
Pre-Championships Press Conference



Matt McDonough - Iowa - Sr. - 125 - 20-3

What do you think about saving the big match until the end?

I'm used to being the first match so I already have to deal with that. You have to be ready right away, there's no watching a few matches. Being the last one out there, you're the last thing everyone sees, so there's the exciting factor there. When everyone goes home you'll be the last thing on their mind if you perform the way you're supposed to.

Does home-mat advantage play a factor in this tournament format?

I think it definitely gets you excited when you have that extra fan base and you can hear them roaring in the stands, with that being said though, it really makes no difference where you're wrestling or how many people are cheering for you. Once that whistle blows and the battle begins, you're in the moment. I don't think for the best wrestlers it affects the outcome of the match or how you're going to perform if you're worried about the things you're supposed to be worried about, like your offense, you're wrestling. It's obviously something that brings extra excitement, even when you're at an away arena and there are a lot of people cheering against you. That brings your adrenaline up. Being at a home environment with a lot of fans behind you is always exciting.

Should you get to the semis and face [Jesse] Delgado again, what will you have to do differently to get to the championship match?

[I] just have to go out there and wrestle my match. The work has been done and the technique is there and the ability is there. He's a tough competitor; we've wrestled five times or so. I've done what I needed to do to win that match in the past, in order to do that in the future I have to be in the positions that I'm strongest at. It's just a matter of wrestling a smart match where you're having fun, but you're scoring a lot of points. Scoring points is always what you have to do to win, but scoring offensive points is going to make the difference.

Jordan Oliver - Oklahoma State - Sr. - 149 - 33-0

What do you think about saving the big match until the end?

I think it's great for the sport. Obviously the [Kyle] Dake/[David] Taylor match is a really anticipated match and the audience and all the viewers are going to stay tuned in to watch this match. They'll also watch all of the other matches, but it's just keeping the crowd into it. Obviously it doesn't change how I have to go out and perform or for any of the other wrestlers. I think it's great and they're going to have a big crowd. I just have to go out and do my part.

How was the experience of training in London with the Olympic team?

It was a great experience getting over there and view all the top wrestlers in the world compete at the highest level. Kyle [Dake] and I were ready to strap up and go back to the hotel and workout; we were so antsy to get back on the mat. It was a great experience to view it because I think Kyle has the same goals as I do and we ultimately want to win World and Olympic titles.

Kyle and I were smack talking a little bit over there and had some people believing we were going to meet at a catch weight and wrestle, Kyle going 165 and me at 149, we were going to meet at 157, but it never happened. I think Kyle backed out, I don't know.

You ever think you should have bumped up weight class earlier?

I've been thinking about it all season. [I'm] just living the good life at 149 and not having to worry about weight so much and just getting out there and having fun. Worrying about more of how to get better at my wrestling and how I can improve instead of going into practice and thinking, 'I'm about five [pounds] over, how much weight should I lose today?' It has helped me a lot. It has helped me focus on my wrestling and it's been showing. I definitely think I should have bumped up after my freshman year, but the past is the past, and now going into this year, I have the same goal of getting the national title.

Kyle Dake - Cornell - Sr. - 165 - 32-0

On new tournament format...

It's just kind of exciting for me, at least. Being the last match, it's kind of like the main event. It's just something cool the NCAA is doing. It wouldn't matter if I was the last match or the first match. Honestly, I could care less, I just want to go out and wrestle.

On mind set coming into historic weekend wrestling for fourth consecutive national title...

I think the most important thing for me to recognize is that I got to first get there before I can make history. I got to take it once match at a time really, and if I just go out and do my job then I'm good [enough] to where I need to be. I've been working real hard this season; putting in the time both physically and mentally, and really pushing myself to the limit and hopefully pushing myself over the edge to get that fourth national title.

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Kyle Dake (ctd.)

On experience training in London with the Olympic team...

Going over to London was awesome. I had a really fun time. It was really sweet to see the world's best [wrestlers] go at it and being able to see those people compete at such a high level. It kind of set the bar and set the standard for me. I knew that in the future I was going to have to wrestle at that level, so I want to start early and try to get there now.

Ed Ruth - Penn State - Jr. - 184 - 28-0

On new tournament format...

I like the format because I'm one of the heavier weights now; it's nice to be first at least once. First or second, it doesn't matter as long as I am one of the earlier matches.

On home mat advantage in tournament setting...

Being at home kind of helps my morale more. You have family, friends, teachers, girlfriends, whatever and they're all watching and you have a lot of people supporting you. Once it is all said and done it comes down to the wrestler himself. If you have a hostel fan base that is against you, it kind of makes you want to go harder, even if you have your fans around you.

Dustin Kilgore - Kent State - Sr. - 197 - 39-0

On new tournament format...

