

# 2025 NCAA Women's Volleyball Championship

Wednesday, December 17, 2025

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

**Wisconsin Badgers**

**Coach Kelly Sheffield**

**Carter Booth**

**Charlie Fuerbringer**

Semifinal Press Conference



**How much has that been a rallying cry for you guys? Where did this start and how has it evolved over the winning streak?**

CARTER BOOTH: I mean, I've always been fiercely competitive. I mean, these two can speak to how I am in practices. I am the same way. Sometimes Kelly has to stop me and say, Hey, it's a good thing your teammate can block that shot because it means they're going to do it against other people.

I think it just comes from a determination that this team has found to prove to people who we are, the work that we've put in this entire season.

Coming into this tournament we talked about the second you think something is owed to you is the second you lose, the second your season is over. I think that the other side of that is also nothing is owed to anyone, which means anytime you step out there, it's anyone's game.

It does have to be an active refusal or active search for a win, for a championship, as you move through this because it's not just going to fall into anybody's lap.

**Q. Charlie, your parents played volleyball pretty well. Carter, your basketball background. Can you talk about the influence of the highly successful parents you had in sports.**

CHARLIE FUERBRINGER: Yeah, I think there's just a lot that my parents can relate to about what we go through. They don't put too much pressure on me. They just continue to just allow my passion to shine. They just want what's best for me.

All they've ever told me growing up is whatever I'm going into, to work my hardest throughout it all. It doesn't matter the outcome, if I'm working my hardest, which I think is an amazing way to go about things.

It's allowed me to have so much fun in this sport, not take it too seriously. Now it's obviously a serious thing for me. I'm not burnt out from it at this point even if I've been

THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome Wisconsin to the podium.

Coach, opening statement...

KELLY SHEFFIELD: Yeah, surely excited to be here. Congratulations to the other three teams that have also made it this far, their coaches, administrations. All three of the jobs they've done at their schools, just building their programs and their fan bases, administrative support, just elevated through a lot of hard work.

I think what you're going to find is four teams that none of them have a glass jaw. These are teams that value work ethic and toughness, camaraderie. I think there's a lot of similarities with I think all four teams' values and the work ethic behind that.

I'm here with our two team captains, Charlie and Carter. The job that they've done this year to get this group, most of 'em have been really new. Carter is the only one that has had this kind of experience. As a matter of fact, this might be the least amount of players in a Final Four that have ever previously been to a Final Four. I can't imagine there have been too many times there have been fewer people on the four teams. We've certainly leaned on that experience that we've gotten from her. Then Charlie I think just has done an amazing job.

So we're excited to be here. Excited to get this thing rolling.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

**Q. Carter, obviously I know you've heard this a lot about explaining your 'refuse to lose'. I'll clean it up.**

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playing since I was literally born. They've allowed me to have a lot of freedom in it, which I think is super important. Champion.

CARTER BOOTH: My parents instilled me the value of brains over brawn. I did have the advantage of being super tall at a very young age, but I was incredibly uncoordinated. Nothing but time was going to fix that.

In the meantime I had to really learn how to get ahead using my mind. I think that's really contributed to my volleyball IQ. Also just the way my parents focused on developing me as an athlete before a volleyball player really helped with my athleticism. It's why I'm able to move the way that I do at my size.

**Q. Carter, back to the 'refuse to lose'. Did you anticipate that it was going to blow up this much? T-shirts...**

CARTER BOOTH: I mean, first and foremost I want to state the obvious in that I was not scripted. I blacked out and forgot the camera was there, which is why you see me turn and say, Sorry, guys.

In my mind in that moment I'm feeling my team celebrate behind me. I'm standing next to one of my best friends. I'm so fired up.

I honestly didn't expect the response, for it to be as widely talked about as it is right now. But as far as the T-shirts go, I'm happy some good can come out of it. Kelly helped me set up a donation to a non-profit organization that provides equipment for kids that can't afford to play sports. Things like that, finding ways to turn a viral moment like that into something good and that has a lasting impact into the community is what is most important to me.

KELLY SHEFFIELD: \$6,000 was raised for this non-profit. Give them a shout-out of what that profit was.

CARTER BOOTH: The non-profit is called Good Sports. Basically, like I said, they provide equipment and gear for underprivileged youth who are trying to get into sports, like hockey and volleyball. Volleyball, you need a new pair of shoes every six weeks. People just can't afford that.

I just think that a child's passion shouldn't be barred by the fact that their parents can't afford to drop \$30,000 on a club season.

So that's an organization that's important to me and that I wanted to give back to.

