

Wrestling: Mendez, Welsh To Wrestle For Title, Day Two Recap Of NCAA Championships



Three Buckeyes secured All-American status on day two of the NCAA Championships with Jesse Mendez and Rocco Welsh advancing to the finals in their brackets and Nick Feldman winning in the blood round of the consolation bracket.

Ohio State started the day with eight wrestlers still alive, but five of them fell out of the consolation bracket in the second day of action.

Here's how each match went:

Quarterfinals

Mendez continued his run against No. 9 Brock Hardy from Nebraska. The first period of the match was scoreless, and Mendez scored an escape point, choosing bottom to start the second. Mendez finally found an opening a minute into the second period, taking Hardy to the mat, but he wasn't given points for a takedown.

Hardy started the third period on bottom to try to even the score with an escape, but Mendez came close to getting the pin and was awarded two points for the nearfall. Hardy scored a reversal with a minute remaining, which Mendez countered with a reversal of his own, holding the advantage to the end of the match, winning 6-2 with a riding time point to move on to the semifinals. The win secured his status as an All-American for the second straight year.

Welsh faced off against No. 3 Edmond Ruth from Illinois for the third time this season, losing the first two in close bouts, one in the Big Ten tournament. The first period was scoreless, with Ruth escaping in the second period and Welsh escaping in the third. The match went to a sudden victory period where Welsh was able to get Ruth's left leg and take him down for a 4-1 victory to secure an All-American spot and move on to the semifinals.

Feldman got through a scoreless first period with No. 1 Greg Kerkvliet of Penn State, who has beaten Feldman twice this season. He allowed Kerkvliet to escape in the second period right away and was aggressive going after the Nittany Lion's legs, but his stacks were defended well. Feldman chose to start the third period neutral since Kerkvliet is one of the best at holding the top position. Feldman came very close to a takedown with 20 seconds left, but Kerkvliet was able to defend against it and Feldman was sent to the consolation bracket after a 1-0 loss.

Semifinals

Mendez faced off against No. 5 Anthony Echemendia from Iowa State – a transfer from Ohio State – in the semifinals and scored a takedown halfway through the first period and would accumulate 1:29 of riding time through the period. Mendez escaped to start the second period, taking a 4-0 lead.

Echemendia chose to start neutral in the third period and got a takedown 20 seconds in. Mendez was able to escape in time to keep his riding time over a minute and lead by two points, but he received his second stalling warning to make it a one-point match with just under a minute left. Echemendia came extremely close to landing a takedown with seconds left in the bout, but Mendez was able to ride the clock out and took the win 6-4 to advance to the finals for the 141-pound bracket against No. 2 Beau Bartlett of Penn State, who he beat in the Big Ten finals.

Welsh went up against No. 7 Lennox Wolak of Columbia and the first period was scoreless before he chose bottom to start the second period, which he escaped in three seconds to take the lead. No more points were scored until Wolak escaped three seconds into the third period to send the match into sudden victory. Welsh got to Wolak's left leg in the period and after 20 seconds was able to get the takedown to advance to the finals against Penn State's Carter Starrocci.

Consolations

Brendan McCrone was quickly down to a 9-3 deficit going into the second period. He started on top and worked the entire two minutes trying to get Stanford's No. 14 Nick Provo on his back which he didn't do, but earned the riding time advantage. McCrone escaped to start the third, but was taken down, escaping again, but he couldn't get enough points and his time at the NCAA Championships ended with a 12-6 loss to Provo.

No. 16 Nic Bouzakis started against No. 18 Derrick Cardinal from South Dakota State, getting a quick takedown and allowing an escape. He was very aggressive going for another takedown, which he got, almost pinning Cardinal and getting the four-point nearfall and over two minutes of riding time. He had a reversal to start the second before Cardinal escaped and scored a takedown. Cardinal had another takedown in the third, unsuccessfully challenged by Ohio State head coach Tom Ryan, but Bouzakis had built too large of a lead for it to matter. Bouzakis moved on with a 14-8 win.

No. 14 Dylan D'Emilio had the chance to upset No. 13 Caleb Rathjen, who beat him in the Big Ten tournament. Despite multiple attacks from both, the first period finished without a score. D'Emilio chose bottom to start the second period and escaped in four seconds. Rathjen went for a takedown, but D'Emilio defended well and was able to take Rathjen to the mat for three points before the Hawkeye escaped. Rathjen went bottom to start the third and D'Emilio fought hard to keep him there for 40 seconds. D'Emilio scored another takedown with 10 seconds left to take a 7-2 win.

Isaac Wilcox tried to keep his run going against South Dakota State's No. 15 Cael Swenson at 157 pounds and was able to keep the match close through three periods, but ultimately his efforts weren't enough, dropping the bout 8-5, ending his season.

Ryder Rogotzke went against No. 16 Nate Dugan from Princeton in the 184-pound consolation bracket and kept the match scoreless through the first period. Rogotzke escaped in the second before being taken down and managing to escape again. He was able to keep it close through the third period, but fell 8-5 to end his run in the tournament.

In round three of the consolation bracket, Bouzakis faced No. 10 Aaron Nagao of Penn State, keeping it close through three periods. Nagao scored two points total, adding another for riding time, but kept Bouzakis scoreless in seven minutes, ending Bouzakis' chances at an All-American spot in his redshirt freshman season.

The first period of D'Emilio's match against No. 22 Gabe Willochell from Wyoming was a busy one, and he came out of it with an 8-5 lead. Willochell escaped to begin the second period, keeping exactly a minute of riding time to take into the third period. D'Emilio escaped in the third period and was able to hold his lead long enough to take a 9-7 win.

D'Emilio's next match was against No. 8 Casey Swiderski from Iowa State, a rematch of a bout at the Cliff Keen tournament from early in the season. The first period was scoreless, and D'Emilio escaped to start the second and Swiderski escaped to start the third for the only points in regulation, taking the match to sudden victory. There were no points in the period to send the bout into a tiebreaker where Swiderski would take the match to secure All-American status at 149 pounds, ending D'Emilio's chance at being a back-to-back All-American.

Feldman needed to get through No. 11 Josh Heindselman from Oklahoma to be an All-American in his redshirt freshman season. Feldman was taken down in the first period and escaped, choosing bottom to start the second period and escaping to make it a one-point match. Heindselman escaped to start the third period, but Feldman was able to take him down for three points midway through to take the lead. Heindselman escaped, tying the match and it went to sudden victory. Feldman got the takedown 36 seconds into extra time to secure his All-American spot.