

2025 NCAA Wrestling Championship

Saturday, March 22, 2025

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Wells Fargo Center

Jesse Mendez

Finals Media Conference



141 pounds

Jesse Mendez (Ohio State) d. Brock Hardy (Nebraska), 12-9

JESSE MENDEZ: First of all, I want to shout-out Hardy. He's a class act, man. I would consider us good friends. Man, he's just one hell of a competitor. He's going to go; I'm going to go.

He took the lead early, 5-0. But I stayed poised, I stayed to the game plan and I got to my attacks, and it ended up in my favor.

Q. 9-8 in Big Tens, 12-9 here. What is it about you guys that leads to shootout matches like that?

JESSE MENDEZ: Yeah, I mean, I think it's something to do with clash of styles. He's got really good defense. He stings my ankles. I sting him. I think it's a mindset thing. I think we both want to put points on the board.

When you get two forward-mindset type of guys I think it's just inevitable there's going to be points. That's why I enjoy competing against him so much. Yeah, I mean, he'll be one of my favorite competitors throughout college.

Q. When you go back to back, you get this question. Which was more difficult, winning one or winning the second one? And talk about the difference of approach. Obviously coming in this year people knew that you had been the champion. It puts you in a little different spot, right?

JESSE MENDEZ: Yeah, I mean, I'd say it's hard to repeat. I think guys become complacent once they win that first one. You reach that milestone and you kind of become complacent, figure there's a target on your back.

But that didn't happen to me. I stayed super focused. I had a mindset that I was hunting, not being hunted. But I took some bumps in the road. Took three losses, two at

Big Tens. Got fourth at my own conference, and that led a lot of people to doubt me.

But I saw a quote earlier, it was like two days after Big Tens, is why I seek validation from a world that crucified a perfect man. That stuck with me. And I stopped wrestling for the spectators and started wrestling for the people who pour into me and wrestling for myself.

Q. Last year in the press room your parents were in here I don't know if they allow them this time you went right to them. What is it about your family that motivate you?

JESSE MENDEZ: They probably are not in here because they got banned or something. Those are my biggest supporters. They're my ride or dies. The amount of sacrifices just that, that my family is made for me, I would never be able to repay it.

I'm sitting here because of them. This isn't a one-man army. I have a lot of people behind me. Those are my ride or dies.

Q. You talk about having big goals, not just NCAA, not just this season, but this is being a step towards other things. How quickly do you start looking at other things? Do you give yourself a chance to enjoy this a little bit and move on to freestyle, move on to something that might be a little different than what you just went through this week?

JESSE MENDEZ: Yeah, I mean, this tournament is a meat grinder. It's a quick turnaround. We have U.S. Open at the end of April, right on my birthday. NCAA titles are cool, but I have aspirations to win world titles, and I want to make the world team this summer.

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