**Q. Carter, your world famous quote, what did your**

**parents say afterwards?**

CARTER BOOTH: My mom thought it was awesome. She said, That's what I'm talking about. My dad had not very much of a reaction, but he doesn't react to very much of anything, so...

Yeah, it was pretty normal in the Booth household.

**Q. To go through the regional that you did, what's the biggest thing you took away from defeating those two teams that were arguably Final Four caliber?**

CHARLIE FUERBRINGER: I think we're just a really gritty team. We've showed up every single day since the beginning, since last spring. We haven't gone through the motions one practice. We've come in every single day working the hardest that we can knowing that this was our ultimate goal.

Sorry, winning a national championship is the ultimate goal, but this is obviously a step towards it. To get to this point we're super grateful, just proud of the work we've put in. But we're not done yet. We're excited to play tomorrow and on Sunday.

I just think that we've put in the work to get to this moment. Feeling a lot of gratitude right now.

**Q. What's it like being in Kansas City? Do you have memories of traveling here for club or anything? Wisconsin itself, the program is established well. Does it feel like y'all are not getting the credit you deserve but like you're being counted out because of bigger storylines in the tournament?**

CHARLIE FUERBRINGER: Yeah, I'll answer the first one.

Definitely have come here every single year for the NIT tournament. It's kind of a full-circle moment really. I mean, we played in the other convention center. That was always the best tournament 'cause that was the only other tournament besides Junior Olympics that we had every single best team in the country competing in one club tournament.

I think it's super cool that we're able to be back here in a familiar city for all of us.

CARTER BOOTH: Yeah, I mean, as far as the second question goes, what's been our focus is getting prepared. What are we doing within our camp to prepare ourselves for this moment.

There are no wins that are predetermined. Like I said,

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nobody is owed anything. It doesn't matter if you're projected as the favorite or not. You step out on the court, it's an even playing field.

We've just focused on making sure we're in a position to win that battle when we step out on that playing field.

**Q. Carter, when Charlie went out and subsequently came back, your team is better not just because she came back, but during the time she was out, returned, did that put you in a better position to do what you're doing?**

CARTER BOOTH: Absolutely. It's adversity. This isn't easy. Getting to this point, being one of the last four teams in the entire country who are playing right now, that's not easy.

To be able to withstand that and to withstand what we're going to have to go through in this upcoming match, you have to experience hardship throughout the duration of the season. There's no other way to do it.

The tournament is designed to expose whatever holes you have and to push you to your limits. If you haven't tested that in a controlled environment, like your own gym or a practice, you're not going to know how to respond when it happens out in front of thousands of people in the Final Four.

**Q. At what point of the season did you feel that you could have made it here? Was there a certain game, play?**

CHARLIE FUERBRINGER: Yeah, the second everyone stepped in the gym last spring I think we knew from the start that we had the talent. It's just whether or not we were going to lean into it. We did exactly that from the start.

We weren't perfect from the start obviously. We always knew we had the opportunity to make it here. We just had to lean into it.

**Q. Your teammate Jada posted a video of getting ready with you before game, doing lip stain. I wanted to ask you, what is your pregame ritual as a team or any other superstitions you might?**

CHARLIE FUERBRINGER: We can't say that one (smiling).

CARTER BOOTH: No.

I don't know. I think I kind of just watch a lot of film

pregame. I will go through and watch every single tech, however many times somebody touched a ball, I'm trying to watch it.

As far as getting ready, most of time I'm just like so focused, the wheels are turning in volleyball mode. Now it's days in advance. I'm talking to you right now, I'm picturing volleyball in my mind. My attention is on volleyball. That's all I'm thinking about.

CHARLIE FUERBRINGER: We do a kind of connect thing. Before we go into the match, when we put our jerseys on, getting settled, a reminder to stay humble with one another. Then we go up and do our thing. Yeah...

**Q. Charlie, how much do y'all feed off of Carter's leadership and intensity? You can feel it.**

CHARLIE FUERBRINGER: So much. I mean, it's been awesome to just see her leadership, especially throughout this part of the season. It's been unreal. The timeouts, I'm just listening to Carter. Whatever Carter says goes. She's the type of person, we have the match on the line, she says, Set me. I just have so much confidence in her.

I think it's funny that the whole world is getting to see her true self. What she said on live TV, we've seen that every single day from her. She's brought that day in and day out. We've been so grateful to just have an amazing leader who is so well-spoken, comes in every day ready to work.

It's been awesome. I think just super helpful for us, especially 'cause she's had this experience. We have a really new team, a lot of transfers, freshmen. It's going to be great to be able to carry on what she says, her passion and aggressiveness throughout the next couple seasons without her.

THE MODERATOR: Carter, Charlie, thank you for your time.

We'll continue with questions for coach.

