

# 2022 NCAA Women's Volleyball Championship

Saturday, December 17, 2022

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

CHI Health Center Arena

## Texas Longhorns

## Coach Jerritt Elliott

## Logan Eggleston

## Asjia O'Neal

### Press Conference



Texas d. Louisville

25-22, 25-14, 26-24

THE MODERATOR: Coach Elliott, if you would please start with an opening statement about tonight's match.

COACH ELLIOTT: Well, first of all, I want to thank the city of Omaha. The way that they ran this event was spectacular. The NCAA committee that put so many hours in following us around and selecting this NCAA bracket is really difficult. And I know how much work goes into it, and they do it out of the goodness of their hearts. So I want to thank them.

Congratulations to Louisville. Amazing season. It's really hard when one team has to lose. I've been on the other side of that a lot of times. And it's really challenging. We were there two years ago. But what Dani is building at Louisville is really special. She's building her own brand. She's doing it by empowering women, and it's great where the sport is headed. So much credit to her to get all the way there.

For me, I've been coaching 22 years at Texas and I think another six years or seven years at USC prior to that. And I told my wife today this was the most important match I've ever coached in regards to the match I wanted to win the most because of the two women sitting beside me but also the 16 women that were battling every single day in our gym.

And they -- as a coach, when you manage teams, there's a lot of problems, sometimes. And this team I didn't have one the entire season. Everybody gave. They were committed to the process. That's because of our

leadership.

And why it was so important to me is because this is a life lesson. They're going to be leaders some day in the community. And they're going to have to lead. And to remember the giving that they gave to one another, the commitment to that, when not everybody gets all the glamour and glitz, they did it.

And most importantly, you know, obviously for the woman that is sitting next to me, she has done so much for this volleyball program, along with Asjia, they made a stand in many different ways and made a lot of young girls really proud.

What they've done on the court, off the court, they've really shown growth, development and a lot of care for the goodness of this country. And I'm just really proud of them.

And to win for Logan, her senior year, when we've been through so many battles -- you guys don't know, but I think she didn't sleep the first time we lost at BYU and said I'm going to get my natty, and we had many talks and many frustration deals. And she kept to the process and led this group.

And there's so many people that deserve credit for this. My staff, David and Eric have done a tremendous job. Everyone behind the scenes. I'd like to thank my wife for always supporting me because it's really challenging. But I'm super relieved. I'm super happy. And I'm super happy for the University of Texas and what they've done. And, again, a remarkable season.

**Q. Logan, I think the last two, three years you've had to come out after the season ending loss and talk to us. Wondering what it's like being on the other end celebrating?**

LOGAN EGGLESTON: Feels a lot better this way, I will say that. I'm just so grateful to have gotten the opportunity to have a fifth year and come back and to get to play with these girls. There's so many girls on the team I wouldn't

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have had a chance to be teammates with without this COVID year.

I'm forever grateful for that and grateful for all the hard work they put in this year to make this happen. Yeah, it's a lot more fun to not be crying sad tears at the end of the season. We can actually say we won our last game. It feels amazing.

**Q. Coach, you've coached and played against some of the greatest players in the whole history of this game. Wonder if you can put Logan's ability, career, impact in perspective with some of the greats you've seen?**

COACH ELLIOTT: It's a great question. I said any last comments today at practice, and my little freshman, Emma, said, "winners win."

To become one of the greats in any sport you've got to win a championship. And Logan did that now. So she puts herself on an extremely elite level along with the rest of the players.

But for what she's done for this university, what she's done to take advantage of every resource possible, what she's given in every aspect, I wouldn't be surprised if we have a statue at some point for her somewhere on campus.

**Q. Asjia, could you put in perspective what this means to you and the team, because you guys have been on the other side of this many times?**

ASJIA O'NEAL: As Logan said, we've definitely felt the heartbreak of losing at the end of your season. And we just always have identified ourselves as a team that has that chip on our shoulder. We always have really talented players and really talented coaches, and we put ourselves in great position to get to a final four. And we haven't been able to accomplish it in 10 years in winning a national championship.

