

# 2024 NCAA Women's Volleyball Championship

Sunday, December 22, 2024

Louisville, Kentucky, USA

KFC Yum! Center

**Penn State Nittany Lions**  
**Katie Schumacher-Cawley**  
**Jess Mruzik**  
**Taylor Trammell**  
**Quinn Menger**  
Championship Press Conference



mean that you guys can come from the outside, so to speak, blend in, and then accomplish this?

TAYLOR TRAMMELL: Well, I've been here three years. I consider myself a Penn Stater. I think coming into this program, I knew that I was leaving my past behind and I was putting my best foot forward here.

I know that, with Coach Katie's training and this team, it didn't even compare to anything else. We're our own group, and we formed our own group.

When you come here, yeah, winning is everything, but it was about finding a group that supports me, finding a group that loves me for me, letting me flourish as a player that's going to push me into who I want to be. That's what Penn State did. That's why we're all sitting up here right now.

**Q. Jess, ask you the same thing. Obviously, when you went there, you were hoping for success, and maybe this exceeds anything you would have dreamed of.**

JESS MRUZIK: I mean, the standard at Penn State is winning National Championships. That's how it's always been. That's what Coach Rose, like, instilled, and that's what we try to uphold every single day. Yeah, this is like a dream come true, but when you come to Penn State, you're a Penn Stater for life, and the ultimate goal is winning a National Championship. Like, that is the standard here.

**Q. Coach, congratulations. Can you speak to what you saw from Jess today, to follow up on that, 29 kills after 26 in the semifinal. Did she go to another level this week here?**

KATIE SCHUMACHER-CAWLEY: Yeah, I think Jess found ways to score and never looks tired although I know she is. But I think she would take 200 swings if we needed to win.

I thought Izzy put her in good position, and we were passing well. She finds ways to score. I'm glad we set her

Penn State - 3, Louisville - 1

KATIE SCHUMACHER-CAWLEY: Just thanks for putting on a great event. I couldn't be more proud of these five girls up here. I know I've talked about them all season, but they were the reason why this team was so successful. They did what it took on and off the court to help this team and to show the younger ones how to work and to be a great teammate.

I couldn't be more proud of these guys and proud to be a Penn Stater and just happy for the university.

**Q. Jess, can you just talk about how well you played in this match today. I mean, it just seemed like you got so many big swings, and I just wonder what your mentality was going into this.**

JESS MRUZIK: I mean, it certainly wouldn't be possible without every single person around me. I struggled a little bit just to find my groove at the beginning, but I was getting a ton of good information off the bench from my teammates and a ton of good information from the other girls on the court.

I think what really clicked was when all my teammates started looking at me saying, like, I have your back, swing away, let it rip. That allowed me to play free. But I definitely wouldn't be able to do it without every single person around me.

**Q. Taylor, I ask you this on behalf of all the people who have transferred into this program, and this is obviously what you were hoping for, but what does it**

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as much as we did. We needed to.

73 swings, that's a lot. I just saw those stats.

**Q. Coach, I know it didn't go the way you wanted it to that second set, but the energy, just the back and forth, just speak to what that moment was like in the game. Then afterwards, kind of what you did to kind of rally the troops there.**

KATIE SCHUMACHER-CAWLEY: Well, we gambled.

QUINN MENDER: You didn't want to play middle?

KATIE SCHUMACHER-CAWLEY: Quinn was living her dream. Quinn wanted to go middle. We knew we were tight on subs. We were in a tight spot, but we still battled and found ways to score and just couldn't close it out. We had set point a few times and didn't quite finish it.

Quinn was blocking up there, and Ava was playing left front.

QUINN MENDER: All-State front row player, so we're just living our dream.

KATIE SCHUMACHER-CAWLEY: We settled down in the third set, found ways to score, and I thought defensively we did a really nice job.

**Q. Coach, forgive me because I know you don't want to talk a lot about yourself, but I have a feeling a lot of people are watching today and were inspired, people who are going through the same battle that you have. And women coaches, there are a lot of people that saw what you did today that are inspired. Can you just talk about that? I know that's not what you set out to do, but you've done it.**

KATIE SCHUMACHER-CAWLEY: I'm so fortunate to be surrounded by so many great people, from this team to the staff I have. I'm just really lucky to have great people around me that go above and beyond.

I think I said in the other press conference that I'm inspired by the young kids that are sick. I told you I'm doing treatment at UPenn, and every time I walk in the hospital, I walk right past the Children's Hospital.

Sure, if I can be an inspiration to someone, then I take that, but I feel good, and I'm lucky to have the people around me. I think that's why we're successful.