To me, really, it doesn't matter. I think it will help the sport a little bit, with the viewers, getting more people to stick around. I know when it comes down to the heavyweight matches it tends to be that a lot of people leave the arena. Maybe this will be something that we need to change with the sport to get people to stick around so they can see all the matches. Of all the athletes here, everyone has worked just as hard as each other to get to the finals. It would be really good to show a little respect for all the athletes competing.

On coming back after redshirt season last season...

Honestly, it really doesn't feel a whole lot different. I'm back with my family at Kent State. I'm doing the same things I did last time to become a national champion. It feels good to be back. I like folkstyle a lot more than freestyle; I wish the world would change, but that's not going to happen. It feels good; it wasn't really much of a change at all coming back in. I was so ready to do it again. I have a lot of anticipation for this tournament and becoming a champion again. Those are my goals and I am going to do anything I can to accomplish it. I've been working so hard with my coaches and teammates in the room and I have been anxious and it's finally here. It seems like the season went by pretty fast.

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Cael Sanderson - Penn State - Head Coach

Opening statement...

It's going to be a great tournament. We're grateful for this opportunity. Just like everyone said, I think it comes down who chooses to go out there and win. We are excited about our team. I think that our team has improved throughout the year and we should be able to do well if we choose to. That's the exciting part we get to sit back and see what our guys do.

What are your thoughts on the new format, the 'main event'? Is it good for wrestling and should they do it in the future?

I don't think it could be bad for wrestling. You're going to get a mixed review from the coaches and the fans just based on tradition. If you look at other sports they have a main event and it seems to work, so why not give it a shot?

I think it falls on the kids and puts a little more on them, but that's what they want. You want to be the best and you want to be the big match. Now you have that chance. I'm not saying that I'm for it, I haven't really put a lot of thought into it, but it doesn't really matter what I think anyways. It should be fun.

When you look at this weekend, a city that has rolled out the red carpet for you, every seat is sold and it looks like it will be a great competition between five or six schools. Is this the ultimate advertisement for this sport?

I think that the NCAA tournament has the greatest fan support just from sheer numbers and TV exposure. It happens to be my favorite wrestling event of the year. Anyone that comes to the national tournament, they're coming back that's just the way it works. That's why the tickets are so hard to get. Once you have been and witnessed the excitement, and whether you have a team or don't have a team, or you are following an individual or whatever reason you are here, you're going to come back because you are going to love it here. It's a great venue for our sport. You see that by the coverage continuing to increase. It's not only going to be great here in Wells Fargo Arena, but there will be people sitting tight to their TVs watching what's going on here.

Is there anything you do from the Big 10 [Conference] Tournament to now that is consistent in the last few years to try and get the guys to peak?

I think as a coach you're always having to take notes. This worked and this didn't work. Coaching is a work in progress just like anything else. If something works, you do it again and if it doesn't work, you drop it. That's been what we've been doing. Every team is a little bit different so it's a different answer for each group. It's a different answer for each kid. They are going through different things in each of their lives at different times. For us it's just a matter of getting to know the kids well enough that we can read them a little bit better to tell what they need and what they don't need. For the most part what I've learned as a coach is the best thing I can do is get the heck out of the way and not screw things up for them.

Tom Brands - Iowa - Head Coach

Opening statement...

Having the home event is good. When I say home, I am referring to the home state. It is familiar territory more or less. I don't know how much of an advantage it is unless you go out and wrestle hard. That is simply what we have to do. We just have to take it one match at a time and everything else you are used to hearing from coaches. I am not going to give any predictions. We will have to have all nine guys go forward the way that they can go forward.

On Iowa's up and down season and how you have gotten them ready for the tournament...

Tom Brands: I think it's an individual sport deserves and an individual approach to each guy. We have been getting them ready to wrestle their best tournament one match at a time. I could probably answer that longer if you wanted me to, but there isn't a lot to do. You just don't do a 180 and go a different direction. If you look at our rides at the Big 10 [Conference Tournament] and is that a concern? We have to have consistent performances to do well here, so it is absolutely a concern if you are trying to win the tournament. We believe in our guys though.

As a coach do you breakdown the potential points?

No and I am not sure that I have ever thought of it in those terms. The path is there at ten weights if you want to look at that. You can fill out your bracket or whatever. We know that we will have to do some damage along the way. It has to be damage in our favor. That would be nine guys doing what our nine guys can do very consistently. I had referred to an up and down season. We can't have up and downs. It has to be solid upward movement.

On the "home field" advantage and how it will help the wrestlers...

Can I tell you Saturday night? I mean seriously. You will either make it work for you or you don't. I think a lot of times that comes down to sheer will power, toughness, smarts and mat savvy. A lot of things go into it. We have to go out there and make it work for us, then that would be the reason why. I have said it five or six times already that we have to have nine guys wrestle hard and consistently every round in every match.