But it's just, like Jerritt said, it's the big sigh of relief, and all the hard work has amounted to something incredible and to be able to do that for Logan in her last year, it's a surreal moment.

There's like no words I can describe how we feel right now. But I'm just so proud of everyone in our staff, on our team that's put in all the hours together and we've just created an amazing culture here and we were able to go and pull it out in an incredible way.

**Q. Logan, when you hear your coach say those things about you and you share a hug afterwards, what do you think? What goes through your head when you**

**hear him talking about you like that?**

LOGAN EGGLESTON: I would not be half the person I am without him. He's just sacrificed and given so much to me as a player and as a person. And so he's the reason I am who I am. I'm just so grateful for him and just glad to be up here celebrating. It's no words right now, seriously. I'm so grateful for him because I wouldn't be the person or player I am if it wasn't for Jerritt.

**Q. 24-22, timeout Texas, what was the talk in the huddle? And how did you all reel off four straight points to close this out?**

ASJIA O'NEAL: Really it was just keep that sense of urgency. We still had all the momentum, I felt like. It was our game. I knew we were fully capable of coming back and being up in the game. Like, we have put in so many hours in the practice gyms. Our coaches put us in the situation where we're fighting against something like that.

It's like a sense of serenity. We were calm and confident in what we could do. We just went back and went to the basics and were able to pull it out.

LOGAN EGGLESTON: We've been in so many situations this year in practice, in games that we've had to come back and stay steady when we were down. I think we just trusted all the work we've done in those situations and trusted each other really, really well and that's kind of how it happens.

**Q. What's the culture of this program bring in so many transfers and still band together and win a national championship?**

LOGAN EGGLESTON: Every single person on our team is just an amazing person. That's the most important thing. Jerritt surrounded us with people who wanted to be here, who are great individuals and committed to the same goal.

I give a lot of credit to him for surrounding us with the right people who are committed and love one another. And I think when you have that, it's hard to lose. You can always look at each other in the eyes and know that they want it just as much as you and they want it for you.

Every single person that came into our program had that mentality and had that just really good spirit about them and it just blended so well together.

Like I said earlier, those are my best friends for life. We're excited to come out -- we talk about it all the time -- we get to come back in 10 years and celebrate this. We'll have families. That's what we're looking forward to, we want a

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reason to come back and unite again, and see each other older and grown.

And just amazing people. I give credit to every single person that came in just committed to wanting something big and doing anything they can to make it happen.

**Q. Jerritt, great blues singers are good at their jobs because they've been through something. You guys have been through it and you came out on top. How did those past disappointments help these girls find it in themselves to get this done against a very quality opponent?**

COACH ELLIOTT: I mean, the two -- I think back to our, now, two national championships. When you have players that are driven and committed to the process, they're talking about the right things. They're basing the right way every single day that they show up work ethic-wise.

I honestly told my staff I've just got to stay out of the way this tournament and be relaxed and make sure that they feel that because sometimes I've got to be the bus driver. But they were kind of driving the bus. I felt really good.

I could steer them, mold them to what we needed to do, make sure they were in a good mindset. Sent some positive texts today out to some of our girls and making sure that they responded and they didn't make the match bigger than it was.

But they've got a lot of grit. This team fights every single day.

**Q. We've talked about this over the last decade, and I've teased you because when you won 10 years ago you sat up there and you looked like death, like you just finished a marathon. Tonight, relatively speaking, you look pretty relaxed and pretty good. How do you feel personally?**

COACH ELLIOTT: Yeah, I'm relieved. I'm so thankful. I'm honored to be the one that got to coach with these women. I'm honored to be the one who leads this program. I'm honored that Chris Plonski, who's sitting in the back, hired me and believed in me when I was wet behind the years at 32 years old or 31.

