

2024 NCAA Women's Volleyball Championship

Wednesday, December 18, 2024

Louisville, Kentucky, USA

KFC Yum! Center

Penn State Nittany Lions

Coach Katie

Schumacher-Cawley

Taylor Trammell

Jess Mruzik

Camryn Hannah

Semifinal Press Conference

KATIE SCHUMACHER-CAWLEY: I just want to thank the city of Louisville and the university. This has been such a great time for these girls already. You guys do it right and put on a great show. We're excited to be here and to get to practice a little bit this afternoon and just soak this all in. Thank you.

Q. Katie, your reaction to the players being named All-Americans and Izzy being Freshman of the Year?

KATIE SCHUMACHER-CAWLEY: Yeah, I'm really proud of that. I think it's a well-deserved honor for these players, and it's great for the program. These guys have put a lot of work in to get to where they are today, and I'm really proud of them.

Q. For the players, I think every season has three big parts. You have the non-conference, the conference, and then the postseason. Can you talk about each section and how you've changed as a team.

TAYLOR TRAMMELL: Yeah, I'll talk about preseason. I think our preseason was really tough this year, and I think us being together since the spring and then going on a foreign trip and then going into that, it just made us bond together so much more. We just felt a lot more prepared than in previous years.

JESS MRUZIK: I think the Big Ten schedule is just so grueling. It definitely prepares us for the NCAA Tournament, and in that way we're playing top 5, top 10, definitely top 25 teams day in and day out. So it prepares



us well for the NCAA Tournament for sure.

CAMRYN HANNAH: I think postseason we've kind of had to suck it up a little bit because you know that each moment is a little bit bigger. But being seniors, we kind of had to remind the team: Don't make it bigger than it is. We're playing for something on our chest, but we're playing for each other, more than that.

Q. When you talk about playing a conference team, there's only two conferences here, ACC and the Big Ten. We've all seen each other so many times. That can be good and bad. What do you think the good part is, and what do you think the bad part is?

JESS MRUZIK: I would say it's good for sure. It's so cool for the two conferences that there are two teams from each conference, and it just shows how strong these two conferences are.

I guess the downside would be like we've seen them already and the two other teams have seen each other already.

Q. What's the challenge of having played a team several times and then having that third or fourth or second time? Does it get in your head if you've lost? Or is it just get revenge? Is it just play your game and go on?

CAMRYN HANNAH: I think the postseason is a different season, but it makes it a little bit harder because it's hard to beat someone twice. They have a different hunger when they come at you. There's a different fight in the game.

But it's about how you respond to that moment as a team. And if you let it get into your head, then it makes it a mental game; but if not, then it stays physical.

Q. I'm curious what your reaction to Izzy's season has been and how you've seen her grow.

TAYLOR TRAMMELL: I think Izzy is such an amazing player. And I've said this before, but she genuinely does play like a fifth-year out there on the court. I think we're



just so proud to see her grow and thrive in the college environment and be able to play this season with her sister.

It's just been great to see her.

Q. For all of you, how would you describe Coach's diagnosis and how you talk about some of the little moments? Because it truly changes how you view life. I'm curious how that shows up in your everyday moments, like little moments. It doesn't have to be a big match.

JESS MRUZIK: Yeah, I think sometimes we can get caught up in the moment. We've been playing this sport for most of our lives, so it can seem like the most important thing in your life sometimes.

But the way that Coach is able to come in and just be the same every single day no matter what's going on puts so much into perspective for us because this really is just a sport. Obviously we want to win, and that's what we're here for.

But at the end of the day, it's just a game, and we don't have to take this too seriously because sometimes life outside of sports can be more challenging than what you're dealing with in volleyball.

TAYLOR TRAMMELL: Yeah, we are playing for something bigger than us. I also think it's important to realize that this is the same Katie from last year and the year before this, cancer or not. She still comes into that gym every day with the same fire and intensity.

