

# 2025 NCAA Wrestling Championship

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Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA  
Wells Fargo Center

**Roger Reina**  
**David Taylor**  
**Scott Goodale**

Media Conference



**Q. Roger, this is your last season coaching, transition year. What's it been like for you to go through the season with this group of athletes and know that at the end of it you were going to be hosting the NCAA Tournament? Had to be quite an experience for you. What was that like?**

ROGER REINA: It's a big mix of emotions, but I think what we've done in terms of our succession plan, with the head-coaching position at the University of Pennsylvania, I think it's been very thoughtful, with the support of our athletic director, Dr. Wren. We have Matt Valenti who is Penn's all-time winningest wrestler, a two-time NCAA championship who will be taking over as head coach come April 1st.

What we've done and accomplished by announcing that is just a very clear, transparent game plan in terms of who was going to be doing what when. All of our alumni, our donors, supporters know. All our recruits and families know. And most importantly our athletes know.

With that, I think we had a tremendous year in terms of growth. Week in, week out, we think our team has been competing at better levels. I think we've been knocking on the door of top-15, top-10 level things. And I think our group's ready to start kicking doors in instead of knocking on them.

**Q. What is it going to take this weekend or in the future to unseat Penn State from where it is in college wrestling?**

SCOTT GOODALE: I don't know. That's a really good question. I think we probably all sit up here and that's kind of our goal, what we want to do. And we'd love to be in that position one day.

The sport is changing. There's no question about it. College athletics is changing. Need to get on board with those changes and make some things happen. And your administration has to be on board with what you want to do.

It's hard. It's getting the best guys in the world. It's getting

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Scott Goodale, Roger Reina and David Taylor.

SCOTT GOODALE: Excited to be here. In our backyard, not as close for UPenn but being Rutgers just 45 minutes away.

Exciting time of year, pinnacle of our sport, national championship at this level. Again, fired up, ready to compete. Excited for tomorrow at high noon. And, again, glad to be here, good to see everybody.

ROGER REINA: I would just say as a host, welcome to Philadelphia. You're in the hot bed of wrestling from a scholastic, high school, collegiate standpoint. More colleges wrestle Division I in Pennsylvania than any other state.

And obviously the city here welcomes all kinds of championships in all kinds of sports. We love our sports. We love wrestling in this area. And our team is extremely excited to be competing here at home as we host this.

So I know that in 2011, when we hosted, there was record set for attendance, there was a record set for media coverage. And I expect there will be some more records set this weekend. So super excited, welcome to Philadelphia.

DAVID TAYLOR: And I think the same. The national tournament is the pinnacle of all wrestling. I've wrestled and been part of all the events around the world, and there's nothing like the national tournament, the excitement, the fan engagement and team following.

Just excited to be here ready to go and looking forward to getting started.



the best guys in the world to come to your institution and want to compete. And it's putting together a plan not only from your college athletes but your senior-level athletes and maybe even levels less than that -- your local sports club and things like that.

It's a huge mountain to climb right now, at least where I sit. I can tell you. That's the ultimate goal where you want to be.

Recruiting, retention, financial backing, all that stuff now matters. It's just not wrestling, it's across the board in college athletics. That's what it's going to take. And it might take a little bit, to be honest with you.

ROGER REINA: I think what Coach Goodale said is spot on. Regardless of the era in any sport, recruiting and retention is the key. And then there's the element of development, right?

With this, before our eyes, changing environment of college athletics across all sports, innovation is part of the game, too, right? Not only being able to keep up with the curve, but how do you get ahead of the curve?

But I think these are kind of timeless things. I think if you talked to John Wooden in basketball decades ago, he probably would have said very much the same things.

But there's levels to this. What's being done at Penn State with Cael and his staff and the team is remarkable. And yet, I think is inspiring, too, to programs across the country.

I tip my hat to them. And yet I think the formula is very much the same as it's always been, to be honest.

DAVID TAYLOR: I think we laid out a plan when I got to Oklahoma State of what we were going to do to be successful. And I think first you've got to surround your guys with the best talent in the world, developing world level RTC which we've done in a short period of time.

You've got to recruit. You've got to surround your program with the best individuals. And it takes time. It takes development. It takes hard work. This is not a six-month job, nine-month job. This is a 12-month job. If there were 13 months in a year, it's a 13-month job.

I think it's every day making progress, chipping away. Think about being an Olympic champion, you don't just wake up become an Olympic champion. It takes a long time. It takes day-in, day-out effort. For the coaching staff it's the same mentality and philosophy I brought to Oklahoma.

