us through that first tiebreaker. He did an optional start and then he tried to ride you out and then you got the escape. What were you thinking in that moment? And then when you knew you had to get the ride out, how you knew you had to process that?**

JESSE MENDEZ: I would say our game plans were similar, other than the optional starts. That's Penn State for you; they've got some tricky tactics, but I had so many times going out-of-bounds that I got a feel for the optional start and when I could close off. It's the same thing. It's a hustle ride. When I got 30 seconds, and the guy on the bottom knows he has to get out in 30 seconds, who is tougher, basically, who wants it more. That's kinda how it is, you gotta hustle.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Jesse.

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