

## FIGHTING ILLINI WRESTLING

### **Isaiah Martinez Named Illinois Wrestling Volunteer Assistant** *Former Illini Zac Brunson to lead Poeta Training Center*

**CHAMPAIGN, Ill.** – Illinois wrestling head coach Jim Heffernan announced on Friday that two-time NCAA Champion and four-time Big Ten Champion Isaiah Martinez will join the 2018-19 coaching staff as a volunteer assistant coach.

"It is with great pride that we announce the addition of Isaiah Martinez to our staff," said Heffernan. "Being the most successful wrestler in the program's history, we felt it was extremely important to keep Isaiah here to continue his legacy on the coaching side, while still competing internationally. He has great knowledge, experience and an incredible work ethic that will help our program in every aspect. We are lucky to have him continue his next chapter at Illinois."

The most decorated wrestler in program history, Martinez joins the Illinois bench after concluding his Illini wrestling career with the highest winning percentage in school history. Winning 97.5 percent of his matches, the 116 victories by Martinez is tied for 10<sup>th</sup> all-time in Illinois history.

"I'm proud and excited to continue to help out the University of Illinois," Martinez said of his addition to the coaching staff. "This is an excellent opportunity to work with a coaching staff and a team that I care dearly for."

Earlier this spring, Martinez announced that he is staying in Champaign to continue his international-level career with the Illinois Regional Training Center. Martinez is currently preparing for his Final X, best-of-three series against reigning World Champion Jordan Burroughs on June 9 in Lincoln, Nebraska with a spot on the 2018 World Championships Team on the line.

A three-time California state champion in high school, Martinez began his Illinois career with one of the greatest freshman seasons in collegiate wrestling history. Finishing his debut season undefeated with a 35-0 record and a Big Ten and NCAA title, the 157-pounder became the first collegiate wrestler to finish his freshman season without a loss since Cael Sanderson (Iowa State) in 1999. Following the season, Martinez was named Freshman of the Year by the Big Ten, InterMat and Amateur Wrestling News.

Martinez added a second NCAA and Big Ten title at 157 pounds as a redshirt sophomore in 2016, culminating with a 6-5 defeat of Penn State's Jason Nolf in the season rubber match at

2010, culminating with a 9-3 defeat of Penn State's Jason Noh in the season rubber match at Madison Square Garden.

Moving up to 165 pounds for his junior and senior seasons, Martinez again added a third and fourth conference crown to become just the 16<sup>th</sup> Big Ten wrestler to do so. Combined with Coach Heffernan's four titles, the two became the first coach-athlete duo to both win four Big Ten Championships.

Recognized throughout his career for his historic achievements, Martinez was named the 2018 Big Ten Medal of Honor recipient this spring. Additionally, Martinez is a two-time Illinois Dike Eddleman Male Athlete of the Year winner and a two-time Big Ten Wrestler of the Championships.

Hailing from Lemoore, California, Martinez graduated with a degree in sociology.

In addition to Martinez joining the Illinois coaching staff, former Illini All-American Zac Brunson will begin coaching at the Poeta Training Center in Lake Forest, Illinois that was created and previously ran by current Illinois assistant coach Mike Poeta. Since its inception six years ago, the Center has produced 26 state champions.

For complete coverage of Fighting Illini wrestling, go to [FIGHTINILLINI.com](http://FIGHTINILLINI.com) and follow @IlliniWrestling on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/IlliniWrestling) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/IlliniWrestling).



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