**Q. For Jess and then for everyone else if they want to answer, when your coach sat down with Emily, Emily**

**in the prematch of the Final Four asked what had she learned about herself going through this season. Now as you sit up there as champions, what have you learned from this woman going through this season?**

JESS MRUZIK: Great question. I mean, she teaches us so much every single day, but I think the biggest thing I'm taking away from this season is like you can do anything. You can do anything you set your mind to. If you believe it, like it will happen.

I think with her doing everything she's doing, that helped us as a group also believe that we're capable of this because everyone says they believe they can do this, but there aren't many people that truly, deeply know they can do this. She's just been an inspiration to us, and she's helped us believe that we can accomplish what we just accomplished.

TAYLOR TRAMMELL: I just want to say I think Katie pushes us in the best way, and she knows how to push each person individually in the way they need to be to be successful here. I know that coming here, that was the main thing that I looked at.

From where I was last year to now, Katie has pushed me to be a better person, a better player, and just a well-rounded human being. I think that's a characteristic that I'll take into life in how to treat others, and that's just something that I'm so grateful for my time spent here that she taught me.

QUINN MENDER: Yeah, I second what Taylor said. I think she's a phenomenal individual, and if I can take a fraction of that for the rest of my life with me, like I'm a better person because of that.

So I'm really grateful to know her and to play for her, and I'm grateful she gave me a chance when I was 15 years old. She saw the great in me before I did, and I hope to do that with others.

CAMRYN HANNAH: I think as a woman in general, you're always told you have to put yourself into one thing, like you have to be a mom and give 100 percent to that, or like you have to be a volleyball player. Katie teaches us that you can give 100 percent in every situation, but there are different times for everything. I think that's one thing I'll take away from her.

ANJELINA STARCK: I just think I second what everybody just said. She's an incredible person, an incredible coach. I've learned so much from my four years here, and I'm so grateful I was able to have her as my coach.



**Q. Camryn, what's it like to get a National Championship-winning kill, especially on that rally that it came back to you finally?**

CAMRYN HANNAH: I think it's special, but I wouldn't put the whole game in that one kill because for me I struggled during that game. I had to look at my teammates and be like, I need your help.

That's what I'll remember most, not the kills or the stats that we had individually, but the moments like they had my back, because that was really big for me. That's what I was looking for when I came here, and I got it.

**Q. For Taylor, the other night I heard from people who went to bed after Nebraska was up 2-0, didn't realize you guys were going to come back. Can you take me back to that moment, down 0-2, what you felt like then, and the fact that this team had so much resolve to come back and be where you are right now?**

TAYLOR TRAMMELL: For one, we want to prove people wrong. Everybody was against us in that match. The whole entire crowd was red basically. We're sitting here, especially us seniors, thinking we're not losing to them, period.

I think coming back, everyone knew we had to kick it in, we had to play our game. I think Nebraska obviously is a great player, but let's not forget we have seen them in the Big Ten season and we beat them. So going into that game, we knew we had all the confidence, and we just had to show that on the court.

I was really proud going into that third set and like our fourth set fight, again, that's just the people we are. We have the grit. We have the power to do what we want to do when we put our mind to it.

Yeah, I'm super proud of this group. Two sets down doesn't mean the game's over, obviously.

**Q. Jess, can you speak just a little bit more to your journey to get to this moment and when this came into focus for you that you could possibly end your career like this, leaving Michigan and having your degree before you ever set foot on the court at Penn State?**

JESS MRUZIK: Yeah, in one of my other interviews I just said, if you would have told me three years ago I was going to be a national champion at the end of my career, I would have told you you were crazy because three years ago I wasn't even in the tournament.

So I've seen all sides of how the postseason goes. I knew

when I was coming to Penn State, I knew that was the standard, and I knew that Penn State, like I'm probably one of the most competitive people you'll ever meet in literally everything. Don't ever play cards with me. But I knew coming into Penn State that this was going to be my best shot.

I love the girls. I love the program. I love the culture. I obviously love Katie and the staff. I think, when I committed to Penn State, that was when I knew that we could do this.

**Q. Coach, care to walk us through, go back to that first recruiting pitch to some of those girls and how you put that first class together.**

KATIE SCHUMACHER-CAWLEY: Quinn and Anje have been here for four years, and they've seen a lot of changes. We had to recruit quite a few players my first year, and I think every player we've brought in the program has made an impact and gotten us to where we are today.

These guys have been here for a little bit longer and are committed to what we were trying to do, and they set the tone. After we lost last year, every single one of them was like, We want to win and we want this. So I put it back on them to make changes and to make better choices on and off the court and to help lead the younger ones.

It's been quite the journey for sure. I think for all of us in the last three years these guys have been through a lot. I'm proud that they're walking away the way they are with what they did. Not even just volleyball. I think as people and in school, they're all excellent, excellent students. They're all going on to either play pro -- Quinn's going to law school, and she's going to be my next attorney.

