

# 2026 NCAA Wrestling Championship

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Cleveland, Ohio, USA

Rocket Arena

## Sergio Vega

Finals Media Conference



141

Sergio Vega (Oklahoma State) d. Jesse Mendez (Ohio State), 4-1 (SV1)

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Sergio Vega, 141 national champion from Oklahoma State. When you heard that final whistle you realized you're an NCAA champion, what was going through your mind on your journey to get here?

SERGIO VEGA: That was freakin' awesome. Took them a while to call the takedown, but it just hit me right away. I was around him. It was awesome. I've never had a moment like that in my life. It was awesome.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

**Q. You spoke up there yesterday just talking about, if we would have told you months ago that you'd be wrestling for a national championship you wouldn't believe it. Now, 24 hours later, you win a national championship. Just, I mean the emotions, when did it go from hoping to believing you were going to win a national championship?**

SERGIO VEGA: Midway through the season, I mean, earlier this year, I remember, I was getting ready for the second day of national duals, and it kind of hit me. I'm going to have Iowa and then I'm not getting away from the 1 or 2 because Nebraska and Ohio State were on the other corner.

So I saw I had Brock Hardy, and I just told myself, all season, I've just been telling myself, why can't I go do this? I had no reason every time I asked myself why I can't go beat anyone.

And it just gave me so much confidence because there's really no reason why I can't go beat anyone or do what I do best.

It's just reminding myself every time I go out there that there's no reason why I can't go beat anyone in this world.

**Q. You're the first Cowboy to wrestle tonight in the Finals. Tell me what it's like to set the tone for the rest of your teammates?**

SERGIO VEGA: It's awesome. Felt like Troy Spratley for the first time. He always gets us fired up, gets us going. So I'm glad I was able to do that for the team. Man, it feels amazing.

**Q. What did Coach Taylor say to you right after you won? You shared a cool moment there. What was said?**

SERGIO VEGA: He just told me I'm a national champion, and I told him thank you for everything he's done for me. It's just awesome, man. When you get to run over there and be by your family and you turn around and David Taylor's waiting right there to give you a big old hug. It's awesome. It's just a dream.

I've been watching him since I was younger. And being able to be in the same room as him. It's always, sometimes I catch myself being a little fan boy still. It's just so awesome. I'm so grateful to be where I am.

**Q. Didn't give up a takedown all year; is that right?**

SERGIO VEGA: Yeah.

**Q. How do you do that coming in as a freshman? Speak to your skill set in that area and how that enables you to win matches like this?**

SERGIO VEGA: I'll tell you what, I gave up a lot of takedowns because in the room I was getting beat up. That's the reason why I go out there and I could do good because all my partners -- me and Casey, we shared a good moment, too, and I'm so grateful for him. He got me ready for that match. And I promise you I will not be where I am without him.

Just months of just again beating up and fighting through

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those days where I'm just so frustrated because I can't do anything to that guy, and he just midway through the season I started getting better.

But still to this day, he just helped me so much. I'm so grateful for him with all the extra workouts and all the motivation, everything. He got me ready for that moment. I'm so grateful for him.

**Q. You mentioned your family was down there waiting for you. Couldn't tell how many. It looked like a big group you had waiting for you down there. What was that moment like just kind of elaborate on what they've meant to you career?**

SERGIO VEGA: It was awesome. My dad never gave up on me. So many tournaments when I was younger, wouldn't score a point and I was just some fat little chubby kid. I don't know how he did it. He's so awesome. Because he never gave up on me.

And in those moments I'm tired and I can't feel my arms, I can't feel my legs, it's just, remembering all the things he did for me and my brother. They just never gave up on me.

And I'm so grateful for them because there was a time where it probably would have been time for me to just quit and maybe it's not for me but they never gave up on me. I can never pay them back for what they've done for me.

**Q. How would you summarize your NCAA season as a whole and the journey you took to get to where you are today?**

SERGIO VEGA: It was good, but I still have so much room to improve. I have so much to grow from. And this is awesome. Like Coach Taylor always tells us, we're on to the next now.

It's awesome to share this moment and do all these amazing things. But it's easy to do it once, but it's now time to go get four of them.

**Q. They say you don't know what you don't know. What didn't you know coming into the national championships that you now know that you could use going forward as you prepare for the next season?**

SERGIO VEGA: That I'm a national champion. I mean, I felt like I could do it, but I did it. And I did it against one of the best at 141. I have so much respect for him and Brock Hardy. They're animals, man.

Last year I was at home on my couch, eating food, being a

little fatty, watching them scrap it out on that arena, or that mat. And now I was up there wrestling and it's just been an honor to keep doubting people because they've been doubting me all year. I love proving people wrong so I'm going to keep trying to do that.

**Q. Can you just talk about the lows and the tribulations and get to this point. Can you just talk about the mindset and confidence to go out there and do that against someone like Mendez?**

SERGIO VEGA: Yeah, it's just I remember one day I was sitting there with Coach Ward and we were having a talk. And he just randomly brought it up, he goes, man, I bet you feel a lot like Wyatt because last year Wyatt had Gable won. Everyone swore he was unbeatable. And it's just, like, who says I can't do it why not me?

My high school coach always told me since I started going there he just told me, why not you. Every time, we were getting ready for something it was, why not you. And then once again I was just reminding myself, why can't I go beat this guy. I had no reason.

Going out there with confidence trusting in my abilities. Everyone was saying he was going to ragdoll me in. I don't care how I look, I'm not getting ragdolled.

**Q. Walk us through that last scramble, but just walk us through that in your own words, like what you're thinking, every position, your thoughts.**

SERGIO VEGA: He's an awesome wrestler. That double leg, it's hard to stop a double leg. But I feel like I'm a good guy to do it.

And once again, Casey Swiderski, all year I've just been eating double legs to my face and chest. Lockett, I wrestle with him all the time. Beats me up with double legs. When I get a 41-pounder to do that to me, it's like all right, cool, I'll give him one leg, try to wrestle through it.

And once I sat the corner, I felt really good in that position. He got my ankle pretty tight. It was like, oh, I didn't know if I wanted to keep wrestling. But national championship on the line, break my leg, I don't care.

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