**Q. With what Craig has done for as long as he's done it at Kentucky, what do you respect or what has impressed you most about him? Any favorite early memories with him?**

KELLY SHEFFIELD: There's a photo going out there with the two of us. We probably won, I don't know, some little JV tournament or something.

I hope y'all hammer him for the pants he's wearing in that photo if you've seen it. That needs to be blown up (smiling).



Neither of us expected. This wasn't a goal for either of us when we were younger. I think our 20-year-old selves to sit there thinking that both of us have won national championships, multiple trips to the Final Four, that would blow our minds. That was never the goal.

We loved the sport. We were around really, really good people. Extremely fortunate of the people we were around when we were getting started.

Both of us had people that came in front and said, What do you think about getting into college coaching? Gave us opportunity. I think both of us were curious enough and asked a lot of questions, humble enough with really good work ethic, I think most of the people where we're from have.

We stand on a lot of other people's shoulders. I remember him and I having a conversation right around the time he was thinking whether or not he was going to take that Kentucky job. The thing is, you can't do it alone. You've got to be able to paint your vision to everybody, to your administration, convince them to invest more. To the your fan base, you've got to get out there and wave the banner, stand on top of buildings, get in fighter jets, whatever you have to do to get people to want to come and check out this thing.

There were only a couple hundred people going to their matches when we were first there. He's built a behemoth, but he's done it the right way. They are consistently good, which is the programs that I respect the most, the ones that can do it year in, year out, not be flashes in the pan. That is certainly not them.

**Q. You have your share of star power on this team. Una Vajagic has been one of those who is under the radar, game seems to keep going up and up down the stretch. What can you say about her contributions here, the impact she's having?**

KELLY SHEFFIELD: Yeah, she's stealthy, right? That would probably be the word that comes to mind. She's playing with a different level of freedom than what she was earlier in the year. It's really tapped into some great things.

She's responding after errors better than what she's ever done before. Her bounceback ability has been fantastic. She passes really, really well. She's getting on balls and really taking big-time fearless swings. What you've got to be able to do at this level. Can you take big-time swings, can you take big-time swings when a defense is set up against you? Do you have the courage and the skill to be able to execute in those moments?

So many people, they get really safe. They play not to make errors. If you do that, you're giving your opponents a chance to come right back at you.

She plays with a fearlessness that I think all of us love, and this team desperately needs. That confidence just keeps going and going and going.

When she's bouncing around like she is with a little smile on her face, she reminds me a little bit of Julia Orzol with that. When she's in that mode, all right, we're usually pretty good to go.

**Q. At the beginning you talked about how each of these coaches have really built up their programs. Can you speak to what Dan has done at Pitt, putting them on the map.**

KELLY SHEFFIELD: No (smiling).

But I'll talk about anybody without hair all day long (laughter).

I mean, all of these guys, I just ran into Jamie out there in the hallway. I told him I was really proud of him, really proud of him.

Dan, these aren't volleyball epicenters with big-time traditions, right? But you got to roll up your sleeves, you got to put the work in.

He's got a very consistent staff that has been with him. They work as hard as anybody. Each of these staffs that are here, I mean, you're constantly running into them. They're in the convention centers right when the doors are open. They're there when you leave. You find yourself in the number of times you're in a gym, a different part of the world, you're thinking nobody else is going to be there. You walk in there and one of the members of these coaching staffs that are here this weekend are in there. You're like, My God.

He's done it with work. They're very, very skilled. They are tough. He gets his teams to play tough. They're fearless. They're experienced. They're dangerous, all four teams are dangerous.

**Q. I know you've been playing Aerosmith's "Dream on" at practice. It feels like an anthem for this team. Was there any particular reason why that song was chosen?**

KELLY SHEFFIELD: No, just on my playlist. I think it was 2003 maybe, I was at the Final Four. I'm pretty sure it was





Hawaii, Florida, Stanford and Minnesota. I think that was the Final Four.

I sat in the stands. They played this video on the video board to that song. It was the final kill of each of the regional finals.

I remember them the word 'sage' comes up in that song. Right then you got Dave Shoji I think they showed. They were showing each of the coaches and their reactions.

I was here for the convention, watching the Final Four. I'm sitting in the stands. I'm just like, My God. I mean, I was going to these practices, writing things down religiously, just dreaming of saying, God, would this be amazing.

I got back home and I reached out not NCAA and said, Can I get that video? I called them multiple times 'cause I kept waiting.

Finally months later I get this VHS tape of this video. I played it all the time. There would be times as I'm going through my career that I'm driving home after a win or something like that. That would be one of the songs. Eminem, something like that would also be a song. I'm sure all of us have those things.

