

2025 NCAA Women's Volleyball Championship

Wednesday, December 17, 2025

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

Pitt Panthers

Coach Dan Fisher

Bre Kelley

Olivia Babcock

Semifinal Press Conference



this season, continuing to be one of the best players in the country?

BRE KELLEY: First, she's an amazing person. Two, at the beginning of this season, obviously she has been a backbone for this team. She kind of just put this team on her shoulders and ran with it.

Honestly, she's become an extraordinary leader on and off the court. She leads vocally so well with this team, knows what every single girl needs and wants to hear. I'm just very, very proud of her.

OLIVIA BABCOCK: Thanks, Bre.

Q. Liv, there's a lot of pressure that comes with being at this stage. What do you do to stay calm, Zen in the middle of what is the highest pressure of the season?

OLIVIA BABCOCK: It's a reminder of who and what you're playing for. I feel, like, this team, we're just fun, this is my family. Every time I step on the court it's just to have fun with my friends.

Obviously, it's not hard to give in to the pressure of these moments. You just kind of look at your six-foot world, we call it, which is just the people on the court, and you're like, I'm not going to feel any stress, these are the people I'm constantly playing for.

Q. Olivia, you and Logan Lednický were the only two college players on this Team USA team. What was it like for you playing with her, and does it add an extra element to this game for you?

OLIVIA BABCOCK: Yeah, I think it was a really good experience. Me and her definitely became really good friends over the course of the summer. It was clear we were each other's biggest fans during the time, rooting each other on in practice, telling each other to be better and make better decisions in that situation.

Coming into tomorrow, I saw her earlier, it was a really good reunion. I'm just really excited. I feel like both of us

THE MODERATOR: I'd like to welcome Pittsburgh to the stage.

Coach, you can get us rolling.

DAN FISHER: I'll start out by thanking Kansas City for hosting, the NCAA for putting all the work on for this event.

We are happy to be back (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Bre and Olivia, this team has high standards, but how does this coaching staff balance keeping you to those standards while building you up, staying positive?

BRE KELLEY: That's a good question.

In practice he's always enforcing us to have a high standard, have not so high expectations. I think that takes the pressure off of us in practice and games to be like we have a standard that we want to hold ourselves to. It's not the end of the world if we don't hit those standards. At the end of the day, we're trying to hit those every single day.

OLIVIA BABCOCK: Also building off of that, how individualized our relationships are with Fish, he's able to have a good personal relationship with us off the court. We know where he's coming from when he's enforcing these standards, is from a place of love. I feel having that relationship with him off the court makes the hard moments where he can get upset sometimes a lot easier to get through (smiling).

Q. Bre, can you talk to me about Liv's evolution over



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are at the top in the position, so I feel like playing with her, against her, is going to make us both rise to that level.

I'm really excited to see how good she's going to play tomorrow. Even though we are on opposite sides of the net and I want our team to win, I'm always rooting for her as an individual. We'll see. I'm excited.

Q. Olivia, what makes this 2025 team different from the 2024 team and 2023 team?

OLIVIA BABCOCK: I think this is just, I feel like, from an initial impression and what meets the eye, we definitely have a lot of new players, a lot of big shoes to fill.

I feel like having that new aspect, a bunch of people who haven't been in this experience, I feel like our growth as a team had, we had to be a little more locked in on the growth. From the beginning we had to first get to know each other as people and players, find out what everyone needs individually. Then I feel like just how much we've put in the work to become good teammates, work through hard situations.

I feel like this team has been through so much, we've had so many hardships throughout the season that we've been able to respond to and get better from. I think the work we put in every single day in the gym. It's a special group. So many new players, so many deserving people on this team.

I feel like we came a longer way from the beginning because obviously completely new team. '23 and '24 were a lot of the same players. This year we had to completely restart. We were able to gel really well. I really love this team and I think they're really deserving.

Q. Going through the circuit, the volleyball circuit takes you all around the country. How many times have you been to Kansas City? What memories do you have, if any?

BRE KELLEY: I believe I've been to Kansas City four times, or three times, two being for the club tournaments back when we were in high school. I was here this summer watching one of my best friends graduate in this arena, so...

This place is beautiful. I love it. They have great food, yes.

OLIVIA BABCOCK: I would have to agree with the food aspect. It's amazing.

I believe I've been here, this is where Triple Crown is

located, I've been here three times for Triple Crown as a player. I was recently here this spring to watch with love. I've been here four times. The food is my favorite aspect. It's a really cool city when you get to actually explore. I feel like it's a lot more than meets the eye.

Q. Bre, you and Olivia are two of six players that have played in a Final Four. Do you think that gives you guys an advantage at all, knowing five of those players have come from Pitt?

