

2025 NCAA Wrestling Championship

Saturday, March 22, 2025
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA
Wells Fargo Center

Stephen Buchanan II

Finals Media Conference

197 pounds

Stephen Buchanan II (Iowa) d. Josh Barr (Penn State), 5-2

STEPHEN BUCHANAN II: I'd like to give all glory to God. The people he's placed in my life, the ability and gifts he's given me to be on a platform like that, it's amazing. There's no other way than looking at it as a gift.

Win or loss I ended up on top and I'm giving him the glory. In wins and losses you give him the glory. But to be on top, it means the world.

Q. You looked like you were immediately emotional after that. I believe it was your mom that came and hugged you on the stage. You already touched on it but going more broad, what's it mean to you after five years to finally getting one?

STEPHEN BUCHANAN II: You know, you get to the semifinals twice and you get denied by it, and you have to make the journey back the next morning. And you don't want to wrestle those two matches, but you do and you pull through. You're still left with this bittersweet feeling in your stomach, in your mind.

You come back the next year and the same thing happens to you. And you finally get on a new team. And you're placed around people who will pour into you, who teach you the little things that make the biggest differences. And you get on that stage and you use the things that they taught you to win, it means the world.

I mean, the work that I put in, just the amount of time that people put into me, it means the world.

Q. We talked about it a little bit yesterday, kind of throughout this season. Where do you think you are today if you didn't end up at Iowa for your final season?

STEPHEN BUCHANAN II: I don't know. God has a plan.



He put me in Iowa for a reason. I never really loved the sport. I did it because I was good.

At Iowa, I began to start loving the sport. And that changes everything about it.

Q. Tom yesterday described you as salt of the earth, was the thing that he used. Where has that persona that we've seen in the Hawkeye Center for you come from over the last season?

STEPHEN BUCHANAN II: My mom and dad, my upbringing, I can't thank them enough. They poured into me and made me the person I am today.

Q. Why was Iowa the destination for you coming after the season? Now that you actually won, did Iowa -- you said about them pouring in to you -- did they pour in to you the way you expected or was it more? Describe the experience here.

STEPHEN BUCHANAN II: It was not what I expected. I had an outside view of Iowa. I thought it was grind, grind, grind. I had people tell me I made the wrong decision.

You get there they treat you like family. Tom and Terry they pour in to you not like a wrestler but like you're their own. They care so much and care so deeply.

And I know you probably don't see things behind the scenes but they'll do everything for you. They're great people. I don't think people understand that. You have to be there and be under them, to get trained by them and learn from them. And it makes the world of a difference.

Q. You were a really big closer for the team this year. When you look back at all the duels and here you are, you have the last match for the Hawkeyes this season. Reflecting back on the season, how much do you think about that, once again, you were kind of able to put a pin in the Hawkeye season here with that win?

STEPHEN BUCHANAN II: It's like a dream, man. It still hasn't -- the emotion have hit me, but it hasn't really hit me yet. And I had a great season. That's because of the



people behind the scenes. I can't thank them enough for everything they've done for me.

Q. Can you just kind of describe your mindset going into this one? I know you defeated Josh Barr earlier in the season. On a bigger stage like this when all eyes are on you, describe what was going through your mind beforehand?

STEPHEN BUCHANAN II: As the match got closer, I got more and more nervous. As I said before, nerves just show that you care. When I got out there, they went away. And I had my corner reminding me who I am as a wrestler and what I need to do to win.

I listened and I put it all on the line because this is my last match of my collegiate career. There's so many times in matches where I feel like I haven't pushed myself to get tired. And I was tired but I kept pushing, and I ended up on top.

Q. That's a match there that you start down 2-0 but you immediately were able to get that takedown. Was that something for you that you felt like you had to go out and be the aggressor from that point? Or was that just more so situational -- you were able to see the takedown and get it?

STEPHEN BUCHANAN II: I definitely knew I needed to get something. Off the snap, he kind of fell into it. I have been working on the re-attack. He felt his hands, I was able to get the angle and finish the shot.

Just comes from the practice partners back at home, the coaches and people that poured into me, like I said.

Q. In the last two matches, we've seen that tactical side of you really win matches in different ways. How much of that has that asset, has that helped you get to the podium where you are at now at the top?

STEPHEN BUCHANAN II: I think the tacticalness definitely helps out. But also the takedowns, they make the world of difference. If you're getting takedowns and you believe in your offense, you win matches.

Q. It's fair to say that you're one of the better wrestlers in your class your whole collegiate career, but coming here -- you already touched on what Tom and Terry did for you -- but as more broadly as a wrestler specifically, how did they take your game to the next level for you to end up at the podium right now?

STEPHEN BUCHANAN II: In the wrestling aspect, it was the little things, like finishing a single hand-fighting

pressure stance. And then outside the mat, it was sleep, nutrition, what I'm doing before practices, mindset. And all those play a small piece, but as you start putting those bricks on bricks, they start building a wall. By the end of the year, you have something great.

Q. What's next for you going forward?

STEPHEN BUCHANAN II: As I said, I didn't really like wrestling until I got to Iowa. Now I started to get a passion for it. I'm going to leave it up to God. He has a plan for me, but all in all, I'm going to continue wrestling and continue this athletic career of mine until he gives me something else.

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