

2025 NCAA Wrestling Championship

Saturday, March 22, 2025

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Wells Fargo Center

Ridge Lovett

Finals Media Conference

149 pounds

Ridge Lovett (Nebraska) d. Caleb Henson (Virginia Tech),
1-0

RIDGE LOVETT: Big thank you, again, just like yesterday, to my mom, my dad, my sister, my girlfriend, my club coaches, Abel De La Rosa. His sons are here -- Elias, A.J. Matthias (phonetic), my boy Kaz, his dad Henry helping me get to all those tournaments when I was little, helping me develop. My high school coaches, Pete Reardon, Jeremy Zender, Luke Roberts, Dave Reardon. And just like yesterday I know I'm missing some people.

But everybody who helped play into what I've been able to accomplish my folkstyle career through club, high school, whether it was Fargo, shout out Chris Owens, Coach Delchev (phonetic), Dan Marger (phonetic), all those guys that gave up summers. (Indiscernible), getting married soon, gave up an entire summer to help me train for Worlds.

A lot of people helped me get where I am today. Wrestling is an individual sport but I had a fantastic team around me, fantastic family, fantastic partners, fans, teammates, everyone who poured their heart and soul into me. You all mean the world to me at the University of Nebraska.

Coach Manning, took me in right out of high school. Two days after I graduated I went out to Lincoln and they embraced me with open arms. Coach Snyder, that's my dog scraping in the room every day. He thinks he's so sick with those wizard kicks. But those days are about coming to an end.

Tervel, bringing the philosophies he brings into the sport of wrestling, helping make everything rational, make it easy to grasp and concepts we can truly understand and take to heart. All these dudes do so much for me -- Jon Pfeifer the weights coach. He's on the trip now, traveling with us always making sure we were all good to go. And Brandon Bradley, the new director of ops, running the cars back and



forth, shuttling doing whatever we needed him to do.

So many people. The guys at TT, the photography crew, the social media guys, all those people doing all the stuff that they do for me. I'm just truly grateful God put me in a position to where I could be truly successful, focus on the things I need to focus on. Everything else would take care of itself.

I'm extremely blessed, grateful and just thank you to all those people and everybody else who helped me to accomplish my dreams.

Q. You mentioned Coach Manning and I think this is a statement that your teammates and yourself, you made a statement about Coach Manning and this program. What was that statement?

RIDGE LOVETT: Just it's a family. They mean so much to me. They've done so much for me. I see all the negative comments, everybody saying everything online, and I almost want to freak out and respond to all of them, no matter what they're saying.

But Manning, I've never been to a practice where I thought that Coach Manning did not want to be there. He comes in every day. He brings the energy. He has his practice plan. Everybody's always saying Nebraska doesn't peak at the right times, this and that, this and that. But look where we're at now baby.

New scoring title for the school. Penn State wrestled a fantastic tournament; they have a real tough team. But we're right there. We're coming. And we built a culture and we built a team. And we're ready to make these jumps.

So extremely grateful for Coach Manning. He's poured his life, his heart, his soul into this program. He means the world to me. I know we mean the world to him. Blessed. Grateful.

Q. What did you think when he chose neutral in the second?



RIDGE LOVETT: I was prepared for that. That wasn't anything different for me. Been happening all tournament. Other guy's choice, I know we're going on our feet. Know they're not going down. I'd prefer if they went down. And made things a little more exciting, more fun for me.

But those stressful moments, that's when you build character. Tyler Weeda, my trainer, this last week we had an off day. He sent me a text, hey, do you want to come in get a mental toughness workout. Like let's do this. Yeah, absolutely. We went in there, he put me through it.

As we were doing the exercises, he was talking to me. He was, like, nobody can beat you. You wrestle the way you wrestle and you will be a national champ. You'll be on this wall forever.

Just being able to attack those stressful moments, not letting the moment get too big, letting the crowd drown out of it. When they're reviewing the call, I saw a bunch of Penn State fans throwing up 3s.

I was like, maybe I will give up a takedown right here, but nothing is going to change. I'm going to down, get out, get a takedown. No surprises, nothing surprising.

I knew he was going to be kind of dipping, dodging, weaving. It was the same thing in Vegas. He's hard to get a hold of. He's tough. He's strong. He's athletic. He's quick, and just gotta persevere and try to find a way to get your hand raised.

Q. Both you guys were talking about respect yesterday for each other and for the way you compete. I think both athletes expected a bunch of points and all kinds of wildness out there. It really came down to just a couple of situations. Could you tell us why those situations went your way and also about the level of respect that you still have for him after going through the national finals with him?

RIDGE LOVETT: With wrestling, a lot of people think that because it is a combat sport and they think there's like some animosity there.

Caleb is a fantastic kid. Last year, when we were sitting on the podium, I was sitting next to him. We were getting ready to go up there. We were sitting there chit-chatting. He's a kid just like me. We have similar goals, similar interests.

We both devoted our lives to the sport of wrestling. There's respect that comes with that because I know what I do every single day and I know how hard I work, the hours I put in, all the stuff outside of the wrestling room.

I know for a fact that he's doing all that same stuff. He wants to it just as bad as I do. And today I was fortunate to be the one who came out on top. Last year it was him. There's no animosity there. It's respect among competitors, and I want to see him do well. I know he wants to see me do well.

That's the kind of stuff, even though we're halfway across the country, we're going to push each other to be better, because every day when I'm skipping a rep -- I know that Manning puts the whistle in his mouth, I know it's about to stop, those days I stand up after a workout, I know Henson is working and he wants to win a national title. I know Van Ness is coming.

So it's that little thing in the back of your mind, always talking, always talking, being able to drown it out at the right times and being able to use it to push you forward at the right times.

All respect to Henson. Caleb is an awesome kid. He's a bad-ass competitor. It was an honor to share the mat with him four times in our career. Hopefully we get back for a rubber match.

Q. When you've been on the stage before, you've seen the highs and lows of this tournament. Describe your journey from going, you know, you're so close and now you're finally at the top of the mountain, what's that been like for you over the past 30 minutes?

RIDGE LOVETT: It's awesome. Having everybody, just to see my teammates being so happy for me because I know how hard they work every single day. And I know what their goals are. They want to be national champs. They want to go out there, accomplish their goals, make their dreams come true.

Being able to come off the mat and see how happy they are for me, it's so awesome just being able to know that the guys I put work in with every single day, the guys I room with, that I live with, all the people back in Lincoln, back in Post Falls -- shout out to my Idaho people. I had Idaho State behind me, all of them cheering me on. It's so awesome to accomplish this goal. It's a community thing. Individual sport but it's a team. This is truly the most team-oriented sport in the world.

Our individual results impact how our team finishes in the tournament, and just having my guys behind me every step of the way is awesome.

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