OLIVIA BABCOCK: I'm confused.

BRE KELLEY: Me, too.

Q. There are six players on the four teams that have played in a Final Four. Pitt has five of them. Do you think that gives you an advantage at all?

OLIVIA BABCOCK: I think it does in a way. I feel like, again, this is a very new feel. Since so many people have been here before, we were able to prepare the newer players coming into this experience what to expect.

We're also able to just remind them constantly that even though there will be a lot of media, things there wouldn't typically be, stay locked in at the goal at hand. It is very easy to get distracted. I think those players are going to help our newer players be able to hone in on the task.

Q. Does the feeling of playing in the Final Four change at all for you guys? Do you feel going to the Final Four, do you have a different vibe going into it?

BRE KELLEY: I'm personally just blessed to be in this opportunity that Fish has brought this team here, for him time five times, for me and Liv three times.

In the past I feel like we've always made it a point that we have to win the Final Four. This year we have really emphasized, especially with our sports psychologist, to play ball. Obviously we're trying to embrace this moment and be where our feet are.

This game is supposed to be fun. It's not supposed to be severely taxing on your mind and body. I think this year I've definitely come in being, like, I just want to play volleyball with this team, play it to the best ability that we can, and have a blast on this court, so...

OLIVIA BABCOCK: I would have to agree. I think it's an honor anytime we get to step on a Final Four stage. I think how special this moment is definitely doesn't change just because we've been here in the past.



I think how locked in we are on getting better and focusing on the practice that day, then the scout that night before actually thinking about just playing the game. I feel like that definitely does change. I feel like we're a bit better about that, like Bre said.

Q. What is it like making a Final Four when you get back to your locker room, seeing your phone, hearing from family and friends? Have you heard from some of your former teammates?

BRE KELLEY: Honestly, this is really cool. Like, we are one of three teams that have been here this many times. With just that, it's super special.

Actually the other day, Liv was with me, I just graduated, and our former teammate, Rachel Fairbanks, called us because she was, Oh, my gosh, you're going again. She was just super excited to see that we got back to this point.

OLIVIA BABCOCK: Yeah, I think it was such a special moment. I don't know. I think it felt a little different this team just because of everyone's reaction. For example, Brooke, she probably had the reaction of the game. She was so happy. Just seeing that, I don't know, it made me so happy just seeing how excited our teammates were, seeing how special it is.

Even though we have been here in the past, this is, like, a really huge deal. I feel like we need to remember to acknowledge that. I feel like a lot of people reached out to me and were like, Congrats, this is huge. Yeah.

Q. I watched the Kentucky match in person. Coach Skinner said when they play like that, nobody's touching 'em. You've dominated some of the best teams in the country. Everybody was talking about the other team, right, in Nebraska. When you're playing like that, do you feel like you are the best team? For you guys, what's it like when you're firing on all cylinders?

OLIVIA BABCOCK: Yeah, I feel like in the moment, it doesn't feel like that. We can obviously feel we're dominating. We're very locked in at one point at a time. I think we're really not thinking about how much we're dominating the game rather than getting that point.

I feel like the focus we had this year is being good after 20. I feel like we haven't always been playing our best games up to this point. Once we got to that point, we were able to flip a switch. It's a matter of who gets to 25 first. If we lock in and play the best points of our life for the next five, we're going to find a lot of success.

I feel like that has definitely helped us, especially in the tournament.

BRE KELLEY: I also think we've done a really good job, even when we're not 100% on, finding those points and finding a way to win that match even when everything is not clicking on all cylinders. I think that's helped us a lot this year.

Q. Dan has turned this team into making the Final Four. What kind of impact has he had on you and developed you as a player?

BRE KELLEY: I said this earlier in another interview.

Honestly, it's kind of weird for me to say this, but I feel like I look at Fish as a second dad, even though I have a dad. Especially when I first got here, I had an injury. He really just made a point of who he is as a person, the way he wanted me to grow as a young woman, not just a volleyball player.

He's an amazing person. He genuinely cares about every single girl on this team, what they are going to produce to the world after. He wants to make that impact on them, to make sure we're ready for what's to come after college.

He's made me a better leader, a better communicator, better at trusting others. I'm severely indebted to him. I love you, Fish.

OLIVIA BABCOCK: I could not say it better myself.

I do agree, he's like a second dad. We make jokes about that all the time. I feel like Fish has cared about me so much more as an individual, more as a person than a volleyball player, which is refreshing because you don't always get that coming up. Fish is definitely the first person I look to if I'm having a good day, a bad day. He's my number one contact. I've gone to his office so many times: Fish, I'm having a bad time.

