

2026 NCAA Wrestling Championship

Friday, March 20, 2026

Cleveland, Ohio, USA

Rocket Arena

Penn State

Levi Haines

Semifinals Media Conference



Levi Haines (Penn State) d. Patrick Kennedy (Iowa), 18-3

THE MODERATOR: We're joined now by Levi Haines of Penn State.

Levi, I was wondering if you could reflect on the past couple days, your match tonight, and competing tomorrow for a championship.

LEVI HAINES: The last couple days have been really an amazing experience with my team, and it's been fun watching those guys take care of business on the mat. I'm just taking that energy that they have and seeing it in my matches as well.

As for my match, I have a lot of respect for Patrick Kennedy. He's a very tough competitor. He's a great guy as well, not just a wrestler. I really appreciate him and how he conducts himself on the mat and off the mat. I think he really embodies what it means to be a wrestler.

Q. You were asked at the press conference the other day what is your song of the tournament? What ended up being your song of the tournament?

LEVI HAINES: I haven't decided yet. We'll just have to wait and see. I'm a last-minute kind of guy.

Q. Levi, pin, tech, tech, tech. You're really dominating the competition. How are you separating yourself right now and make it look like you're really jumping levels even though you've already achieved so much?

LEVI HAINES: I'm just trying to challenge myself and just do better every time I step on the mat. One thing I've been really focusing on is try to get better at one thing every time I step on the mat. When you do that, you just force yourself to keep getting better.

I just think I've done a good job this tournament just being

myself and competing the way I want to compete. It's a quick tournament, comes and goes fast. I just think being present and competing the way that I want to has really helped.

Q. Minto in the finals. You've had some close matches with him. He's the one that seems to have given you the most trouble this season. How do you prepare for a finals match like that?

LEVI HAINES: I think we've both made adjustments in our game. I really appreciate guys like Christopher who always force you to get better and adjust your wrestling. I expect we both made some adjustments from the last time we met.

I think it's going to be a fun matchup. He's a tough competitor, and those are the guys who get me up out of bed every day to keep training.

Q. The finals will be your last match in a Penn State singlet. What's it mean to you? How do you deal with the emotions of that along with getting ready for a finals?

LEVI HAINES: I'm grateful for the time I had at Penn State. I don't plan on going anywhere soon, so that helps as well. Lord willing, my wrestling career will be a lot longer than tomorrow night. But if it isn't, I can say I did the best I could, hang my shoes up and know I've done my best.

I hope to give back to Penn State, Coach Cael, Coach Casey, Coach Nick Lee, they've all done a lot to help me achieve my goals and keep on getting better.

Yeah, just trying not to think about it too much, I guess. Mostly just being grateful for the time that I've had and looking forward to sticking around and helping the next group of guys come up through and get better.

Q. A lot of fans follow the team race as closely as they do you guys' chase for an individual title. Do you pay any attention to it at all?



LEVI HAINES: I don't think we pay any attention to it, but when we're out there on the mat, it's in the back of our minds. As much as wrestling is an individual sport, the team race is a lot of fun. That's what we strive to do as a team every year is be national champions.

I think our guys have done a really good job this tournament scoring bonus points to separate ourselves in that team race. I think you'll just continue to see our guys doing that.

Q. As an older guy on the team, how are you kind of handling, or have you given any advice to Blaze and Duke who dropped in the semifinals and kind of had to handle that as being someone who's been on both sides of it?

LEVI HAINES: I haven't really gotten a chance to talk to them yet. Those guys have been in those situations before, whether it's a national tournament or a youth tournament when you're a kid. It's all the same. Wrestling is wrestling no matter what stage it's on. Those guys have been there, and they've been able to take care of business before. I don't expect anything different.

I hope they're proud of the way they competed. They both competed hard and were in some really fun battles to watch.

It's tough. I've been on both sides of it, but they'll take care of business and be better because of it.

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