I think our focus is being the best program we can be, giving our student-athletes the opportunity to perform the best they can, surrounding them with the resources that they need. And in doing so we're focus on just what we can do.

**Q. David, your first year. What's it been like, stressful, fun? I'm sure you're busier than you ever imagined. What's it been like for you?**

DAVID TAYLOR: When I got there May last year, it's been crazy. In some ways feels like you've been there for 10 years. Some days it feels like we just got there yesterday.

I just think every day we go to work and we're just trying to help our guys get better wrestling, help our guys live a better lifestyle. Help them to lead them to a championship mentality.

And that's everything. That's not just how you wrestle. It's how you live your life. It's how you think, how you perform, how you train, how you recover.

I think when you do that, I mean every day we get to go to work it's a blessing. We get to go in there and help these guys get great at wrestling, help them become better student-athletes.

I've enjoyed every second of it. There's definitely times that you go to bed -- maybe that day's a little bit stressful. Maybe it was very fulfilling. But you get to lay down and you get to wake up the next day and you get to go do it again. Every day you get to try to make a difference in people's lives.

I think that's why I desired to take this job. I felt like it was a way I could impact lives at the highest level. It's just been very fulfilling.

And excited to be here at the national tournament. And this is year one, it's exciting to focus on the present right now. Excited for every day moving forward.

**Q. You were talking the other day about how this has been a successful year regardless of what happens this weekend. But when there's so much emphasis on the NCAA Tournament, I guess, how do you view program success with these three days relative to the other four months?**

SCOTT GOODALE: We're going to be judged on, especially in our state, we're going to be judged on these next three days, no doubt about it.

It's really two departments. We had a really good duel

meet season. We're in the thick of a lot of really great duels. Our arena is packed every single night. That's success. We won a lot of big duels. That's success.

Now you come to the individual part of the season. It's still a team tournament, but it's the individual part of the season and we're going to be judged on how many guys on the podium, are we going to have champs, All-Americans and all that stuff. I realize how important it is.

This is my 18th year coming to the national championship. And it gets harder and harder every year, the talent level gets harder and harder every year.

But I know how we'll be judged. I know the New Jersey fan base. I know what that's all about. It's about these next three days.

Can't let our guys get caught up in that. It's got to be laser-beam focus. And the task at hand starts tomorrow at noon. And that's all we can really control, control what you can control.

But I understand what this tournament means to our fan base. I understand what this tournament means from a recruiting standpoint, the outlook on getting guys to come to Rutgers. It's an important three days, no question about it.

It's not going to take away from what we did early on. It's not going to take away from our attendance and people who are excited about the sport in our state and around our state. It's a great wrestling atmosphere. It's going to continue to be. Things are getting better and bigger. So we're excited about that.

But we understand that this is the next event and it's a huge event. Biggest event on the calendar.

**Q. David, question about the takeaways you and the team had from the Big 12. Also just a little bit about the tragic fires that were in Stillwater this past week. A, did it affect some of the people in the wrestling community that are there in Stillwater? And just the thoughts as people that were part of the community going through that.**

DAVID TAYLOR: I think Stillwater, we had some adversity with the fires. It was really high winds, and I think there was a power line that went down, and just those two things kind of make for not a great combination and the fires started. It was moving really fast. At the time, they were moving really fast. It wasn't as much of an impact, then started to slow down. There were areas in Stillwater that got burned up pretty good.

Dr. Cook, he's our academic advisor, he lost his house. It's a reality check to the things, being grateful every single day. I know they're struggling right now. Obviously we're there to support them. And I think it's a way to continue to get stronger together as a community and support people.

I think it was tough. It was a tough period of time. Our guys are not sleeping in their houses. They're staying at friends' houses, all hands on deck, making sure our guys are safe. And Troy Spratley was out in his dozer pushing dirt to try to divert fire away from his house. It's crazy. Obviously you do what you can to make sure you're protecting your loved ones.

I think obviously as a community we're rebounding and moving forward.

Obviously from the Big 12, I think it was a great tournament. It was a great tournament for us. I think we wrestled really well, scored a lot of bonus points early in the tournament, put us in a great position. We had some tough matches in the finals.

I think our guys needed those matches. I think they've been very disciplined and very focused in areas they needed to improve on, and our team's energy is really good going into the national tournament. And now I feel like they're really ready to wrestle.

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