

**From:** Donghia, Patrick Andrew pad11@psu.edu

**Subject:** Nittany Lion Wrestling Welcomes Jimmy Kennedy as Assistant Coach, Promotes Jake Varner to Head of Penn State Olympic RTC

**Date:** November 12, 2021 at 3:01 PM

**To:** undisclosed-recipients;

PD

## ***Nittany Lion Wrestling Welcomes Jimmy Kennedy as Assistant Coach, Promotes Jake Varner to Head of Penn State Olympic RTC***

Former Illinois All-American joins Penn State staff; Varner to head Penn State RTC

**UNIVERSITY PARK, Pa.; November 12, 2021** – The Penn State Nittany Lion wrestling team welcomes Jimmy Kennedy as assistant coach as Jake Varner has been promoted to head the Penn State Olympic Regional Training Center. Kennedy joins the staff in Varner's former assistant coach slot while Varner will now head up the efforts of the Penn State Olympic RTC/Nittany Lion Wrestling Club.

Kennedy comes to Penn State after serving as an assistant coach for the Northwestern Wildcats, which was preceded by an All-American career as a wrestler for the University of Illinois. Kennedy served as an assistant coach at Northwestern from 2018 through 2021.

He was a three-time All-American for the Illini, hitting the podium in 2008, 2009 and 2011. Kennedy ended his collegiate career with a 119-24 record. A native of Ingleside, Ill., and a graduate of Grant Community High School in Fox Lake, Ill., Kennedy also has a lengthy list of freestyle accolades. He was a member of the U.S. World Team in 2014 and finished second in the U.S. World Team Trials in 2013 and 2017. Kennedy was the U.S. Open Champion in 2016, won the Paris International in 2017 and the Yasar Dogu in 2014. Kennedy won the Intercontinental Cup in 2013, the Guelph Open in 2012 and 2013 and the New York Athletic Club International in 2012.

"We are excited to be adding Jimmy Kennedy to the Penn State wrestling staff as our volunteer assistant coach," said Penn State head coach Cael Sanderson. "This is an exciting day for Penn State wrestling and the Penn State Olympic Regional Training Center. With the ascension of the Penn State RTC and Nittany Lion Wrestling Club, we are now in a position to dedicate singular attention to running the RTC/NLWC as head coach and point person. We're fortunate to have Jake Varner take on the duties of head coach of the RTC/NLWC."

Varner has served as an assistant coach for the Nittany Lions since 2016. He came to Penn State after an outstanding career at Iowa State University. The Cyclone ended his collegiate career as the best in the country, winning the 197-pound title in 2010. Varner posted a 31-0 record as a senior and was 121-10 over the course of his career. The NCAA title he won as a senior was his second, having won his first as a junior in 2009.

Varner was the 184-pound NCAA finalist as a sophomore and freshman. One of Iowa State's all-time greats, Varner was a four-time All-American, four-time NCAA finalist and two-time NCAA Champion. As a freestyle wrestler, Varner reached the sport's pinnacle by claiming the 2012 Olympic Gold Medal at 96kg in London. His performance in the Olympics capped off a stellar 2012 that also saw him win the Pan American Games Gold and the Yarygan Bronze. He also claimed a World Bronze in 2011 in Istanbul.

"Jake is an Olympic Champion, and National Champion and well respected internationally," Sanderson continued. "With Jake now helming the RTC, we are excited to welcome Jimmy Kennedy to our Penn State wrestling coaching staff as our volunteer assistant. Jimmy's experience as an All-American wrestler and an assistant coach in the Big Ten are great assets and we're grateful that he is joining our staff."

The Nittany Lions will trek to the Spooky Nook Sports Complex on Sunday, Nov. 13, for two dual meets in Manheim, Pa. Penn State will face Sacred Heart at 5:30 p.m. and Oregon State at 7 p.m.

(approximate).

The 2021-22 Penn State Wrestling season is presented by the Family Clothesline. Penn State Fans are encouraged to follow Penn State wrestling via twitter at @pennstateWREST, on Penn State Wrestling's Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/pennstatewrestling](http://www.facebook.com/pennstatewrestling) and on Instagram at [www.instagram.com/pennstatewrest](http://www.instagram.com/pennstatewrest). **This is PENN STATE. WRESTLING lives here.**

Patrick Donghia  
Strategic Communications  
Penn State Athletics  
Office 814 865 1757