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Cox Wins Third NCAA Title; Smith Named Coach of the Year

Cox becomes the first three-time NCAA Champion in program history

ST. LOUIS, Mo. – With an 8-2 win in the NCAA Wrestling Championships Finals, Mizzou Wrestling senior 197-pounder **J'den Cox** (Columbia, Mo.) became the first ever three-time National Champion in program history and Mizzou Athletics history. Cox upended Minnesota's Brett Pfarr to capture the top prize in collegiate wrestling once again on Saturday night at the Scottrade Center.

Cox, who won an Olympic Bronze medal in men's freestyle wrestling at the 2016 Rio Summer Olympics, previously won the national title at 197 pounds in 2014 and 2016. The Tiger senior surpasses Mizzou legend Ben Askren, who won national titles at 174 pounds in 2006 and 2007.

"I'm honored to have accomplished another great feat, not only for myself but for my school, for my teammates and for my family," said Cox following the match. "I have a lot of respect for the history of the school, the respect of the people that came before me and that paved the way for me to be able to do what I do day in, day out. And I've accomplished great feats. And I hope to become a stepping stone for someone else to come through and break that."

The Columbia, Mo., native opened up the scoring in the championship bout, scoring a takedown in the first period. Cox started the second period down, escaping quickly then tacking on another takedown. Following a Pfarr escape, Cox led 5-1 heading into the final period where he scored another takedown. Riding time gave Cox the final point for the 8-2 result.

Cox finishes off the season with a record of 28-0, becoming just the second Tiger wrestler to finish a season with a perfect record (Askren 2006, 2007). Of Cox's 28 victories, only 11 came via decision, as he scored six falls, six technical falls, and seven major-decisions.

For his career, Cox finishes with the best winning percentage among any wrestler with over 100 wins (96.4 percent, 136-5), tied for second-most wins with Alan Waters (136), second in technical falls (20), third in major decisions (31) and tied for eighth in falls (27). He is one of two wrestlers in program history to record four All-America honors (Askren, 2004-07).

The evening capped one of the best weekends in TigerStyle history. Mizzou finished in fifth place as a team with 86.5 points, its third-highest finish in program history (3rd in 2007, 4th in 2015). In addition, Head Coach **Brian Smith** coached five All-Americans, which tied the 2009, 2013 and 2015 teams as the most in school history. For the Tigers' great season, Smith was named the National Wrestling Coaches Association Coach of the Year following the session. Cox was one of three finalists Saturday evening, which marked the first time the Tigers were represented more than once in the sixth and final session.

Falling in the finals for the Tigers was redshirt senior 149-pounder **Lavion Mayes** (Mascoutah, Ill.) and redshirt junior 157-pounder **Joey Lavallee** (Reno, Nev.). Both Tigers dropped their match to No. 1 seeds from Penn State, as Mayes fell to Zain Retherford and Lavallee lost to Jason Nolf.

Mayes finishes his career as one of the most accomplished Tigers on the mat, as he is one of five wrestlers in program history to record three All-America honors, joining Ben Askren (2004-07), Max Askren (2008-10), Drake Houdashelt (2013-15) and J'den Cox (2014-17). Among program records, Mayes ranks fourth in major decisions (29), seventh in winning percentage among wrestlers with over 100 wins (83.6 percent, 122-24) and tied for ninth in wins (122).

Lavallee finishes the season with a record of 29-2 with eight major decisions, while earning his first All-America honor. He will return next year for #TigerStyle, entering his senior season with a career record of 83-26.

For all the latest on Mizzou Wrestling, stay tuned to MUTigers.com and follow the team on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#) (MizzouWrestling).

Final Team Scores

1. Penn State, 146.5
2. Ohio State, 110
3. Oklahoma State, 110
4. Iowa, 97
- 5. Mizzou, 86.5**
6. Virginia Tech, 63.5
7. Minnesota, 62.5
8. Cornell, 60.5
9. Nebraska, 59.5
10. Michigan, 47.5

Finals Results

197: J'den Cox

Finals: #1 J'den Cox (Mizzou) dec. #2 Brett Pfarr (Minnesota): 8-2

149: Lavion Mayes

Finals: #1 Zain Retherford (Penn State) tech. fall #3 Lavion Mayes (Mizzou): 18-2 (6:43)

157: Joey Lavallee

Finals: #3 Joey Lavallee (Mizzou) maj. dec. #1 Jason Nolf (Penn State): 14-6

—MIZZOU—



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