

# 2026 NCAA Wrestling Championship

Friday, March 20, 2026

Cleveland, Ohio, USA

Rocket Arena

## Ohio State

## Ben Davino

### Semifinals Media Conference



Ben Davino (Ohio State) d. Marcus Blaze (Penn State), 3-2

THE MODERATOR: Good evening, welcome to the 2026 NCAA national wrestling championships press conference. We are joined by Ben Davino from Ohio State.

Ben, I was hoping you can take time to reflect on the past couple days, the exciting match you just had tonight, and competing tomorrow in the championship.

BEN DAVINO: That one was electric. There was a lot of ups-and-downs mid-match. Got hit early.

They came out with a strong game plan, but at the end of the day, winners win, like I heard on the Internet a couple weeks ago when I lost to him. Winners win. I found a way. Yeah, when they tried to take that overtime takedown away from me, I just dove deep. In my mind, I was hoping they would so I could wrestle longer and beat him a different way.

An ecstatic match, and I'm excited for tomorrow night.

**Q. How long did that last five minutes break feel like?**

BEN DAVINO: I was just in my head. I was trying not to focus on what they were going to say. Like I said, I was keeping myself in the match. I was hoping they would take that away from me. Like thinking about it now, I wasn't actually hoping because I wanted that takedown, I worked hard for it, but like the middle of the match, I'm like they're going to take it away from me, and I'm going to beat him in doubles.

I was just focused on double overtime because the power of that break in that corner is different. I was ready for that call not to go my way.

**Q. Between the Big Tens and the NCAAs, Marcus Blaze has brought the best out of you. You guys seem**

**to have this little budding rivalry that's led to some epic matches. What is it about Marcus that brings the best out of you?**

BEN DAVINO: He's super hard to score on. I only got to his legs once, I think, and that was in overtime. I got there at the beginning of the first two, but that wasn't a good bite.

He's just a great competitor. He stays in really good position. He's calm. He's poised, super structurally sound, stays in a really good position. He just has all the fundamentals down that make a wrestler great. Breaking past all those things just helps me improve.

**Q. During that break, during the review, what were your coaches telling you? What were the messages you were getting from the corner?**

BEN DAVINO: Jagers was kind of just like, hey, if they're going to take this from you, you know what he's going to do. He kind of showed that in the beginning of the second when he rode me for 11 seconds. That was kind of his game plan.

I kind of adjusted to that rather quickly, and then again, I got out of bounds. I kind of tried to force a reset. Then hustled up, saw he had 21 left. Then I was just focusing on riding him. We do those situations all the time in the room. During that break, it was kind of just keeping myself mentally ready to go again because you never know what's going to happen in an independent review.

**Q. Jax was just in and talked about how you guys have wrestled, I think four times in freestyle. What has that rivalry been like, and what kind of challenges does he present maybe different than like a Marcus?**

BEN DAVINO: Yeah, I think we've only wrestled once in freestyle, but we've wrestled a bunch throughout our whole careers. No, wait, team trials, my bad. My brain is all over the place right now.

He's super funky, but at the same time, he's good technically. Like he's structurally sound as well. He's a puzzle that nobody's been able to figure out. I mean, I'm

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going to have a shot tomorrow night, and I'm super excited to clash with him again because he's a great competitor, a good person, and there's nothing better than wrestling the best in the world.

**Q. Were you surprised at all that they hit you with that stall call?**

BEN DAVINO: To be honest, I didn't even know until like -- they hit me in the second, right? I believe. I didn't even notice until after we kind of like broke.

Yeah, I wasn't super surprised. He was doing a good job holding center, and he was taking a lot more shots this time. I wasn't like -- it wasn't anything out of the ordinary, but it kind of was like, yo, you've got to get your offense going. This is your time to shine right now. That kind of helped me just push through.

**Q. I think there was the one in the sudden victory, and they gave him the point.**

BEN DAVINO: Yeah, I wasn't super surprised. I was trying to mat return him. He just had a strong base. I just had to ride through that and just focus on getting more riding time. It wasn't anything, again, out of the ordinary.

I was up there for a pretty good bit, but yeah.

**Q. So much discourse about reaction time, takedowns, wrestling on the edge, the long review times this year. Your overtime match kind of had all that. Does knowing that that kind of takedown and that kind of moment, that that might not be a guaranteed 3 points like you think it might, how does that change your mentality? How do your coaches prepare you to get through that long period and still keep it together?**

BEN DAVINO: It takes a lot of discipline, a lot of focus. Like I definitely thought I got it. I was on his ankle for quite a bit, and I secured both legs. So I definitely thought I got it.

Then we kind of scrambled out of bounds. I didn't get it. The brick went in. I was just, like you said, just staying super focused. Yeah, I was just focused on that 30 seconds because, when they didn't give it to me initially, I knew I probably wasn't going to get it at all.

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