I don't think people understand how hard it is to get to a national championship. You basically spend every living moment thinking about what your program needs, the adjustments, the work of traveling and recruiting, the management of not only your team and your staff but the 80 people underneath that for the goal of winning a championship for the university. My goal coming in was to

make this brand better and to bring in empowered women and get them better.

I think, to your question, we do a lot of communicating with our players. And we teach them how to communicate, tell them they can come into our room and be mad at me, be upset at me, but most importantly, there's a lot of good people surrounding them.

Everybody that I hire are great people that love people. I think that's a really big thing. But for me, this is just -- I'm ecstatic inside. I'm still numb, I can't believe we actually did it because we've been pushing for so many years. I believed that we were going to do it today. But I'm just so happy for our players and our staff.

**Q. Coach, obviously you have a lot of great offense. Did Keonilei and Zoe add something that some of your other great teams have missed?**

COACH ELLIOTT: We've been able to get more kids into the school on the defensive side. That's been a major focus for us. But they've obviously added a lot. K-lei and Zoe and frankly Emma -- she doesn't know she's a freshman. She's just nails.

The back core of that and the belief how they work with each other, the way they watch film together on their own, they motivated each other and just had a positive mindset every single day and smiling and having it.

And I actually told Kayla at match point, she's like, come in here and hold us. I said, she's going to ace here. And that serve was so clean and hard and she did it.

Seeing them run towards that the dog pile was amazing. I hope it was better than the 2012 dog pile.

**Q. You guys are actually incredibly close to a perfect season this year. But I hope this isn't a dumb question but was the loss at Iowa State in some way a help? Was it a little bit of a reset in the season? And did it help in terms of the rest of the way through the season?**

LOGAN EGGLESTON: 100 percent. I don't think it's ever good to go undefeated in a season because you don't know how to battle through adversity. I think we learned a lot about ourselves as players and as a team and through that game and what we could do better.

And I think we really did a great job of learning after that game. We came back into the gym and we worked really hard. We watched film and we all were committed to getting better.



And I think if we hadn't have lost that game, I don't know that some of the conversations we had and some of the areas that we improved on would have happened.

So I'm honestly really grateful that we hit that kind of roadblock in the middle of the season because it made us so much better throughout the end.

**Q. You were lined up with the team there at match point. What were you saying to Kayla Caffey at that point?**

COACH ELLIOTT: I said Kayla has ice in her veins and she's going to get an ace. That's specifically what I said. I may have thrown some other word in there. But she's just been nails all the time. She's tough as nails. So she hit that serve -- to serve that ball in this magnitude of a stage, hit it the way she did, she hit it clean, which is what we always talk about, no spin and a ton of velocity, a lot of pressure. She did it with -- that's what so great about this team. Other people can carry each other and make points and make runs.

I told them at 24-22, sideout, we're going to go on a run here and win this match. They believed in that. They made some plays. Really long rally there at some point.

**Q. Can you take us through that last play? And did you think Kayla as going to ace it out, were you as confident as Jerritt there?**

ASJIA O'NEAL: I was pretty confident. I was literally standing there talking to God in the moment, I'm giving it up to you; I know you're going to take us to victory. I literally saw the serve coming out of my peripherals, going over the net, I was like, oh, that's an ace. I turned around and collapsed to the ground.

LOGAN EGGLESTON: Yeah, we see her serving every single day during practice. She probably aced me, like, nine times today during serve and pass. I know she has dinner.

Honestly, anytime Kayla is back there serving, I know it's going to be a solid serve. I don't have to even watch it because I know it's going to be amazing. We had all the trust in her, and she made us proud.

COACH ELLIOTT: Thank you for making this sport better. There's a lot of growth happening, and it's because of what you guys do and believing in these women. Thank you for writing and covering us and doing a great job this week. Thank you.