He's such an inspiration, someone I look up to. I wouldn't want to play for anybody else. Yes, he's developed me as a player, as well. I feel like I'm a better person because of him, and it's really fun to play for him.

BRE KELLEY: He's probably both of our emergency contacts (smiling).

Q. Looks like Brooke has developed a lot. What have you seen from her growth throughout the season?

BRE KELLEY: She's just a really hard worker. She's always in the gym trying to get better.

Personally, between me and her, we've had a lot of conversations with our connection off the court. I have also said this in another interview. I told her kudos to you for taking on one of the hardest jobs a fifth-year setter can take on. She's emphasized she wants to do this, have all of our backs.

I think over this past month and a half, she as a middle and setter, the connection needs to be there.

I'm just very proud of her because she's, like, really wanted to and she has. She's shown all the work she's put in. Yeah, I'm very proud of what she's accomplished over the past few months.

OLIVIA BABCOCK: I agree. I think Brooke is a completely different player than when she first got here. Every single day she's the first one in the gym and the last one out of it.

The amount of time she takes to lock in on the skills that may not have been working the day before. She just wants to build that connection, whether it's six-on-six drill, hitting lines. She's looking to the hitter like, What do I need to change? What do you want better? I feel like her emphasis on that relationship and the honesty of that connection is why she found so much success.

I think also taking more risks in the game. In game is when you can learn the best. I feel like she's willing to take those risks to build that connection. I feel like it's been reflecting really well on her middle connection and her overall game.

Q. Bre, this goes back to AVCA. I'm going to paraphrase what Olivia said after that weekend, where she was basically saying that you guys need to put pressure on opponents as opposed to having opponents put pressure on you. In retrospect, what did you take from that weekend? Was that one of those things that you had applied?

BRE KELLEY: Honestly, from that weekend we had a lot to learn. A bunch of aspects in our game that we needed to get better at and gel on the court with.

Honestly, I think we're a really good serving team. We may not have been on day one. That's how you put instant pressure on another team, is serving tough. I think that has gone really well.

Obviously our offense and our defense, like at the beginning of the year throughout this entire season I think our defense has been really good. That's been, like, our thing. Go be big defensive, whatever, big game. So I think that's just something that has grown over this entire

season, is our season and defense. Obviously the offense came along with that.

Q. For the growth of volleyball and women's sports in general, can y'all think back to when you were younger, compare, seeing you be the stars of your team? Thinking back to when you were younger, could you imagine the growth and the boom that it's seeing now, especially with the most viewership...

BRE KELLEY: Honestly, you got two girls that started volleyball pretty late in their career (smiling). When I think about it, I was just playing volleyball back then. Oh, this is super fun.

I guess when I got a little bit closer to college, this sport has definitely grown. I feel like a lot of these girls in college right now have huge impacts on younger girls' lives. We're role models for them. I don't really think that was as big of a case back when we were younger. We looked at them like, oh, they're superstars. Now we're so connected with the community and with our following, I think it's absolutely amazing.

OLIVIA BABCOCK: I agree. It's just really inspirational to see how much people care about this sport. I feel like you just see so many little girls at your game come up to you: I started volleyball this week. I want to play like you. You're the reason I decided to play.

It wasn't as much my freshman year, but seeing how much the sport has grown in the last two years. That happens almost every game. Wow, we really have impacted a community.

Also just the coverage of volleyball now. People want to see volleyball, people are arguing for volleyball to be shown. I think just how much support, I feel like not only the volleyball players are the ones contributing to making this a thing. I feel like the fans and coaches, everyone is buying into making volleyball such a successful sport. I think that's why it's been able to find so much success. Especially this past year, leagues and all of that. It's just super cool to witness.

THE MODERATOR: Olivia and Bre, we'll let you go and shift to questions for coach.

DAN FISHER: I can't have them speak for me (smiling)? That was going well.

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions for coach.

Q. Pitt is essentially in the driver's seat now. What is your message to continue to put essentially the pedal



to the metal?

DAN FISHER: The main message is is just to stay in the moment. Along with that, we were touching on it earlier about what's different about this team, and I think when we're playing our best, we're really good. So just knowing that we don't know what the outcome will be, but we certainly know how good we can be. Just trying to be ourselves.

Q. You've been building this program to what it is for 13 seasons now. At what point did you realize that Pitt wasn't just building towards something, but had become one of the standards?

DAN FISHER: Probably last year. I mean, I think just with us being ranked No. 1 a lot, it shifted from us being looked at as this new kid to, Oh, yeah, Pitt is going to win, they're No. 1. So that was a progression.

Probably last year, that was the biggest show because we were on top for quite a bit.

Q. With Jamie Morrison being relatively new to the world of college volleyball, what is your relationship with him like? How good is it for the sport to have some new blood in the Final Four with Texas A&M?

