

2025 NCAA Wrestling Championship

Saturday, March 22, 2025

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Wells Fargo Center

Mitchell Mesenbrink

Finals Media Conference

165 pounds

Mitchell Mesenbrink (Penn State) d. Michael Calieno (Iowa), 8-2

MITCHELL MESENBRINK: I'm just really appreciative of where I'm at and the people that surround me. I said this yesterday and Carter said this, it's a lot more than just me and him towing the line. It's pretty much our whole life.

Those are people included and the great men and women and your parents and your family and your friends and all the people that you surround yourself with and that I've been so lucky that God has surrounded me with, to be able to do something like this.

Q. You've talked in the past about measuring your progress in terms of the process and just getting better every day. How do you measure that if it's not in the results? Like, what is your measure of, I've gotten better between now and last year?

MITCHELL MESENBRINK: I think even more not just last year, like your whole career. Right? When I was saying all that, I didn't want to go too long on an opening comment.

But, like, I've been here so many times watching. And my dad will call them ignition events and stuff and get me pumped to want to do these things and to have fun like this.

I think that right there is the epitome of what you're not measuring your success or your development as a wrestler or a man or a human in results, in a win. But each time it was like, okay, since I was 5, it was, okay, you lost in this, let's keep going. Maybe you won but you can still have stuff to learn on.

That's a big thing. Like Coach Casey said to me last year, you don't have to lose to learn. You can keep winning and learn along the way. I'll keep learning from that stuff.



I think that's how you make -- it's less of a quantifiable result -- points or first place or a second or third place. It's less quantifiable, more qualitative, stuff like that, descriptions of how you're getting better as a wrestler.

Q. What did you learn over the first five times you've wrestled Michael Caliendo that helped you win tonight? And what was different with this match compared to other ones?

MITCHELL MESENBRINK: It was a specific opponent and just keep on getting better. Man, it's so awesome to be able to have those people there in your corner. My parents and my girlfriend and my family, my siblings. And then I look over in my corner, and I've got the best coaches in the entire world. It's, like, that's what -- is how I can not even make it a thing about how many times I wrestle a guy. Just keep getting better and better and better.

Q. Is this kind of a bittersweet moment for you after what you endured last year? Got to the Finals and you lose in that heartbreaker there to David Carr?

MITCHELL MESENBRINK: Yeah, it stinks. As it was written, right, that's -- when I lost last year, AB, Aaron Brooks really helped me with this. I went in the back and I said, dude, I can't believe it.

Sometimes you get to this -- I don't want to say this arrogantly -- but you get to a level like this and it's almost like you feel like you were tricked when you lose.

That was what I felt like in that moment. I was like, shoot, dude, this doesn't even feel real. I felt like I was tricked.

But what has happened is needed to be where I am today. And there's really no point to keep going on that. It's just keep letting that level you up.

Q. You talked about how you were appreciative of Mikey wanting to battle at the Big Ten Championships. And lately he has closed the gap on you. What has changed or what has he done to close that gap?

MITCHELL MESENBRINK: Yeah, I mean, I don't know



that there's much of a point of talking about other guys and their skills. I feel if you have a wrestling mind or you've watch enough wrestling, you can kind of watch along those times of what he was doing. And you can see that he's done different things to try to beat me. Maybe that's not stretching himself as much because I can burn guys if they're going to try to come get me too much.

You can make it kind of pst, pst and make it seem like you're going. But sometimes I can't get around there, if it's not too, too far extended. But that's the fun part of this, is just keep on getting better and enjoying it.

Q. In addition to being a national champion you've built yourself a pretty good Hodge Trophy case throughout the season and kind of cemented that tonight. What would it mean for you to win that honor? And obviously you have your teammate, Carter Starocci, too. What would it mean to see him do it after five years?

MITCHELL MESENBRINK: Yeah, that would be sweet. I think we have to, you know, realize a lot of this -- the sweet thing about wrestling is it's not -- and what I've tried to do in my whole wrestling career is take it out of the judgment of others.

So you can watch and it's, like, you don't have to be a master referee to score my matches. You can score them off of, okay, that's a takedown. Okay, that's maybe blatantly stalling, right? Stuff like that.

But what is the Hodge Trophy? It's a judgment award off of people that get to vote and stuff. There's a bunch of different criteria for people to vote in that.

And I think another thing that Aaron Brooks has helped me a lot too is not being of this world. You know, this is a very temporary existence for an eternal one. So I'm not going to let myself be swayed by a judgment of however many mass of people it is.

Obviously it would be freakin' sweet. Walking into AWA, there's two Dan Hodge trophies sitting on the table there. And I've done that -- I've seen that since 2011. So, yeah, it would be really freaking sweet to get that. But at the end of the day it's not everything.

Q. You talked about philosophy and psychology and even today. Was there any specific mindset you took that was special to this weekend to maybe help you not think about last year, just keep those outside factors that you've been talking about kind of separate from the event in front of you?

MITCHELL MESENBRINK: There's a lot of, you know, philosophical terms you can put in there. And a lot of, I mean, cardinal virtues, stoicism or Aristotle or Plato or all those guys, like a lot of those things, courage and temperance and justice and discipline and all those things.

There's this quote, I read this book, "The Wager," it's about these seamen that circumnavigated all around Cape Horn and went thousands and thousands of miles. And these people were like, you know, it's very few times does come out of -- does not come out of. So success equals, like, being fearless, courageous, disciplined, cunning, smart, stuff like that.

I think those are things we've seen transcend history in champions and in leaders, and my coaches and my parents and my family, there's no shortcoming to that, they're all that. And I've been able to learn that, not only in a philosophy book from the leaders -- moral exemplars is what it's called in philosophy. Like, I have them in my life that do it.

Q. You talked about it early in the press conference about how you used to watch this event with your father growing up. Just tell me, what does it mean to you to finally be a national champion?

MITCHELL MESENBRINK: I think the main thing is -- it's going to sound ironic, it's not all about being a national champion; it's about your performance.

I'm so lucky to have been brought up through that through AWA and, most importantly, my dad. And then go to Penn State and even more so it's about performance.

If I wouldn't have went out there and brought it, then, honestly, I'd rather lose and I'd rather bring it losing.

So at the end of the day, people keep asking about, you know, making the sport more likable. It's like you got to go out and get it. You have to have people that want to go out and get it.

Maybe it's not just like, you know, throw around, you know, do whimsical things, but being a savage, going to get it and make it exciting. We're gladiators out there.

You see how many people are watching it. People want to see people scrap. They want to see people fight. But if it's like a one-on-one, we're just going to stand there, you know, that kind of makes me want to puke. I don't really want to watch that.

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