

2009 NCAA Division I Wrestling Championships Individual Champion Quotes

125

Troy Nickerson of Cornell

On opportunity of becoming a national champion...

"I've been very fortunate all year. It shows that all hard work pays off and that I'm very fortunate. Last year's loss took a lot of pressure off this year."

On being greatest Cornell wrestler in school history...

"I try to go out there and be the best I can. There's quite a history here and I don't think I'm there yet."

On overcoming injuries...

"It's a hard process; I've struggled all year with the same injury (shoulder and bicep). There was even a time where the coaches and I thought I wouldn't wrestle again. I was nervous and scared but knew I wanted to help the team do something special."

133

Franklin Gomez of Michigan State

On his wrestling style...

"It just depends on what point I'm wrestling. I'm kind of used to wrestling low and most people that I wrestle are not used to wrestle low. So it's kind of an advantage."

On landing on his back prior to first escape...

"It didn't really affect me, not really. I was just like, 'Oh my God. I got to wrestle.' I wrestled through all positions. I couldn't stop and I didn't have time to think."

On being highly ranked two years ago and then falling apart at Big Ten's...

"I think a lot of it had to do with my body growing. After Christmas especially, I just kind of gained weight naturally. So that really affected my weight and eventually that wore me out towards the end and I technically fell apart. "

About becoming National Champion and on going to Michigan State...

"I think it's a great experience for me. No matter where I am I'll always go to church and that always keeps my focus. That tells me that God is everywhere. And I've been through really hard times, some really difficult times, and I was able to get up because church as helped me a lot to stay focused. (The National Championship) means a lot to me because I'm not just representing Michigan State but representing Puerto Rico, the people there at my club and the people in Florida. I represent a lot of places, not just Michigan State."

141

J Jagers of Ohio State

On performance in the final...

"My plan was to strike as quick and as often as possible, I couldn't let it turn into a cat and mouse game. For me, when I turn it into a shootout and it is about a lot of points, I'm more confident that I'm going to come out on top."

On earlier match against Tyler Nauman...

"That (the match) was scary. He is a very talented freshman, very good on top and had some moves. Like I said, I might have over thought that match a little bit. That was one of the matches I was talking about, turning into a cat and mouse and is a lot closer than it should be. When I open up, good things happen."

On teammate Reece's match and effect on performance...

"I was watching it in the back but I couldn't control that from the tunnel. I just had to worry about myself. Who would have predicted that at 149? In hindsight I would have tried to fire off a couple more take downs, try to get that major. I'm sure he (Brent Metcalf) got one taken away right there, with that tackle. I think if Mike (Pucillo) wins, we move into first."

On feeling of repeating...

"Unbelievable, especially with how I struggled early in the year and with how people doubted me. The number one driving force is getting as much out of me for myself and for the people that supported me."

Thoughts on coming back to St. Louis...

"I'm doing it again. You don't just luck upon this thing. Last year people said I was a one hit wonder. The day after the national tournament last year people were saying, 'he won't win it again.' It's annoying to hear when you just put your life onto it. I think this proves you don't stumble on two National Championships."

149

Darrion Caldwell of North Carolina State

If match go as planned...

"I just wanted to go out there in the beginning of the match and get the first couple of takedowns, be the aggressor. I knew he was going to come at me hard in the end, try to build up a lead late in the match. So I just wanted to build a comfortable enough lead where I can catch my breath or be able to stay in control during that third period."

On game plan going into the match

"I didn't watch any film at all, that's not something I do. I know pretty much what he does by sometimes watching him at tournaments, like last year here, but basically it's all anticipation. I try to anticipate what he's going to do. I can almost feel it or I can see it before it comes, like I knew when he was going to shoot. I knew basically the whole time he was going to try and control my head, get me to pop up and go for his high crouch and his outside single. I was just trying to anticipate what he was doing and stay two steps ahead of him at all times."

On possible fear of Metcalf

"No, he's human and it's just a wrestling match. Its not like he has a gun and I have a knife. We're both just going to come out here and give it our best and that's what we did, he came at me. He's a great guy, I don't know him off the mat but he's a great guy on the mat, his competitiveness and he's a go-getter. He wants to be the best, he thrives to be the best and I applaud him for that."

On what this win means...

"It just means I've got to continue to work for the next couple of years. I'm thinking about taking this next year off and getting better, a lot better, keep working and maybe go up a couple weight classes. I'm just going to keep working hard for next year, maybe I'll do something with the US Open this upcoming April. We'll take it from there and see where it goes, see where it leads."

