

2026 NCAA Wrestling Championship

Friday, March 20, 2026

Cleveland, Ohio, USA

Rocket Arena

Penn State

Josh Barr

Semifinals Media Conference

Josh Barr (Penn State) d. Joey Novak (Wyoming), 14-3

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the 2026 NCAA Division I wrestling championships press conference. We're joined by Josh Barr from Penn State.

Josh, I was wondering if you could reflect on the past couple days, the match tonight, and tomorrow.

JOSH BARR: I'm just grateful for my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ first and foremost. I'm wrestling here, but I'm here to serve Jesus Christ. That's what I'm doing, and I hope I'm doing that well.

The last few days have been good, fun competing with my teammates. A great tournament with the best 300 or so wrestlers in the country. Really grateful to be here and grateful I get to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ here on this stage.

Q. We had Mitchell on a little bit ago, and he referred to this team as a super team of savages that can take guys out. So far in this tournament, you have beaten your first four opponents by a combined 51 points. Can you explain your dominance in this tournament?

JOSH BARR: I don't know, I don't really have a word for it. I don't really think about that stuff. I'm trying to be the best version of myself every match, and I'm trying to improve upon myself every single time I go out there.

The dominance thing, the points, that's something that comes along with it. For me, it's not about that stuff. It's not even about winning these wrestling matches. It's about being than I was the last match, and like I said earlier, serving Jesus Christ with the talent that He's blessed me with.

It's a cool thing that comes along with it, but all the stuff comes and goes, the points, the dominance, whatever. It



comes and goes. It kind of is what it is.

Q. Last year at this time you were not healthy. I think you got dinged up in the Big Ten, not 100 percent. Can you just talk about the challenge of doing that last year, maybe that helped you this year. Just from a mental standpoint, just being healthy, what has that done for your confidence? If you're wrestling and you're not at 100 percent against some of the guys you've wrestled, it's really tough.

JOSH BARR: Being healthy is a huge blessing. I also think what happened last year with the Big Tens and then going into the NAAs, it's all part of God's plan. I ended up having a decent tournament last year and finishing second.

It was a cool experience for me because I got to really battle some adversity, and I was really grateful for that, really thankful for it. I got to learn a lot about myself, and most importantly, I got to learn a lot about Jesus, that He's faithful through all this stuff. Win, lose, draw, injuries, whatever it is, he's faithful to his promise. That's what I learned from that, and I'm really grateful for that.

Q. To be honest, Bob nabbed my question. I've got a bit of a smaller one. Last year in the finals, you ended up changing your walk out song. Are you planning on changing it up again, or sticking with I Love It?

JOSH BARR: They said they're going to ask me for my music after this, but I don't have any songs off the top of my head. So I'll stick with I Love It after this one.

Q. Josh, you talked about becoming a better version of yourself. I'm just curious, you this time last year versus you this time this year, how do you evaluate your growth?

JOSH BARR: I think that I'm willing right now to just go as hard as I can. I'm willing. I've got myself through -- Jesus has got me to a spot where I'm really fearless and getting tired really fearless, and just going out there and brawling, having fun, and wrestling my hardest.



Really grateful for that growth because I think last year around this time I was still holding back a little bit because I don't know if it was fear of getting tired, fear of I don't know what it was. Last year I didn't really exhaust myself, and this year I've gotten tired in every single match I've wrestled. I'm really proud of that growth. I know, if I'm getting tired, good things are happening usually. I'm just having a lot of fun.

I think overall good technique stuff, listening to my coaches more and more, trusting what they have to say in preparation and just with my training.

It's hard to pinpoint, I really got to break it down to find the little things here and there of what's actually better, but I think just overall I've gotten better and really grateful for it.

Q. One of six finalists for Penn State. What's it mean to be in the finals competing for a National Championship alongside five of your teammates?

JOSH BARR: It's awesome. This Penn State is something special, every team I've been on since my freshman year, two, three years ago, whatever that was, last year and this year.

I've been on three really great teams with really great people. It just means a lot that I get to do it with my brothers that I train with every single day. I'm just really grateful for God putting me where He's at. It's really special, and I'm really, really grateful for it.

Q. You're going to face Cody Merrill in the finals. Can you talk about your opponent and your game plan for that match.

JOSH BARR: Yeah, Cody Merrill, he's a freshman, I believe, from Oklahoma State. Just another guy in the bracket. Really grateful that I just get to go and compete tomorrow. I'm just going to go do my thing and wrestle as hard as I can, have fun, score points, and just go be myself.

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