I don't know if that's been an anthem. The other day we're at practice. At the end of practice that song pops up. It's like, yeah, it's just a great reminder.

All of us, whether it's coaches or players, these guys when they're younger, we've all got dreams of being exactly where we are right now. Sometimes we need to be reminded what we're doing is really, really cool. Let's have fun with it, keep dreaming. Keep dreaming those big dreams.

**Q. With the Final Four and the convention coinciding every year, Kansas City being the hotbed that it is, seeing coaches all over, does it feel like a family reunion? Is it good to be part of it or actually playing in it?**

KELLY SHEFFIELD: The convention took a totally different meaning to me after the first time I came here. You'd love coming to it. You'd love it. Then you get to it, you really don't want to be a part of the convention anymore. You want to be a part of the Final Four experience.

I know what this is like to see people that are in the same profession as you, to swap ideas. Man, they're just not too many cities that are better to go if you're part of this convention, go have some barbecue and a beer. There's

so many different places here. I love coming to this place.

I never sleep well at night after eating here. That's a different story (smiling).

I mean, this is a great city. They really, really support, get behind our sport.

**Q. Your offense and Kentucky's are two of the best in the country all season long. What are the biggest challenges that theirs poses for your defense?**

KELLY SHEFFIELD: I mean, just go and look at the All-American listings that just came out. Their players are peppered all over it.

They've got two big-time players. When you have a player that can carry a team in non-perfect situations, it just relieves so much. They have two of them. It relieves the pressure on your serve/receive. It relieves the pressure on what the setter is feeling. You don't have to feel like you have to be perfect.

When you're going through some of those times, you have people that are courageous and be able to take big-time swings. They certainly have that on the left really well.

Hudson has gotten a lot better than what she was last year. She was a big-time player last year. She's elevated her game at a totally different level.

Lizzie Carr has taken her game to a totally different game the past month. They've continued to get better as they've worked through the season. That's hard to do. They haven't lost since the first week of September.

Sometimes you get teams that when they're just having a success over and over and over again, what drives you, not just the results, but are you getting better. Their players are getting better as they're moving through the season, even with that success.

Sometimes you hear people say, Well, a loss is good to experience to be able to go. They haven't lost forever. They continue to get better, which means there's a motivation thing that's happening right there. They don't need that loss. They're tapping into something else. That's coaching and that's leadership out on the court.

**Q. When Charlie got hurt, your team was playing well. Since she's come back, you're playing even better. What do you see from that, maybe something that she gained while she was out, the team had a new confidence with her back?**

KELLY SHEFFIELD: It's a lot of things. It's not just Charlie. I told our team one of the our first team meetings, I said, Y'all don't know each other. They were genuinely offended by that and upset by that.

I said, You don't. You guys spend time together, but you don't know each other.

It's different having trust on the court of knowing who's going to show up, when things get tight who's got what seams, communication. Who is fearless, who is going to run. You have to go through that.

We weren't a team that communicated very well on the court together. We weren't a team that responded to adversity the way that we needed to in a unified fashion together early on.

With the season, we've learned a lot of those things as we moved through the season. One thing we talk about is everybody gets adversity in life. Adversity comes all over the place. How you respond to that is everything. Do you lean into that.

When Grace Egan went down, that was a bit of adversity. Then coming right after that shortly Charlie. There's a lot of moving pieces as the team was starting to get to know each other.

Yeah, but when Charlie got back, there was a different -- I think everybody had to elevate their game even more certainly. Charlie I think kind of gets things smoother. Carter has the strength for our team, but Charlie is the one, you're watching her. There's the constant communication all the time.

Addi is just trying to run the offense. There was probably a little bit less of that. Everybody else kind of had to rise up a little bit. It brought more out of them.

When Charlie got back there, I think they kind of kept that elevated state. Charlie was learning a lot and applied a lot of things while she was out. One of them was feeding Carter a lot more. Her game I think is playing as well as anyone in the country regardless of position in the last month.

**Q. A lighthearted question for you. After the Texas win, there was pictures of the you dancing in the locker room after the game. Grace Egan's face was impeccable. Where did you learn your dance moves? How often do you bust them out?**

KELLY SHEFFIELD: Oh, I have got dance moves (smiling).

I'm walking down, two of our players, I can't even tell you who, said, When you walk in there, you need to do this. When you just go and beat an elite Texas team on their home court at a chance for the Final Four, your players tell you to go and do this, that's your moment to go and do that.

I had no idea what that move is. I don't know what it's called. I think my response is, There's going to be cameras in there, this isn't going to be a move that gets me in trouble, is it?

They're like, No, no, you're good.

There you have it (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, coach.

KELLY SHEFFIELD: Thank you.

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