157

Jordan Burroughs of Nebraska

On key to beating Poeta:

"Getting that first takedown at the end of the first period was huge for me. Going into the second period 2-0, and not allowing him to get an escape made him have to come after me. That's where I feel most comfortable at, on my feet. So it's pretty difficult for him to score."

On emotion:

"I'm not really an emotional person. I enjoy winning, I love to win. But, I don't like showboating, especially in front of the crowd. I know a lot of people don't like that and I just like to stay humble, show good sportsmanship and just stay classy."

On accomplishment:

"It's huge for me. I'm the first undefeated, ever, Nebraska wrestler. It's a great accomplishment for me, my family, my teammates, and everyone who has ever supported me and enjoys the way I wrestle. This is for them."

On what he's going to do from here:

“Just training. Going to get back in the weight room. I want to get back to practicing, I’ve still got a lot of things to work on. I know a lot of people are going to be gunning for me next year being that I was an undefeated National Champion. So I’m just going to stay on top of my game and enjoy this a little bit, and party tonight.

On a potential team trophy tonight:

“It’s always great when you can bring home hardware for the team. Although we stress being individuals as well as a team, we also stress going out there and worrying about ourselves first, and getting our points. The team thing will take care of itself.”

On people figuring him out:

“I think people have figured me out already by simply watching tape. A lot of things I do, I do often. A lot of guys are looking forward to stopping it, but it’s kind of difficult to stop when you’re confronted with it.”

165

Jarrold King of Edinboro

On overcoming surgeries/injuries

“All through my career, I’ve been wrestling through injuries. I mean I’ve had three surgeries, since I entered college. To come back from those and getting back in shape it made it that much harder.”

On coming from Oklahoma to Edinboro

“I started at OU and had injuries there, and that kept me out. Am east-coast boy halfway across the country, and being injured, I was being with not being able to do what I had done my entire life, and that’s wrestle. My brother was at Edinboro and I knew everybody there, so it was a good fit with the closeness to home and the staff. A great, great head coach.

On defending his opponent

“I was hoping to squeeze a couple back points from him, but it ended up ok without them. He was just relentless on the head, I was more worried about him there than my legs.”

On being highly-ranked after high school

“Yeah, I actually was ranked 1-2 with Steve Luke, who just won his own title, coming out I was on top of the world, be a 4-time AA, and national champ. As first I never got to that point, but my ultimate goal, a championship, finally came true.”

On being a 12 seed

“No, I don’t think it (the seeds) matters so much. My goal the entire time was to be a champ, no matter if I was the top seed, no seed, whatever.”

174

Steven Luke of Michigan

On wrestling career...

It does go through my head before the match I guess. It kind of relaxes me cause when I went out there today I felt really calm. Last year I was really tense and didn’t wrestle well but today I just went out there and gave it my all.

Thoughts going into today...

I tried to really focus on this match. If you look back at your career and you’re not thinking about today’s match. Next week and I’ll probably be thinking about all the good moments. I said that this was going to be my last year of wrestling and I meant competing. I’m always going to be around wrestling. This sport, I’ve learned a lot. Some life lessons I’ll take with me throughout my life. No matter what I do from here on out it won’t compare to

some of the years I've had with wrestling. Some of the stressful moments and some of the things I've had to do.

On Accomplishing a National Championship...

When you're little kid you watch the NCAA's on t.v. and think wow I want to do that. But when you're a little kid you think you want to do that but at the same time you think there's no way. You think one day I want to be up on that stage and I don't want to be up on that stage losing, like I did last year. I want to be up on that stage winning. It feels good to go out with a win.

On today's match...

When warming up I felt really relaxed. I was warming up with Coach Kulczycki. He's a really good drill partner. And I felt really good going out on the mat. When I got in on the (Miller's) legs I thought, 'I am finishing this shot because I'm not going to this many opportunities in this match to get it out of the way.' When you get on the legs in a national championship match you have to finish it. It was just a mental attitude of finishing it.

On his wrestling style...

The important thing is that I win the close matches. That was a big thing about my wrestling in college. I had a lot of close matches. I had a lot of overtime matches. But I really focused on winning those close matches. I think that separates the average wrestler from the good wrestler. You see a lot of guys that they're average and they have these average records like 10-10 but those ten loses that they have are by one or two points. I don't care if I go to 32-0 with 32 overtime victories.

184

Jake Herbert of Northwestern

On the team score and the support of the Iowa fans...