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Kevin Jackson - Iowa State - Head Coach

Opening statement...

Being the home team, you definitely have your privileges, and I guess that's why I'm up here right now with these guys. We're excited about the event, as we have some very good athletes going tomorrow and over the weekend. Four of our athletes this weekend are from the state of Iowa. They all wrestled their state tournament here in Wells Fargo Arena. Three of them won state championships here, two of them multiple times. Iowa State's event staff has done a great job so far and I think that all the coaches would agree with that. The NCAA, as well as our athletics department and event staff, has done a great job and that's going to continue through the weekend.

On how Kyven Gadson and the rest of the team of handled the adversity that came with the passing of Willie Gadson...

I think we've been extremely focused over the last few months. Kyven has dealt with this like the champion he is and been raised to be. He has embraced this opportunity to wrestle for an NCAA championship. I'm not sure how much more motivation he needed for an NCAA title. Obviously something like his father passing is nothing I've had to deal with, but he seems to be handling it very well, along with his teammates. I think it's a motivating factor and we will see first thing in the morning how it has affected him.

On the Olympic wrestling situation...

I think we have the right people in the right spots right now to really move things forward with selection of the committee that USA Wrestling has put together. We have some very powerful and educated people leading the rest of the world to getting wrestling back in the Olympic Games.

We have to keep the pressure on. We have to keep it at the forefront of everyone's mind and thoughts; that has to continue with all of us sitting here and the people that are really in charge of amateur wrestling in the United States and international wrestling around the world. It's something that we're going to continue to fight. We have to keep the pressure on until decisions are made. We can't let up one single bit. There's people in place working very hard to make sure that happens.

J Robinson - Minnesota - Head Coach

I think that pretty much echoing all of the other coaches: we brought all 10 guys and they are pretty excited to be here. Obviously this is what everybody looks forward to towards the end of the year. We've had some good wins this year and we stumbled a few times, but we had a pretty good Big 10 [Conference] Tournament. We made a few errors there and it's a chance for us to come back.

I think that what Kevin [Jackson] said was that there are four or five teams here in the hunt. It's going to go to the team that is really prepared and ready to win. That's what makes it exciting. Everybody talks about seeds and everything else. The thing that I say is that it's the national tournament. It's the way it is and you've been coming for years. It's exciting to be in the state of Iowa where people appreciate wrestling. It is fun to come back here because you know there's going to be a great crowd and fan applause throughout the whole tournament. As each team vies for a championship and the individuals try to win their own personal ones.

John Smith - Oklahoma State - Head Coach

Opening statement...

We are excited about the tournament and look forward to earning our way into the picture. There is not a single team here where anything is a given. I think that it is going to have to be earned. We know for our team to be successful then we will have to earn some tough wins. We have done a pretty good job all year long and most of the time we are pretty consistent. It has been a group that I have enjoyed working with quite a bit. Normally our outcomes have been pretty good. We are looking forward to the opportunity because it is going to be exciting.

On the first-time qualifiers and how much will you rely on them to put you in contention...

You have to rely on all of them. That is an easy question. It doesn't matter if it is your first time. There have been lots of guys that come here for the first time and have a lot of success. I think that some of our first timers, a couple freshmen, have had a pretty good year. They need to make it a great year. This is where you make it great. We can't afford to see too many negatives and we need to give ourselves every reason to see positives. I believe that right now we are in a good place to do that, no question. The team that will have the most success is going to earn it by winning the tough bouts.

On the international perspective and the Olympics...

I am on the committee and have enjoyed watching the positive direction that we have gone in. I really enjoy the cry from the worldwide wrestling community. I think that honestly we will look back at this as a great thing. It gave wrestling an opportunity to be seen. It gave us an opportunity to be heard.

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John Smith (ctd.)

Very important people in the world have stepped up letting the IOC (International Olympic Committee) know their concerns. You see every day that people who haven't been in wrestling for a while are speaking out on the issue.



I like the direction that it is going in, but it doesn't mean we are comfortable at all. It means that good things are occurring and quite a few people are involved across this world. It has been incredible how quickly the campaign has come together. Wrestling came together quickly and started the fight early. I think that tells you a little about the sport and the passion the people within wrestling.

Options that coaches have and how they will change the event...

I won't know until we see. I don't think that any of the coaches disliked it at their dual meets. We will have to find out. There will be times we go through it. Is it holding up the tournament? Is it holding up matches?

I do believe it is the right thing and gives the officials a chance to look at a situation to solve it differently. We made a good decision. I shouldn't say 'we' because they did it without giving the coaches a choice in it which is good.