

## Penn State Wrestler Adam Lynch Reaps Rewards for Persevering

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By **The Patriot-News** ANDY ELDER

STATE COLLEGE - Before Jan. 29, Mike and Melissa Lynch harbored no plans to spend the third week of March in Omaha, Neb., watching the NCAA Division I Wrestling Championships.

On that night, Adam Lynch, Mike and Melissa's son, secured the signature win of his unlikely senior season as Penn State's starting 141-pounder.

"That's when his mom and I started believing," Mike Lynch said.

Paired with then-No. 5 Montell Marion of the No. 1 Iowa Hawkeyes at Carver-Hawkeye Arena, the unranked Lynch built a 5-2 lead seconds into the third period. However, with 17 seconds left, Marion scored his second takedown of the period to tie the match at 6 and send it into overtime.

It appeared the frenzied crowd of 8,923 Hawkeyes fans would carry Marion to the sudden-victory win. Lynch thought the opposite.

"That part's over and done with," he said. "You just have to move on to overtime. Don't sit there and dwell on it. You've just got to go out and do what you have to do.

"Mentally, I was just like, 'I'm going to get this takedown.' I just told myself that right from the start."

Lynch silenced the throng by countering a Marion single-leg attempt and turning it into a takedown and an 8-6 win.

"That's a huge testament to him and his mental toughness," Penn State coach Cael Sanderson said. "Those guys wrestled hard. It was an exciting match. Giving up the takedown right at the end is like getting taken down twice.

"The momentum was going against him, and there was a big crowd there. He just got the job done. That's something he'll be proud of, should be proud of, for the rest of his life. When things aren't going your way, it's easy to just put your head down. He didn't. That's great character right there."

The soft-spoken Lynch, who didn't nail down the starting role until Jan. 3, the day after starter Colby Pisani quit the team, described the win in his usual understated way.

"That was pretty neat. I definitely liked wrestling there. It was pretty cool. They have a neat arena. It's kind of cool when everybody hates you," he said.

That feeling of being hated is a foreign concept to Lynch, a descendant of a storied wrestling family that has represented Mifflinburg Area High School for generations.

Adam's grandfather, Bob Lynch, wrestled the first bout of Mifflinburg's first dual meet in 1952, and coached there for 10 years. Adam's father was a PIAA runner-up in 1977 who competed for Bloomsburg University and coached Adam at Mifflinburg until his junior season.

Adam's uncle, Scott, was an NCAA 134-pound champion for Penn State in 1984.

"He was a pretty big influence. Just knowing he was a national champ was motivating. It was a goal to try to achieve," Adam Lynch said.

He simply followed those examples onto the mat.

"It's just something we've always done. I just got into it when I was young and have been doing it ever since," he said.

A standout for Mifflinburg, Adam couldn't mirror the rest of his family's postseason success. He never qualified for the PIAA tournament.

Then, after a year at the Naval Academy, he transferred to Penn State, where he languished as a backup until this season. Never once did he consider quitting.

"I loved Penn State, and I liked wrestling here. It gave me something to do and keeps me busy. I didn't think I would ever actually quit, though," he said. "I've been wrestling my whole life. I don't know if I would know what to do with my time."

That Lynch, a kinesiology major who plans to attend physical therapy school, toiled in obscurity is what makes his parents most proud.

"I think there were times he didn't know if things would work out for him, but he never considered giving up trying. He told me, 'I'm on the verge of getting good,'" Mike said.

"We're more proud of that than the wins, the perseverance and the effort he's put forth when he hadn't seen any success."

When Sanderson took over in April, Lynch immediately took to his new coach's disciplined, simplified ways.

It manifested itself in an 11-10 record, 6-2 in the Big Ten, and several wins over ranked opponents. He was No. 28 in the NCAA's final coaches rankings and No. 30 in the RPI.

"It makes me feel like I definitely have a shot at qualifying for nationals. I think I can do it," Lynch said.

He is seeded fourth for this weekend's Big Ten Championships at Michigan. The top five finishers earn automatic berths to the NCAA championships. It's an accomplishment that his coach thinks he can attain.

"I think he's going to be right in the middle of things. He's shown that he can beat guys who are ranked to be All-Americans. I really think he can be an All-American if he goes out there and wrestles hard," Sanderson said.

"He's had some lopsided losses, but it's a new day. He's a guy who made tremendous progress and he'll be at his best at Big Tens, I believe.

"Who knows? I'm not going to say he can't do this or he can't do that. I think he can win. Every time he steps on the mat, I think he can win that match."