

2025 NCAA Wrestling Championship

Friday, March 21, 2025

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Wells Fargo Center

Ridge Lovett

Semifinals Media Conference

149 Lbs

THE MODERATOR: Winner of the second 149 lb semifinal, Ridge Lovett, 14-8 victory. Ridge?

RIDGE LOVETT: Yeah, so I want to start off shout-out and thank you to my club coaches; my dad, Lonnie Lovett; Abel Delarosa; my high school coaches, Pete Reardon, Jeremy Zender, Luke Roberts, Dave Herndon. Those guys who were with me from when I was little-bitty to now. They mean a lot to me.

Thank you to God for all the blessings He's given me, the abilities He's given me, putting me in the spots and putting me around the right people to get where I am today.

Thank you to Coach Manning, Snyder, James Green, Tervel, Bobby Kokesh, all those guys that helped shape me into who I am today. After I left my house back home when high school was done, these guys welcomed me with open arms, all my teammates from my freshman year to now, my sixth year. Had a lot of people impact me in real positive ways. And big shout-out, thank you to them.

There's so many people that I'm missing. But if you helped me out, you know who you are, and thank you.

Q. We just listened to Caleb use the word respect when thinking about your match-ups, past and tomorrow. What's the word that comes to mind for your match-up tomorrow?

RIDGE LOVETT: Same thing, respect. I've wrestled him a few times. He's a tough competitor. He's going to send it. He's not going to hold back. We've had scraps, you know, tight matches all the way through.

I just talked to him when he was walking out. We're homies, he's cool. We're ready to go out there. He said, Hey, let's put on a show. I said, Let's do it, baby, let's run it. So yeah.



Q. Ridge, there's mutual respect there between the two of you guys. He got you last year in the semis and made the finals and won. You haven't been in the finals since 2022. So I'm curious, first of all, what the journey has been like getting back there and then what is the plan for tomorrow to bring home the gold?

RIDGE LOVETT: Nothing really changed. Stay the course. Maybe a little bit of a mind-set change, having that sour taste in your mouth, you know what I'm sayin'? Really just foot on the gas pedal. All gas, no brakes. Staying committed to what we're doing, eating right, cutting weight right.

Those are the two biggest things I had to change from high school to college, learning how to be a professional in this sport. I have had great mentors, James Green, Jordan Burroughs, Coach Manning. He's coached some of the best ever.

So I have these tools and these people around me who can help me to be great. And just really taking full advantage of it and fully diving into the sport, watching more film, working more on different things in the room, focusing on what I need to get better at in areas that I might not be the best at. And just putting myself in the right spots to win.

Q. Where do you think you're going to win this match with Caleb? Last year you ended up taking top, he got away. Are you looking to win the battle on the feet, on the mat?

RIDGE LOVETT: Well, I would prefer to win it in all three positions. But on our feet, that's where it's going to happen. In this match I was just out there -- when I was sitting with the massage gun sitting on the air mattress over there, and I was like, you know, I'm one takedown away from making the finals.

If I can get the first takedown, I'm going to win, 100%. If I can get on top early, build some riding time, maybe get a turn, and, you know, it worked out for me out there. I could have got a fall, just a little loose on my cradle.

Those are positions that are going to win national titles, win big matches, and just continuing to replicate those positions. I was saying in the interview earlier, wrestle in the match like you do in practice.

Again, I was fortunate to make that happen. Got on legs early, got a takedown, controlled the scramble when he was trying to roll, and it was just all work on top.

Q. You have been able to score more points on Shayne Van Ness than any other opponent that he's faced this season by a pretty wide margin. Is there something specific in that matchup that you've been able to exploit, or is there something else that you think accounts for that discrepancy?

RIDGE LOVETT: He's a goer. I do my best wrestling when the fur is flying. When stuff is going on, when wrestling is happening, most of the time I win those positions. If there is a scramble, a lot of time I come out on top.

He's a gamer. He's going to come out, he's going to come at me, he's going to shoot, he's going to try to score. He's going to do lots of stuff. And in those type of matches, I usually come out on top.

It's the low-scoring, one takedown, kind of grind-out matches where you can game plan a little bit, that's where I don't do as well. We've seen it in the past with Parco where after I got in the Big Tens, but before that, Coach Snyder was telling me you wrestled for 21 minutes, you haven't been on top yet. Go dive to your face and grab a leg. Figure something out. If you can get to the legs, you're going to win.

With Shayne Van Ness, I don't have to do that. He's going to come, he's going to scrap. So those work out for me. Get a takedown, get on top, score some points.

Q. I asked this of Brock Hardy. I will ask you. I know you're in a vacuum. You don't hear the outside noise, but a lot of the talk is what is happening at Nebraska? What's happening at Nebraska? Define what Nebraska wrestling is.

RIDGE LOVETT: It's a culture. Coach Manning talks about it a lot. We are a blue collar program. We work. That's what we do. Doesn't matter what the predictions are, the seeds are, the rankings are, those are all just numbers and people guessing. They look super smart when they guess it right, but when they don't, it's just a prediction.

Let all that stuff go. We built a culture that's a winning

culture. We love to do what we do. We love to be in the room. We love to go in there and scrap.

When we walk in on a match day, I walk up, look at the wall. It says Antrell Taylor, James Green, Brock Hardy. A lot of guys would be like, Oh, my God. I'm like, let's do it, baby. We're going to scrap today. Today is going to be a heater.

A lot of people aren't blessed with that opportunity. And Coach Manning has done a really good job in the years I've been there of putting together a winning culture, building a winning team. And I would be happy to think I was a big part of that.

Q. I know Nationals can be crazy, and a lot has happened in 48 hours here. At one point in the first round, you were down 8-4. Was there any panic there? What went through your mind out of the gate, especially now that you're in the finals?

RIDGE LOVETT: Yeah, that was a high-stress match. And the kid is tough. He's had some bad losses. But that kid beat Webster earlier in the year in their dual. He turned Parco. He was down 14-1 maybe and then turned him twice, I think. He has some stuff. I wasn't ever really nervous. I was like, you have to be able to push out those bad thoughts.

I look at the score, I'm down 8-4, that's when the negative thoughts start creeping in, and I'm like, oh, my gosh, am I really going to lose this match? What am I going to do? And just pushing those out and just go scrap.

There was still four minutes. We weren't even halfway through. And the first takedown that I gave up, I was this close to scoring. I had my hands locked on the double, some craziness. The kid was a decent scrambler. Came out on top on that one, got to my feet, right back in, got a takedown. Two-on-one, I got tilted. And that's all okay. I came out on top, and it's grinding, finding a way to get your hand raised.

I think it was good. Woke me up. Slap in a face. Like, Hey, buddy, you're at the national tournament. Everybody here is here to win.

That's something sometimes people forget. A lot of times people are happy just to be here. Yes, I qualified. Yes, I won some matches. Yes, I hit the podium. If my dream is to be a national champ, when stuff starts getting a little crazy, out of control, I just have to think that first match, pretend this is the finals.

Am I going to put my head down and lose and go home

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

with second place? No way. There's no shot. I'm going to go out there and fight. I'm going to go down swinging. If I go down swinging, so be it. I went out there and laid it on the line and I did what I could. I put out my best effort.

And that's all you can control is your effort and your attitude. I went out there, I went for it, I sent it. I went and scored a bunch of points, got six more points, and that's what I needed to win and got the job done.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Ridge.

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