

Penn State's Retherford and Washington Earn 2017-18 Big Ten Medal of Honor

Penn State Senior All-Americans Garner Big Ten's Most Prestigious Award

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Seniors Zain Retherford and Haleigh Washington have been selected as Penn State's recipients for the prestigious Big Ten Medal of Honor for 2017-18.

The Big Ten, the nation's oldest collegiate conference, commemorates the 104th anniversary of a very unique tradition - the Big Ten Medal of Honor. The conference's most exclusive award was the first of its kind in intercollegiate athletics to recognize academic and athletic excellence. The Big Ten Medal of Honor was first awarded in 1915 to one student from the graduating class of each university who had "attained the greatest proficiency in athletics and scholastic work."

In 1982, the award was expanded to include one female student-athlete from each member institution. Big Ten institutions feature more than 9,500 students competing in intercollegiate athletics, but only 28 earn this prestigious award on an annual basis. In more than 100 years of the Big Ten Medal of Honor, nearly 1,400 students have earned this distinction.

Earlier this spring, Retherford and Washington were named recipients of the 2018 Ernest B. McCoy Memorial Award, which is presented annually to one Penn State senior male and one senior female student-athlete who have combined successful athletic participation with academic excellence.

Retherford, a finance major with a 3.73 grade-point average, won his third straight NCAA individual title at 149 in March, downing Lock Haven's Ronnie Perry in the finals. Retherford ended his season with a 31-0 mark and posted a 126-3 career record. He finished his Penn State career riding a 94-match win streak dating to his true freshman year. His 19 career NCAA Tournament wins are second on Penn State's all-time list (Ed Ruth had 21). He is a four-time All-American, Penn State's second three-time NCAA Champion (joining Ruth) and helped the Nittany Lions capture the last three NCAA team titles. Retherford also sits at seventh on Penn State's all-time win list.

From Benton, Pennsylvania, Retherford's honors are numerous: two-time Hodge Trophy Winner, three-time NCAA Champion, three-time Big Ten Champion, three-time first team All-Big Ten, three-time NCAA Most Dominant Wrestler, four-time All-American, NCAA Championship Outstanding Wrestler (2017), Penn State's 10th four-time All-American, Penn State's second three-time NCAA Champion, 53 career falls are tied for tops in Penn State history, 2017 U.S. World Team Trial Champion, member U.S. World Team, 2017 CoSIDA First Team Academic All-American, 2016 CoSIDA Second Team Academic All-American, two-time NWCA First Team National All-Academic Team, 2016-17 Penn State Male Student-Athlete of the Year and three-time Academic All-Big Ten.

Washington, a senior captain of the 2017 Big Ten Champion and NCAA semifinalist women's volleyball team, graduated last December with a 3.79 GPA in philosophy. A three-time First Team AVCA All-American, she earned Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year honors in 2017 and was a four-time All-Big Ten honoree. Washington helped Penn State to a 33-2 record and an NCAA semifinal appearance in her senior campaign. Over her four-year career, she helped the Nittany Lions to a 121-21 record, and the 2014 NCAA Championship.

From Colorado Springs, Colorado, Washington is a three-time CoSIDA Academic All-American, earning second team honors in 2015 and 2017, and third team honors in 2016. She also earned Academic All-Big Ten honors in her sophomore, junior and senior seasons. She was a member of the Parmi Nous Honor Society, the Spiritus Leonitus Honor Society, and the Lion's Paw Honor Society, along with being the recipient of Penn State's Dotterer Philosophy Award. Washington was the 2017 Senior CLASS Award® winner for NCAA® Division I women's volleyball and a nominee for the Class of 2018 Honda Sport Award for Volleyball.

Since her graduation last December, Washington has pursued her dream of playing professional volleyball, recently completing her first season as a starting middle for Olimpia Teodora Ravenna in the A2 Italian Women's Volleyball Championship League.