"That was great. I finished my career wrestling (Patrick) Keddy and we had a lot more Iowa people there than we did Northwestern. It was my senior night and they clapped for me. Iowa wrestling is great, Tim (Cysewski) comes from it and I couldn't imagine if I went to a university that had a following like that, I mean what it would be like. We have a great fan base at Northwestern but I mean it's nothing like the Hawkeyes. They bleed black and gold. Just knowing I had them on my side gave me three-fourths of the arena. I know I'm older than Brent (Metcalf) but I look up to him, he is one of my idols. He is relentless when he wrestles. It's great to have somebody like that in our sport."

On final match...

"It went well, I like to get some back points. I didn't give up a takedown, which is good. I took all the camera time I could, seven minutes. I got the win, I did what I needed to do and it was a hard fought match. He made me work for it, he made me come at him and he made me win that match. It wasn't like he was going to give it to me, it wasn't like he was going to roll over, Mike Puccillo is a great wrestler and he has one more year and I could see him another National Title."

On hand injury affecting match...

"Anybody that wrestles knows that my knuckles crack. So anytime I jam my finger, it's been happening more recently, it takes a while before I can bend them again. It's just annoying, you have to keep going. That's the fun part about being a wrestler."

Thoughts on if a seventh year of eligibility was granted...

"College wrestling is awesome, I still would love to stick around and do it. I have to focus on freestyle now and maybe get a team together and win a Midlands title."

On improvement from the Olympics...

"It improved my wrestling. I got to wrestle not only the best people in the country but the best people in the world. Training camps over in Belarus, getting to work at the Olympic rumble, it showed me that I had some good points. I just have to make sure I put it together at the right time for the 2012 Olympics."s

197

Jake Varner of Iowa State

On relief after two runner-up finishes...

"It feels like everyone, I feel like, expects you to win and I just went out there and wrestled my match and it feels good to finally do it."

On his preparation...

"Nope, same thing from the beginning of the season, you know. That first match you wrestle, its the same as this match right here. same preparation, don't change anything. You wrestle your match and that's what I did."

On waiting to get back to this stage...

"I've been waiting the past two years. Coming up short makes you want it more, especially taking second two years in a row. it just makes you want to get back out there and it makes you want to train harder."

On what did differently than Big 12 final...

"I think maybe the Big 12 final I rushed things a little bit, maybe let myself get a little frustrated. He got that takedown and that was it. But I stuck to my game plan and just stayed focused."

On stall warning...

"It was the NCAA finals. Being here two times already, you just kind of figure out how to stay calm in those situations. If you get taken down or anything like that you don't freak out. You've just keep yourself cool and wrestle."

On if losing made him better...

"I don't know about that. I think everyone will say they're better after they lose. You go back and look at that stuff and see what you can fix and what you did wrong. But I feel like each year I get better so its hard to say."

285

Mark Ellis of Missouri

On what winning a National Championship means to him...

"It's winning a Title. With where I came from and the people who believed in me and just gave me a chance, it's amazing and God is just so good to me. There are so many things, Coach Smith coming through for me and just making me stay on the team."

On previous thoughts of leaving the wrestling program...

"There were tough times when I didn't know what I wanted to do. I thought about walking away a couple of when I first got there but people believed in me. I'm just so grateful for the people in my life. It's amazing, God is so good. If it wasn't for Ben [Askren], there's no way I'd be here and be a National Champ. He pushed and pushed and pushed and never let me walk away. Even in practice and workouts he never let me quit. This is my dream come true."

On the scrambles during the match...

"I felt like I was fine but I was afraid they were going to give him the two still. I felt like I wasn't in danger, like I was fine. I had a leg secure but I've seen them call that both ways and I was a little worried that they might give him the two. I thought it would have been a bad way to lose."

On opponent as a dream stopper...

"You know, he's another dream stopper. I didn't let it happen. I'm just grateful for the win."

On Missouri teammate and fellow heavyweight Dominique Bradley...

"We have another heavyweight in the room, Dom Bradley. I wouldn't be able to do what he's done. He's the second best heavyweight in the country. The way he's handled it, I'll tell you the truth, I wouldn't have been able to do it. I don't think I would have been able to stay on the team. I don't think he's a second string guy. We scrap every single day, he gets the best of me some days, I get him some days. He's so hard to score on. He's just helped me so much with my shots and stuff and I'm so grateful for him. The people God has put in my life and put in my path, I'm so grateful for. Dom is just a class act guy. We haven't been able to become great

friends because of this deal. But he's amazing. I know he's going to get a shot at it and I promise he's going to be a National Champ."