

2026 NCAA Wrestling Championship

Friday, March 20, 2026

Cleveland, Ohio, USA

Rocket Arena

Penn State

Shayne Van Ness

Semifinals Media Conference

Shayne Van Ness (Penn State) d. Chance Lamer (Nebraska), 22-1

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the 2026 NCAA championship wrestling press conference. Tonight we have Shayne Van Ness from Penn State.

Shayne, I was wondering if you could reflect on the past couple days, the match tonight, and what it means to compete in the championship tomorrow.

SHAYNE VAN NESS: First I'd like to say thanks to my coaches, my support, my teammates, my family, and everyone who's allowed me to be here today.

Little disclaimer. I didn't have time to put my teeth in. If you make me laugh and smile, don't pay attention to this area.

I've been having a lot of fun. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that I've been lucky enough to compete in twice, three times. There's nothing like the NCAA Tournament. It's the best tournament in the world. I'm just incredibly grateful to be here. I just want to make the most of every match that I get to wrestle.

Q. You guys, especially you, are so good defensively, and yet you score a tremendous amount of points. Why do you feel that's good for your style personally and then your team overall?

SHAYNE VAN NESS: I think for us -- sorry, I didn't catch your name. Greg, nice to meet you. Thank you.

I think for us, if we are confident in our defense, it allows us to be more offensive and take more risks. I think having that strong foundation of baseline and not being afraid of guys getting in on your legs helps us to go out there and attack.



Q. I have two quick ones for you. Could you just talk about the physicality in your semifinal match. Have you been in much more physical matches than that? To get that takedown there at the end, what was going through your mind? The quick one is, if you don't mind, how did you lose your two front teeth?

SHAYNE VAN NESS: Short story is, when I was 8 years old, I walked up a slide face first in the winter, and then I bit the slide. We still have the slide, and I still have the teeth marks in it. That's the short version.

As for my quarterfinal match, that was one heck of a brawl. I loved every second of it. I said today's gift was that three extra minutes of wrestling in that match for me. I haven't been in overtime for a long time, and that's something I'm really grateful for.

Q. Shayne, can you just talk about going from that quarterfinal tight match and you have to have that clutch moment. It seemed like you wrestled with ease in that semifinal and really opened things up. Just how you're able to separate in such a tough match like that?

SHAYNE VAN NESS: I think I have an amazing staff, from our coaches to everyone that helps out. Aaron Pav is a huge part of that. Then I've got buddies and friends like Paul Fight. I have so many people around me to help me be ready.

It just feels like as the tournament goes on, I keep getting more and more ready.

Q. I know you've been close to punching through and getting to the final. What was the difference this year, and what does it mean to you?

SHAYNE VAN NESS: I think for me the difference this year is remind myself to have fun and have fun. The thing with the semifinals is it's a big moment and you get excited. I kind of let the moment be bigger than it was.

My philosophy this year was it's just another Tuesday. Today was just another Tuesday, and this is what we do.

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Q. Tell us more about how you can have that joy and that freedom in wrestling while also being able to be very aggressive, score a lot of points, and just dominate the tournament.

SHAYNE VAN NESS: I think the simple answer is because I want to. That's what I think is fun to go out there and to wrestle hard. That's fun. Winning is fun too.

If you go out and wrestle hard, then the winning will take care of itself, and that's a lot of fun too.

Q. One of the things that I've noticed about your style is you're a chameleon, whether it's a very offensive match, defensive match, and you've alluded to that. To me a foundation of that is discipline and your ability to just maintain that focus. How have you developed that craft, and how do you maintain that in sometimes some difficult circumstances?

SHAYNE VAN NESS: First of all, I must say I'm flattered by your question. Thank you very much. I think discipline, a big part of that is just consistency, and what you do every day is what you'll see out there in the tournament.

Again, it's just another Tuesday, and this is just what I do. This is what I do every day, whether it's in the practice room or here on the big stage. It's just what I do.

Q. You and Luke are staying in the same hotel room, you guys said last week, and now you're the first two Nittany Lions to qualify for the national finals. How has that relationship been with him over this past weekend, and how's the Minecraft server looking?

SHAYNE VAN NESS: It's pretty good. We're doing a hard-core run right now where we do our own hard-core world and see how we survive. Top score is like four or five days right now, so we're not very good. We're getting better.

Just that idea that we can sit there and play video games and have fun has been a huge help having Luke as a roommate and just spending time with him. This morning I made a joke with him because of music I was playing in the hotel before we left. I was like, dude, it's time to get serious. We both kind of laughed at that. It's just about having fun, yeah.

Q. First of all, congrats on making the finals. Your opponent is Aden Valencia of Stanford. What's your history with that opponent, and what do you expect in the finals match?

SHAYNE VAN NESS: I wrestled him earlier this year. He's a great opponent. I'm just looking forward to going out there and enjoying seven minutes of wrestling and maybe more.

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