I think that's something that people need to realize. Katie has pushed this program on her back year after year, and she's pushed us this year to the Final Four, and I'm just excited to be a part of all those years.

Q. Coach, how are you able to show up with the same energy? What is your mindset throughout this all?

KATIE SCHUMACHER-CAWLEY: Well, I mean, I'm fortunate that I'm at a great hospital and getting great care. I think that being around this team and the staff is when I feel most normal. For me, being at practice and in the gym with them makes it a whole lot easier.

Yeah, people talk about inspiration and things like that. I'll tell you I'm going to UPenn, and every day I walk into the hospital there, and the children's hospital is right across the street. So for me, that's my perspective. There's babies and younger kids that are really sick, and I'm going to be healthy and I will get through this, and it's just part of my

journey and my life right now.

But that, for me, is inspiration. But being with these guys makes it a whole lot easier and fun, and I'm happy for them and excited to experience these next couple days with them.

Q. I'm curious for the players what your experience has been like here in Louisville so far, and what are you looking forward to about this week?

CAMRYN HANNAH: It's been awesome. I got my nails done. We showed up and we had a police escort. We brought so many people with us that just want to support us. I think they've just made us feel really welcomed, and that's really nice.

TAYLOR TRAMMELL: It's a super bougie experience. Super, super bougie. I mean, this is nice. Y'all really did your big ones.

Q. What are some of your thoughts for the players on Nebraska? Obviously a huge match coming up.

CAMRYN HANNAH: I think they're a great team. We knew that. That's how you get here. I think so are we. It'll be a battle.

Q. What are some of your thoughts on this season, what things you've been able to do well in particular to get to this point.

JESS MRUZIK: I think this team does such a good job of just moving through things and moving on really fast. We've put together such a good body of work throughout the season.

But if we win or if we lose, it's always on to the next. We never talk about rankings. We never talk about awards. We're never really talking about other teams or hyping people up or anything.

I think we do a really good job of just living in the moment and, if we win, great, we're moving on to the next to beat the next team; if we lose, great, we're moving on to beat the next team.

We do a good job of moving through things pretty quickly.

Q. What does it mean to you to be carrying on the legacy of this program, the latest Final Four team?

CAMRYN HANNAH: I mean, I think it means a lot. We talk every day with just walking into the gym at Penn State is a different atmosphere than anywhere else in the



country. Playing at Rec Hall is a different experience, being supported by people at Penn State is a different experience.

Being able to wear these jerseys and play for this team under Katie, as well, is a dream come true. We grew up watching Penn State volleyball. They were great back then, and we're great now.

Q. Katie, you said you feel most normal -- let me ask the players, what is normal with your coach around?

CAMRYN HANNAH: If I could call Katie Mom during practice, I would, 100 percent. Mom, can I...

JESS MRUZIK: Yeah, she definitely cares about you so much. The first thing she asks you when she sees you is how's your day going, how did your test go today, is your homework done? She really does care about you. I think that is, like, her normal.

TAYLOR TRAMMELL: She also is always in our lives, and I think that she cares about everybody's families and things like that, like whose family member is doing this. My brother just had a baby; she checked in on him. She's texting my mom. I'm like, oh, my gosh. She's part of the family.

That's her normal, just being a part of our lives the same way she's a part of ours every single day.

Q. Katie, I guess normal to you is exactly that, then; is that right?

KATIE SCHUMACHER-CAWLEY: Yeah, I love being with this group and our daily interactions. Like I said, I have the best staff around and just people that care. I just want to see these ladies do the best they can on and off the floor. I'm just excited about their future and that they've been a part of this program.

Q. Jess, you guys have had some big comeback wins, been able to win in a lot of different situations. How important has that been?

JESS MRUZIK: Yeah, super important. It just builds these micro doses of trust. And I think the first time we ever talked about that was in preseason against Kentucky when we were away and we reverse swept them. That was the first building block into that trust. I think that's been accumulating over the course of our season.

