

2026 NCAA Wrestling Championship

Saturday, March 21, 2026

Cleveland, Ohio, USA

Rocket Arena

Max McEnelly

Finals Media Conference



184

Max McEnelly (Minnesota) d. Rocco Welsh (Penn State),
4-3

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by the 184 national champion, Max McEnelly, from Minnesota. When you heard the final whistle blow and you realized you were the NCAA champion, what was going through your head and your journey to get here?

MAX MCENELLY: Going through my head, I mean, there's so many different emotions that fill you at one time. It's really hard to explain.

I said it last night, but you spend years of your life dedicating yourself to this sport to get to this stage, to wrestle on the biggest stage. So it feels good for it to finally pay off.

Q. What was the difference in your approach to training and in your approach to this match?

MAX MCENELLY: My approach to training in this match?

Q. Your approach, like, after Big Tens, the training leading up and then the approach to this match?

MAX MCENELLY: We just tried to peak for this tournament. We didn't reinvent the wheel. I'm already a good wrestler, so I don't need to come up with a new style. All we were doing was fine tuning things, peaking for this tournament and just getting mentally ready to go, more than anything.

Q. At Big Tens, you were really close to a takedown but ran out of time. Was it a conscious decision, I'm going to get a takedown during regulation during this match? Was that a point of emphasis?

MAX MCENELLY: Yeah, trying to put one on him first was definitely something that we talked about. And I should

have put more on him. It's just not the way it went.

But, yeah, there was definitely an emphasis to score early and to keep scoring and to, especially, put the pressure on him. Make him back up, stay in the center. So I felt that I did a pretty good job of that this match.

Q. Can you just tell me, you weren't able to get the job done last year. You got the next best thing in third. How does it feel now to be a NCAA champion?

MAX MCENELLY: Like I said earlier, it's hard to describe the feeling. I don't think it's really set in yet. I'm going to take some time, hang out with my teammates, my family, just try to soak it all in, because you never know how many more of these you get. But the goal is to get two more.

Q. Can you just talk about, going back to the match, the difference in a match when you're able to get that first takedown and open up the lead early, versus like your match at Big Tens where it came down to the end and overtime?

MAX MCENELLY: It kind of just opens up the match. Once I got that takedown, I mean, I tried to keep my pressure on him still so he felt it. I think he felt a lot of my fakes and a lot of my circling.

I think getting that early takedown was just kind of more of a mental thing for him to overcome. He hadn't been there this year. He hadn't been there with me. So I know that he can't take me down.

Q. You've got your family front row. Your teammates were there to support you, cheer you on. What was it like getting to embrace them after your win?

MAX MCENELLY: It means everything to be with the people that you love and to be with all your teammates who go through the whole season with you. To share that moment with them and to know that I'm not the only one that won here tonight -- my whole team won.

Those guys were in my corner since day one. My family's been in my corner since day one. There's about 20 people

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from my hometown that came out. I mean, all these guys, I've got them in my corner.

Win or lose this match, I mean, I feel like I've already won just with the people that surround me. It's just been a heck of a ride.

Q. You jumped into Michael Kemerer's arms. He kind of fell over. Can you talk about the influence that not only Michael but your entire coaching staff has on you?

MAX MCENELLY: Our entire coaching staff is amazing. But with Kemerer coming in, he just elevated me to another level. He was a guy that's been here before. He's wrestled on the biggest stages. And, I mean, he's really damn good at wrestling. So just to be able to wrestle with him every single day, how could you not get better wrestling with someone like that?

And Eggum, he's great. Becker's great. Those guys, more of mental coaches for me than anything, walking me through the matches, talking to me about mindset. Kemerer does those things too, but, yeah, I've got a great support team.

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