

March 21, 2014



JOSHUA KINDIG

Oklahoma State • 149 pounds • 28-8

Q. No one could see this going in. Why is this different for you?

JOSHUA KINDIG: It's a great feeling to be where I'm at. Going in, it's a tough weight class, so seeds really don't matter. Coach has been telling us that everybody came to our city. It's our town to perform, to own the mat.

And I came in like I was the best, and that's the way I wrestled. So now I wrestled and wasn't thinking about seeds or anything.

Q. Talk about this match. What was the difference for you and how did you establish the lead that ended up winning?

JOSHUA KINDIG: Well, I stayed calm and focused. Big thing is being focused, because I'm usually -- every match I was scoring in the first minute. And this one I just kept pushing and stayed focused and kept my defense ready, too, for quick little shots, and that's how I scored my first takedown. He shot in and I hit a quick spinaround. When the shots aren't there, whenever you're moving forward, you always have to be ready for them to shoot, and that's what I did.

Q. Being from Pennsylvania, what was your history with him?

JOSHUA KINDIG: We were friends. He was always a lighter weight than me. So kids on my team who were the lighter weight wrestled him. But my girlfriend's from that school, so I'm friends with him. Jordan Oliver.

So it's a little personal. I haven't wrestled him before, but it's always nice to, especially being the older one, to show the dominance, especially from your area.

Q. Coach Smith talked a lot about having guys wrestle well above their seed for you guys to have a chance to win. Could you talk about how it feels, not only for you

individually, but it's also helped the team out by wrestling well above your seed already.

JOSHUA KINDIG: It was a battle the whole year. I had a lot of tough kids. One time I wrestled seed 1, seed 2, seed 1, back-to-back weekends. And it was a grind.

But especially coming off of injury, tearing my hamstring from last year, recovering, which I just did in the beginning of February. There was also a lot of adversity this year, and I just kept pushing through, and I went through way too much this year to give it up or be worried about a seed and wrestle, thinking about that.

But when it comes to the team, coach has told us -- I really established it after beating the No. 6 seed, Sueflohn. We're a kind of a team where, you know, I think we're the best, but we feed off each other. And this round it was huge for me to get us going. And that's what I did.

And we get forward to the Finals, we're sitting pretty good.

Q. What's the feeling like for you to go into the Finals?

JOSHUA KINDIG: It's indescribable. After my quarterfinal match, I went up and said hi to my family and stuff. They were crying. I'm like, it's the quarters. But it's great.

It probably shocked the nation. But that's the exciting part about it. Just performing and doing it for all my fans and family, everybody watching on ESPN, which is great that we started this. So it's really exciting.

Q. Josh, you described yourself earlier as a dark horse, and you say the seed didn't bother you, but did that drive you a little bit, maybe?

JOSHUA KINDIG: Yeah, I always love challenges. Just the way I grew up. Fargo Nationals, always took second, always the guy behind. In high school I stayed at a certain weight class so I could wrestle Jordan Oliver rather than go and win it.

So coming in this tournament, I knew it was going to be a grind all the way through, and it was exciting to have people think that I'm not anywhere in the hunt for it, and then surprise everybody. So it's a good feeling.

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JASON TSIRTSIS

Northwestern • 149 pounds • 34-3

Q. Jason, do you have to be reminded that you're a freshman? And talk about escaping there with just a couple of seconds left.

JASON TSIRTSIS: You know, I think coming in here, being a freshman and whatnot, it doesn't really mess with my head at all. Just real confident and treated it like another tournament. So that aspect didn't really feel like that was a factor at all. And with that escape, the last couple of seconds, we do those type of things in the room to where we've got 10, 15 seconds to get an escape.

And I was comfortable with nine seconds left. I've gone out from a lot of people with nine seconds left. So felt good. Felt confident.

Q. Jason, over the summer you went to the Junior Worlds and had a whole season of competition outside of the college wrestling. How did that experience help prepare you for this season and how will it help you tomorrow night?

JASON TSIRTSIS: I think being on that Junior World team, where a lot of guys are taking that summer and they're training and everything, but they're not training to become a world champ, and I think having that aspiration to be a world champ at that junior level, I think it helped me improve my wrestling more than most throughout the summer. And I think that was a big help for this college season, definitely.

Q. At this point only one No. 1 seed has advanced to the Finals. You just beat one. What is it about this year's competition that maybe seeds don't mean that much?

JASON TSIRTSIS: To generalize the whole field of wrestling, it's hard to do, but, I mean, I think there's a lot of good quality guys at every weight. I think there always has been.

So maybe this NCAA Tournament, couple things. One thing can change a whole match, a whole tournament. So maybe some of those matches where No. 1 seeds didn't turn out their way like it normally does in years past.

Q. Jason, you had a lot of options coming out of high school as far as where you would go to college, and picked Northwestern. Just want to hear a little bit about why that choice and why it's working out so well for you. You're in the NCAA Finals as a freshman.

JASON TSIRTSIS: It was not an easy choice. It was one of the toughest choices I had to make. And I think a lot of factors played into it with the diversity and experience with the coaching staff. I liked them a lot. I liked who was on the staff.

I really like the area. I'm close to home, close to my family. That was a nice factor as well. And when I went on that visit, I clicked with my teammates, and I think that's one of the most important things.

Q. What were the experiences your brother had as a collegiate wrestler to help you do this now?

JASON TSIRTSIS: I never had fun at this tournament unless I was just coming and I had no personal ties to anyone. So I always had a tough, tough NCAA Tournament with Alex, and I wish it wasn't. I wish he was a four-time NCAA champ.

But it was always tough. And I think his downfall has helped me. And I think he really helped me prepare for this tournament, as well as my coaches, to where he was able to guide me in the right direction where maybe he wasn't guided.

Q. Any history with Kindig and thoughts about the challenge ahead? Obviously he wrestled way over his seed. You weren't favored to make the Finals either.

JASON TSIRTSIS: I think 149's filled with a lot of tough wrestlers, and I think it's a little

underestimated by a lot of people. But Kindig, I know him a little bit. I know he's a real talented wrestler, real athletic, real smooth.

So just wrestle like I wrestle, and that's how I'm going to win. So not going to worry about what he's doing too much.

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