DAN FISHER: Well, I've known Jamie for a long time. He's one of my best friends in the coaching world. His wife used to be an assistant for me. So Jamie has been in my gym a lot.

We've shared information with each other. He does bring a unique perspective with how much international volleyball he's been around.

What was the second part of the question?

Q. How encouraging is it to get some blood, how good for the sport is it?

DAN FISHER: I think it's great when we have great coaches in college volleyball. I can remember a time when he was trying to get in. Certain schools were questioning how good of a coach he was because he didn't have NCAA experience, which turns out Texas A&M made a good choice.

Q. You talked at the beginning of the Final Four last year when you were presented a Louisville Slugger bat. You said you were going to put it in your office. After the result of the semifinal, did you?

DAN FISHER: I did. I think they gave me, like, four bats. I

had to find special bat holders. I can simultaneously be proud of making the Final Four and disappointed we didn't advance. I can hold those two thoughts at once.

Q. Have you been presented anything here in Kansas City?

DAN FISHER: There was a gift in my hotel. I got a couple stocking stuffers for my kids in the activation room, so...

We'll see what else comes (smiling).

Q. You made an appeal on Twitter to have Husker fans cheer for you. What made you do that? What's the reaction to that?

DAN FISHER: You think it worked (smiling)?

If you look back at our past Final Fours, only one of them really felt like a neutral. The others felt like we were on a road game. Last year at Louisville...

Looking at the bracket, again the driving distance to Nebraska, there was a reality of, There's going to be a lot of fans, Nebraska fans. So that doesn't mean I wouldn't take just the regular Kansas City volleyball fan.

Hopefully we'll turn a few and maybe have a little bit of a home-court advantage.

Q. You've been real fortunate in having really good players transfer into your program and helping you through this stretch. You had a deal with a great one leaving you. I wanted to ask you, how did you find out and what did you think when Torrey Stafford said she was leaving?

DAN FISHER: Yeah, she called me after the season ended, told me what she was thinking. At that point it was pretty evident that she had her mind made up. We had to pivot pretty quickly.

I think in January at one point we had one outside hitter on our roster. I'm just really proud of the work my staff did to get a team in place to be back here.

Certainly I was disappointed, but Torrey was part of our program for two years. She helped us make two Final Fours. I enjoyed coaching her. There's a lot of stories on this team we're talking about.

Q. To lose a player of that magnitude and still have even a better team, what does that say about the group?



DAN FISHER: Yeah, I think it says that we've got a lot of players that love playing volleyball in Pittsburgh. They love the school. We've got a coaching staff committed to bringing in the best and putting the most competitive team out there we can.

It would not have happened without the support of our administration, too. We have a newer athletic director that's been incredibly supportive to us.

So yeah, I'm lucky to be at a volleyball school.

Q. Last year, No. 1, losing in the semis. The transfer. Everybody jumps on Pitt. The downfall. Sky's falling.

DAN FISHER: But not you. You weren't someone that said that (laughter).

Q. Not that the sky was falling. But the way this team has come back, to put the team together, the season that it's had, has that made this for you and the staff a little bit more rewarding, a little grin, that we are that good? Does it make it, Hey, everybody, we have had a great year, or a little more special than other teams?

DAN FISHER: Every year's a little bit different. So it's hard to compare. Some years are special just 'cause.

The early days we developed players over five years. We're able to see players get to a point where they're good enough to be here. So that's really special.

But yeah, if you look at one single calendar year from where we were in January, Okay, yeah, we knew we had some talent returning, but we had some holes to fill.

You look at a player like Blaire Bayless that certainly could have gone other places, could have taken the easy road. She put her head down and kept working. It's pretty satisfying to see what a season she's had.

So it's hard to compare year to year. But from where we were in January, it's really satisfying.

Q. What has been the hardest and the most rewarding part for you in sustaining the success you have over the past couple of seasons?

DAN FISHER: Well, the hardest part for me personally is how much the college landscape has changed. People are going to schools for different reasons, recruiting has changed.

As a collegiate coach, you need to evolve and adapt and embrace it, or you need to get out. So for us as coaches,

figuring out how to recruit best and coach and manage players best in 2025, you can't do it the same way you did it 10 years ago. So that's pushed me the most.

What was the second part?

Q. Most rewarding part.

DAN FISHER: Uhm... The most rewarding part is always the relationships. Yes, we're not done. Yes, we have bigger goals.

The best thing as a coach is to see somebody maybe become better or to do something maybe they didn't think they could do. To be part of that journey is the best part.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, we're going to let you go. Appreciate your team.

Q. (Question about bald guys.)

DAN FISHER: I think my hair's going, too (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, coach.

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