

Jackson Earns Eighth-Place at NCAA Championships

The senior seals a second All-American honor in his career finale

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ST. LOUIS – Seeing Indiana wrestling senior [Nate Jackson](#) walk off the mat for the final time as a college wrestler was a bittersweet moment.

Bittersweet because although dropped an 11-7 decision to Drew Foster (UNI), the fifth-year wrestler from Crete, Illinois left Scottrade Center as Indiana's 20th two-time All-American. Jackson put the finishing touches on the best season of his career at 35-6, adding to a 105-36 varsity record.

And he did it while opting to move up a weight from last year's All-American finish at 174 lbs., entering a weight bracket with 10 former All-Americans and four NCAA finalists.

"It was a unique experience," Jackson said of his battle through the wrestle-backs to the All-American podium. "I didn't want to have to take that route, but I embraced it. I was in a dark place by myself in the warm-up room, knowing that I needed three wins to make All-American. My coach and I kept the faith, I prayed before each match, and talked through the process. You always say that you could draw it up better, but God's will doesn't let you be in control of anything."

Jackson left it all on the mat in his final match, despite the adverse result. He pulled back from a 4-2 deficit with an escape-to-takedown swing in the second period. Foster mirrored the move to regain the lead and locked his ride point in the process.

Jackson continued the attack in the third, cutting Foster before scoring a takedown to tie the bout at 8-8. Needing another point to erase the ride time, Jackson again cut Foster in a final effort for seventh place. Instead, Foster grabbed the bout's final takedown to win an 11-7 decision.

Tonight will be Jackson's second appearance on an NCAA podium after his third appearance at the greatest weekend in college wrestling. It's an honor, Jackson said, to be among the most talented wrestlers in the country and to receive national recognition for his achievements.

But the shine fades on even the best-kept medals. Jackson has a greater reward to take away from his five-year career.

"I'm most proud of the relationships I've built in my time here. I have a great relationship with my coaches and teammates, and those things last way longer than this weekend, Jackson said. "At the end of the day, I go back home to my wife and kids and the family I love. They're proud of me and here to support me, and that's the most important thing."

Indiana head coach [Duane Goldman](#) bids farewell to the seventh two-time All-American in his 25-years with the Hoosiers. It's a fairly common occurrence to hear an athlete say that they look up to their head coach. When the coach draws inspiration from an athlete—an accomplished wrestler, loving husband and father of three, in Jackson's case—it's a testament to the relationship forged between the two.

"He's been a big inspiration to the team and a good role model for a lot of people," Goldman said. "It lies in the fact that he's able to handle so much, to compete at a high level, and to adapt and make changes from last season. He threw his hat into the toughest weight class in the country and came out an All-American. He's a really good example for a lot of guys on our team to not make excuses and pursue your goals, because you can overcome a lot when you set your goals high enough."

Set your goals high enough.

With the end of Jackson's tournament run comes the conclusion of Indiana's 2016-17 wrestling season. The Hoosiers finished the year with a 10-9 dual record, their first-ever series win in the NWCA National Dual Series, and four NCAA qualifiers. Jackson's podium finish gives Goldman his fourth consecutive season with an All-American (Adam Chalfant, 2014; Taylor Walsh, 2015; [Nate Jackson](#), 2016 & 2017).

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