

2025 NCAA Wrestling Championship

Friday, March 21, 2025

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Wells Fargo Center

Drake Ayala

Semifinals Media Conference

133 Lbs

THE MODERATOR: Our second interview for our 133 lb national semifinal is Drake Ayala of Iowa with a 6-1 victory. Drake?

DRAKE AYALA: Feels good to be back. I'm ready to flip the result from last year.

Q. Last year in the NCAA Finals, there was a lengthy review in that one that slowed that match-up. You had one there at the end of the second period. What's your mind-set in the second period as you're waiting to see if you get a takedown and you're able to get the 2-point near fall before you go to the third period?

DRAKE AYALA: It's actually funny because I was thinking like, dang -- like I felt like I was getting to him, like he was getting tired a little bit, and I was coming on, and he was letting off. And then that review hit.

And I wanted the review, but it kind of took a while, so I was like, dang, we need to get going, we need to get going.

But my coaches are always preaching to me, hey, you're not going to get these points. So I was prepared for the worst, and luckily it came out as 3 points. And I capitalized in the last 8 seconds, I got a near fall there.

Q. You talk about flipping from what happened last time. Talk about your progression as an athlete. Obviously you've grown a little bit, but you've also maybe made some changes in what you do and how you approach things. What would be the difference this year based upon the experience you've had in the past?

DRAKE AYALA: I think that I've just kinda grown up a lot. I said that in another interview, too, but I feel like I'm maturing, I'm growing into a leader, I'm growing into -- just a man.



Me from last year, this very seat last year to now, it's just night and day different. It doesn't matter the weight class. I said at the beginning of the year, I wasn't coming up to 133 to throw my hat in the ring, I'm coming to win it all.

Q. You talk about the night-and-day difference from your mentality and things like that. Is it more gratifying to see that mental growth as a human being as you come into this year?

DRAKE AYALA: Yeah, I think mentally I've grown up a lot, like I said. I think it's just -- I think it's evident in my wrestling, too, I feel like I'm more free. Last year I scored a lot of one-takedown matches, and today was the same thing. But I feel like today was different. I'm healthy, I'm real healthy, and I've been healthy for a lengthy period of time, which is new. So I'm firing on all cylinders.

Q. Your next match is against an opponent you know. Sometimes they come out differently, sometimes it's similar to other matches. How do you approach wrestling somebody that you've been on the mat with recently?

DRAKE AYALA: I don't know how I would approach it and if I would tell you guys that. But I think the biggest thing is I wanted this match. I didn't want to win this national title without seeing him. He made me a little nervous there in the first or second round, I'm not sure what round that was, but I'm glad he got it done. I'm glad he's in the finals with me.

Q. The sport of wrestling has a lot of emotions, high and low. How does it feel to have the high of that win? You get to be in an event where you're walking around the hallways and see the highs and lows right now.

DRAKE AYALA: I think the biggest thing is I see my brother is hurt. Last year at this very time, I rode home on the shuttle back to the hotel with Brody Teske, who came up short in the blood round against Dylan Shawver. And I just made the finals, but I didn't feel like that because he's sitting there crying on my shoulder, and that's one of my best friends.

I think the highs and the lows in this tournament. I feel for my brothers, but we've got four more matches today. So I'm looking forward to watching them scrap.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Drake.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

