

# 2024 NCAA Women's Volleyball Championship

Friday, December 20, 2024

Louisville, Kentucky, USA

KFC Yum! Center

## Nebraska Cornhuskers

### Coach John Cook

### Lexi Rodriguez

### Andi Jackson

### Merritt Beason

#### Semifinals Press Conference



did that a lot. She was -- it was one of the best performances I've ever seen by an outside hitter. Finding ways to make kills, hitting off our block, hitting really sharp cross-court. She willed that team and made some great plays, and that was one of them there.

We thought we had it, but she did a great job of hitting off our fingertips.

**Q. Coach, I know it's a tough time to talk about it, can you reflect on this senior class, though, and how much they've meant to you over the years here?**

JOHN COOK: I told them in the locker room that this senior class has done some amazing things. They've been to three Final Fours. They've played for two National Championships. They pretty much have inspired a generation of volleyball young players, a generation of fans that have really come to love volleyball and follow this team.

We broke attendance records at every place we played this year. We broke the world attendance record. We have the sellout streak attendance record. This team actually played at the highest level of any team I've ever coached statistically in how we measure things.

It's been an honor to coach them, and they've done an amazing job, and they're also just great people to be around. They're fun. So just really proud and happy for what they've accomplished. We'll get over this in time.

**Q. Lexi and Merritt, you were the ones that led this team this season, a part of that senior class. What are you guys going to miss the most about this year's group?**

LEXI RODRIGUEZ: That's an easy one: All the people, all my teammates. All the coaches. (Crying.) I'm sorry.

Just everyone, every single person that's a part of this program, just truly amazing people, and they really changed my life. They just believed in me, every single person every single day from the moment I stepped on campus, and you can't find that anywhere. You truly can't.

Penn State - 3, Nebraska - 2

JOHN COOK: That was a great match. Got to give Penn State a lot of credit. I thought we put them away in Game 4, and they found a way to win that game. Carried a lot of momentum into Game 5.

Tremendous performance by Jess. She hit some shots we had no answer for. Again, hat's off. Penn State beat us twice this year, so they deserve it.

**Q. What are the plays that you needed to make that would have kept Penn State from being able to hang around in the match?**

JOHN COOK: We had that lead in Game 4, and we hit a couple balls to libero, and they transitioned. They got a couple aces, and we just didn't make a couple plays. Just a couple plays from finishing that thing off.

It was a great match by both teams. It's a bummer somebody had to lose it.

**Q. Coach, in that fourth set, I think it was the first match point that you guys had, it looked like it really was initially going to be for your team. What was that ruling, and did the officials explain why it ended up going to Penn State? The one I think some of your teammates started to jump out. I think even a couple of cameramen were coming onto the court to see you guys celebrate. I thought it was the first match point. It may have been the second one, though.**

JOHN COOK: They hit a ball off our -- we touched it. Jess



I'm just so grateful for everyone, and I'll say it for my entire life that this program was the best thing that ever happened to me.

MERRITT BEASON: I think just kind of what Lexi said, like the people are what make the place. Obviously these girls are so special, and it's not because they're great volleyball players and they're good at what they do, but it's because of who they are as human beings and the respect that they hold themselves with and just how they carry themselves. It's really hard to find 14 girls that have a whole lot of respect for themselves and are great human beings.

So I think that's irreplaceable, and everything that we've accomplished together and the memories and the dumb, little silly things in the locker room, those are the things we're going to remember the most.

Like Lexi said, our staff, it's from top to bottom, from Coach to support staff to nutritionists to trainers, everyone in between is supporting you and cheering for you in any way they can. They listen to you. They do literally anything that you need, and they're going to do their best to do it for you, and that's something that's really, really hard to find.

**Q. Andi, when you hear them talk and talk about the things they're going to miss, what goes through your head of things you're going to miss about them?**

ANDI JACKSON: So much, just going off of what they've already said, but the seniors are truly the most empowered, selfless women that I've ever met. They are the epitome of Nebraska volleyball, and they hold themselves so well, and they represent our program so well.

It's been such an honor to play by their side and be their teammate, and I'm so proud to get to call myself Merritt's and Lexi's teammate, truly. I could flaunt it all day long. It's going to be heartbreaking losing them, but they have such bright futures ahead, and I'm really excited to see what's in store for them.

Just the impact they've had not only on our program but women's volleyball as a whole, it's such an achievement in itself. I want them to be so proud, and I don't want them to hang their heads because what they've accomplished, like no one can say. It's such an amazing thing they've done with our program and women's volleyball as a whole, and that goes for all our seniors. It's truly an honor to get to play with them.

**Q. Andi, Penn State's coach said a few minutes ago that she felt like you had a hundred kills in this match.**

**Obviously you had -- you were great in the first couple of sets, but what adjustments did you see Penn State make, especially in those last couple of sets, to really deny you the kills and deny the points for you guys?**

ANDI JACKSON: I think credit where credit is due, they're a great defensive team, and they showed that tonight. They adjusted really well on their block, and they picked up a lot of our swings, and I think that that was a huge factor for them.

**Q. Coach, forgive me for asking this after a loss, but nobody knows Dani better than you do. When you talk about Nebraska's impact on the sport, obviously she's a Nebraska kid. You coached her and coached with her. Just what are your thoughts about her making it back to a championship match and what she's meant to this program?**

JOHN COOK: First of all, I think she's done one of the greatest turnarounds of any college volleyball program, coming here to Louisville, getting the Final Four, playing for a National Championship, and now she's going to get to do it again.

This place broke the attendance record for the Final Four. It will be packed on Sunday.

The storied thing is finally a female is going to win a National Championship. That's one of the silver linings in all this. I hope DeBeer is okay and everybody's full speed to go. It should be a great match.

I hope people appreciate what she's done here. Penn State has been great for -- they've won more National Championships than anybody, I think. She came here, and it wasn't a power program, and she's done an amazing job.

**Q. You just partially answered my question about a woman holding that trophy for the first time on Sunday. I know you would have rather seen it happen a different year, but you've done it four times. Can you speak to the significance of that? Also seeing Katie and what she's battled this year.**

JOHN COOK: There's two great stories for you guys to write about, Dani and what she's done getting this team here, and Katie, all her challenges, what she's going through. She put together a great team, and she's found a way to manage all that.

Women are tough, and those two are really -- look at them as players. They both were great players. They both won National Championships. This isn't like a fluke. These guys are winners, and they're tough, and they're great



competitors, and their teams play like it.

I think Penn State is playing very inspired for her. It should be a great match on Sunday.

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