They're amazing, and like I said, I think everyone that we've brought into the program has helped and has made an impact to push this team to where they needed to be.

**Q. Wanted to follow up on the question to Coach about the second set. It was 10 set points that they saved. That can be really frustrating for the team that doesn't win that set. Then you guys came out just like gangbusters in the third set. What did you talk about immediately after the second set to be able to push aside that disappointment?**

JESS MRUZIK: Yeah, we were really frustrated, but honestly, after the second set in the locker room, the vibes were pretty good. We were just laughing about what just happened, like Quinn and Ava are playing front row, I was playing middle, Quinn was playing middle.

QUINN MENGER: I don't know why that's a big deal (laughter). I was like magic out there.

JESS MRUZIK: I mean, come on. We get through all of those -- we don't even get through. We're excelling in those rotations they're in the front row. Yeah, it didn't go our way, Louisville battled, but we were just giggling about what just happened.

So, yeah, it lightened the mood for us, and we knew we still had more in the tank for the next two sets.

**Q. Following up on this whole second set scenario, momentum being what it is, when you go into the locker room, what's the first thing on your minds about how did this happen, and who kind of talked you all off the ledge, so to speak? What players spoke up?**

CAMRYN HANNAH: I don't know that we were really -- like Jess said, we kind of came into the locker room with like -- we've been in this situation before. We've lost the second set several times this season, so it's nothing new for us. We know how to come back.

We rally together in the locker room and all of us talk about, yeah, that just happened. We have to move on. We can't dwell in the moment. The next set is a whole new game.

So just knowing that, we were lighthearted and laughing, and we came out with a fight.

QUINN MENGER: Also, like, they're a great team, and they deserve to be here. The fact that they stole a set from us, like they played a great game. So we kind of in the locker room recognized what a great team they are, what a great set they played, the grit they had in that set, and we were about to go and have a great set of our own.

Like no one didn't deserve to be there and win that set. They stole it from us, and we were going to steal one back. We were going to play our game with composure and show what Penn State volleyball is. We were excited about that, honestly.

**Q. As they mentioned out there amid the celebration, part of a previous National Championship, part of this one, aside from the obvious, how is this one different?**

KATIE SCHUMACHER-CAWLEY: From me playing, you mean? Yeah, I think it's pretty crazy that I came back and I'm with Penn State, and to win it as a coach is really special. Someone asked is it better as a player or as a coach? Like I said, I just like to win, and I like to compete, and I like to help our players be the best they can.

This is pretty cool, though, as a coach. It's pretty neat. Yeah, I would say probably as a coach right now.

**Q. Jess, could you speak about sort of the contrast between you and Anna right now, like your paths were so similar. It just ended so -- it couldn't have ended more differently. Could you speak to her journey as well as yours, sort of comparing the two of your journeys? Anna DeBeer, sorry.**

JESS MRUZIK: Anna and I are great friends off the court. We did have a similar journey, committing to your hometown place. Obviously I made the change, and one of the best changes and decisions I ever made in my life was to come to Penn State.

Yeah, I really feel for her. I know she's an ultimate competitor as well, and to see her go down in the semifinal, like I was sick to my stomach because I know that, if she could play, like she definitely would. She definitely would even if she could barely walk.

Yeah, I feel for her, but I'm happy for her. She looks super happy. And I talked to her at the All-American banquet, and she's really excited to play with my girl Tay down there in Indy. Yeah, it was similar, but also very, very different.

**Q. Katie, when you played at Pitt and you got destroyed, at what point after that did you say we can win a National Championship? Or did you never say that to yourself? You just move forward and go from there.**

KATIE SCHUMACHER-CAWLEY: I always thought this group could do something special. We didn't talk about winning this, winning that. I thought the Pitt match was an eye opener for everyone involved, and we went back to work after that loss and just got better. I thought that was -- Pitt was an exceptional team all year long.

Yeah, they put it to us in that match, but for us, I thought it was a great learning experience for a lot of the younger players who haven't played in an atmosphere like that. We learned from it, and I think it got us ready for Big Ten season, and I think we really kind of took off from there.

Yeah, we didn't talk about winning a lot. We talked about getting better as a team, and that we knew that, if we got better as conference went on, we could do something special.

Thanks to the AVCA president right there, Mr. Jaime Gordon. We appreciate you. I thought the NCAA did an excellent job with all the seeding and things like that. It

was pretty neat. It was nice for these girls to be able to play at home. That was really special. That was a goal of theirs too for the past couple years, we've been on the road for the start of the tournament. You've got to win the matches that you're supposed to, and you've got to steal ones on the road.

They figured it out this year, and we were in the best position to be successful by being able to play at home the last couple weeks.

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