

2025 NCAA Wrestling Championship

Friday, March 21, 2025

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Wells Fargo Center

Keegan O'Toole

Semifinals Media Conference

174 Lbs

THE MODERATOR: We welcome Keegan O'Toole.
Keegan?

KEEGAN O'TOOLE: Tomorrow night is going to be sweet.

Q. In your pre-press conference addressing the media, you said you're as good as you're going to get as far as injuries. What's the mentality you have to have to overcome that and perform and reach the highest level possible?

KEEGAN O'TOOLE: There are always fundamental things that I need to stick to, and a couple of these matches haven't been too pretty, but at the same time it's the national tournament. I don't think anyone is going to remember how easy you won or how clean it was. As long as you're finding a way to get your hand raised, that's all that really matters. Especially in this tournament.

Q. Talk about the season. You missed some time this year, and then you came back late in the season. How do you overcome those setbacks?

KEEGAN O'TOOLE: This was probably the most unideal, surprising college season in my five years here at Mizzou. So much trust is what I had to have in my team, my coaches, my athletic training staff, my team doctor and also just my teammates.

I hated sitting out, and I hated the way that I was training. As you can see out there, I'm just not -- I don't have that pop, I don't have that wild style like I usually do where I'm trying to put up points and getting wild scrambles. It's been tighter. It's been, I guess you would say, not like me.

As much as I hate that, the circumstances are never going to be perfect. I think every year here I've had something hurting. It just stinks that my final year is probably the most unfortunate in terms of how my body is feeling. But then again, it's my fifth year doing this. Obviously you only



usually get four years. So that extra year, it weighs on your body. College wrestling is not easy. And after tomorrow night, I have a very, very long time away from the sport.

Q. People talk about your athletic abilities, your wrestling skills. Talk a little bit about your determination, your mind-set, your toughness. Obviously we're talking about a challenge this tournament, and you're stepping up, which is what a winner does, right?

KEEGAN O'TOOLE: What was the question again?

Q. Talk about that part of your wrestling because a lot of times people are talking about some of the things you do that dazzle them, and this is a different part about why you're a champion.

KEEGAN O'TOOLE: I was talking to Ben Akren about this not too long ago. I said, Do you think toughness is a skill that the wrestling world has stepped away from? He said, Yeah, if you go back 20 years ago, literally it was just a contest to see how tough someone was.

So with the evolution of skill, the evolution of people getting better at the sport of wrestling, obviously that takes away from the toughness aspect. So that part of wrestling can never be forgotten about, because wrestling is a combat sport, and you're trying to impose your will and break another person.

Sometimes the technique is pretty even, and sometimes the skill level and strategy are so neck and neck that there is going to be one differing factor, it's who is willing to go the distance, who is willing to get that extra mat return, who is willing to get that one more breakdown, who is willing to wrestle for seven minutes, not 6:55, not anything less.

Obviously you can see in these matches that I've been in, it's not pretty, I'm down, or maybe it's a tight score, but you've just got to find a way.

Q. Keegan, you're facing Dean Hamiti in the NCAA Finals. What is your history with that opponent, and

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what are your expectations tomorrow?

KEEGAN O'TOOLE: We've been in the same weight class every single year. We wrestled in 2022. And obviously we had a fun match two weeks ago in the Big 12 Final. We gotta go back, get some rest. We gotta make sure the weight is good. We gotta wake up tomorrow, and we gotta be ready.

It's never easy against Dean. He's super good. He's really savvy in a lot of areas. And we got into wild scrambles. And I know the areas where I need to be to win the match, and I'm sure he knows the areas where he needs to be.

So we have to make adjustments, and then we have to make counter-adjustments of the adjustments our opponent is making, right.

So we're both hopefully making adjustments from the Big 12 Final, but who is going to make those counter-adjustments to stop his adjustments. So I guess we will be talking about that during the day. But overall the same things for me apply, the same fundamental skills, fundamental principles, the same four affirmations I repeat in my mind whenever I feel anxious, whenever I feel doubt, whenever I feel a negative thought creeping in.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Keegan O'Toole.

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