Against Creighton on Sunday in that third set I think is when you definitely saw that come to fruition. We're hoping to just keep building on that.

Q. How would you say that international trip helped build camaraderie with the team and got you to this point?

CAMRYN HANNAH: I think it just proved how well we can be together as a team. Every single day we were together for at least 24 hours, literally every single day, and we were laughing and we were playing volleyball. And it was like, okay, you'd walk around the city for seven hours and sightsee, and then you'd have to switch gears and play volleyball and figure out how to be in a different mindset.

But we could help each other with that, and it's helped us on the court. If we're in a bad mindset, I go to Jess, and I'm like, Jess, you got to snap me out of this right now. Give me something else to think about. And she can do that. But that's the trust that she just talked about, like building that in the beginning has really helped us now.

Q. That trip you guys played against the Italian national team, what was that experience like?

TAYLOR TRAMMELL: It was really cool, obviously, to get that opportunity to play against them. And then also like for people like us that are looking at going pro, it kind of gave us a little dabble what life would be like to play against foreign players and their pro teams. Yeah, it was super cool.

And the view outside the gym was amazing with the mountains. It was so beautiful. It was right by Lake Como, and it was amazing.

Q. How would you describe Penn State volleyball culture? Do you guys go in day in and day out grinding at the craft? How would you describe Penn State culture?

JESS MRUZIK: Yeah, I think Quinn Menger on our team describes it best. Penn State has always been maybe not the best team on paper, but they are going to fight you tooth and nail if you wanted to beat them.

And I think that just totally encapsulates Penn State basketball, like scrapping, out-working, grittiness. And some of the people who have been through this program are some of the baddest women to ever do it.

Q. I'm curious if you've watched the videos of previous teams winning National Championships and flying onto the court. What goes through your mind when you're watching that?

CAMRYN HANNAH: Straight chills. We watched Megan



win a National Championship. We're all like, Megan, what did that feel like? It's a crazy experience because we know her now. And just knowing we can be around people like that and try to uphold that same legacy, it's really special.

Q. Jess, I'm curious your thoughts on your backcourt this year, Gill, Ava, Joce playing pretty significant roles.

JESS MRUZIK: Yeah, it's really cool. One of my favorite rotations is when all three of those littles are back there just flying around, and it makes our lives a lot easier up in the front court.

But it's awesome because they just fly around and make some insane defensive plays that make it really hard for the other team to score.

Q. Taylor, what's your impression of the arena here? Obviously you have practice coming up after this.

TAYLOR TRAMMELL: We've seen the court, but obviously the KFC Yum! Center is amazing. Lots of big people have played here, and we're just excited to be here. That's really it. It's a nice place, and like I said, this has been great.

Q. Playing in your home state, what does that mean to have so many friends and family here watching you?

TAYLOR TRAMMELL: I'm super excited. I think coming back for my fifth year, this was one of the main things I was thinking about is I knew Louisville would be hosting it. And I'm super excited that I'm here with this group of girls and that the team gets to experience it, and it's our first time experiencing, too. And it's just really cool.

Q. I'm curious how you've seen these three players up here really make an impact on your program and the things that they've brought to the table.

KATIE SCHUMACHER-CAWLEY: Yeah, I think each of them are different in their own way, yet so competitive and caring. The senior class has -- I put a lot on them to do the right things and to help the program get to where it is today, and they've done exactly that. I'm really proud of them.

Q. Just curious the camaraderie that you guys have, if maybe you have a best hair braider on the team, different things like that, to bring you guys closer together?

JESS MRUZIK: I would say the foreign trip definitely did it for us. That was what made us so close.

I don't know if there's a best hair braider. Maybe Quinn probably. Quinn is probably the best hair braider. But we have all these little micro traditions that we do before the game, and it's just cool to see everyone get ready together and do those.

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