

Big Ten Volleyball Media Days

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Chicago, Illinois, USA

Indiana Hoosiers

Coach Steve Aird

Delaynie Maple

Ramsey Gary

Press Conference



STEVE AIRD: Good morning to everyone. Thanks again for having us. Happy Day 2. I hope everyone is hanging in there. I'm going to start with a simple thank you to the Big Ten. Some incredible people here, going over and above for these young women to have this opportunity to be able to be treated in a way that I think is commensurate with what they're doing in the country, which is perform day in and day out at the highest level. Incredibly entertaining to watch and wonderful young people as you get to know the two beside me.

I want to thank Scott Dolson, Jeremy Gray, Mattie White, the administration at Indiana. They want Indiana to be good in volleyball, and they have, and they've been very supportive. Incredibly thankful and grateful for the opportunity to lead the program.

I've been around the Big Ten since '97. I was a student-athlete at Penn State and was able to play in three Final Fours, and now I think this is my 22nd or 23rd preseason in the NCAA. Just incredibly grateful.

I don't know if I've ever been more excited about where the conference is. I've been proud to be in the Big Ten for a very long time, but adding some spectacular programs with great histories is something we're very, very excited about.

Very excited to get the day going.

Lastly, we did not coordinate the outfits, but we do look good. Shout-out to Hot Sam's in Detroit, Michigan for my blazer.

But with that, let's get it going.

Q. Delaynie and Ramsey, you guys see a lot of serves. What are the most difficult serves to handle and what makes them difficult?

RAMSEY GARY: Personally I would say probably a float serve. I know everyone says top spin, but float serve, it kind of just floats in the air and you have to be really patient with it. I think that would be my most difficult serve.

DELAYNIE MAPLE: I think I would also say a float serve. But I have been messing around with a top spin, so I think it's fun for me to receive it after realizing -- I think it helps me figure out what works with my top spin.

So I think I probably enjoy but also probably hate the most passing a top spin. It's the most rewarding if it works out well.

Q. Delaynie, I wanted to hear about your transition to get your land legs, and Ramsey, what have you seen from her in the gym?

DELAYNIE MAPLE: Yeah, it's been super fun. It's been super rewarding. I got really comfortable in the sand and I kind of got to a point where I was feeling really good about my game, feeling really confident by the end of the season, and then two weeks later I was like Bambi again. I think it was really humbling, but probably one of the best things I could've done for myself.

It's been so much fun. They've been so helpful. I've been having Ramsey give me privates because she knows so much about the game. And I think being at Indiana was a perfect spot for me to transition into because the players have just been super helpful with kind of just giving me feedback throughout every play, every practice, and kind of being 18 different coaches, which has been incredible.

I'm super excited to see where it goes, but I'm really happy to be back and getting used to wearing shoes again.

RAMSEY GARY: She's a beast. She doesn't need anybody to teach her anything. We just kind of have to help her with little things. Just knowing the game, it's different. Beach and indoor is a completely different game, so just little things here and there to help her with her game indoor. She was learning how to dive. She doesn't really dive in the beach world. Just teaching her little things like that.



But she's a beast all around. She doesn't need that much help.

Q. With the two libero system, is this something you consider or it doesn't fit what you want to do?

STEVE AIRD: I think Ramsey is one of the best players in the country, period. She's my libero and she will be my libero. What will be creative I think about the other libero slot, whether it's someone like Kenzie Daffinee who is a phenomenal jump server might be in that slot. Maybe get someone some looks at various times during the season, but Ramsey is my girl. That's how that works.

Q. Steve, between Delaynie and Jaide, you may have the most interesting group of transfers. How do you balance having a Division I athlete and a law school student?

STEVE AIRD: Yeah, Jaide is unique in a lot of ways. Her story, and I'll be brief, she was at the University of Toronto. I'm obviously Canadian and kind of knew about her from some people back home. She gets into law school at Indiana, says she wants to play, and this was last year.

I sat down with her and it wasn't going to work. The law classes were incredible. She met with the dean, said hey, listen, I need to do this, this, and this to be able to compete. We got her in the gym a little bit, saw what she could do.

She's a nice volleyball player and more importantly she's an incredible young woman. Maybe at one point in my life I might need representation, so this is a really smart move by me.

But she's a really great kid, unbelievable human being, and yeah, for someone to -- last year she was in the gym watching practice. She was coming to matches. She was around the team. Whether she'll have a tremendous impact on the court or not will be determined, but as a human being -- one of my biggest things is you want people who want to be there and you want people to buy into what you do and how you do it.

Her story battling through injury and becoming who she is as a human being is something I'm incredibly proud of. It'll be fun.

And this one was unique. Delaynie was unique. My associate head coach Rachel had known her a long time. My assistant coach Kevin Hodge is one of my best friends, was my college roommate, someone I trust and love, and they both said, hey, listen, the kid has got game.

I knew she could play the sport. What I didn't know is how incredible a human being she was. I'm pretty lucky to be able to be around her every day. She's going to make us better in a million different ways. We've been able to attract some really neat people.

I think the culture -- every coach will be up here and talk about culture and talk about this and talk about that and coach-speak is coach-speak, but they'll tell you we're getting to the point now with the way recruiting is going and we've got a couple Top 5 classes in the next few years, and these guys have worked so hard to build it. Ramsey will tell you, we've known each other since she was in the ninth grade, what we started with and where we are, it's because of people like these two that we've been able to be a little bit better.

Q. Coach, what is your main objective for your team this season?

STEVE AIRD: It's a great question, something we think about a lot. Appreciate the question.

I think we do a pretty good job of really keeping blinders on and just worrying about our program. I laugh with people. I've been to six Final Fours. I've won two titles. My first assistant coaching job when I was 23 years old; the team went 1-27. So we lost 27 times; we won once.

I've kind of seen bookends of how it works, having really a ton of success and then kind of grinding through it.

There are some teams in the conference their goal is to win a National Championship. There are some teams trying to build. What I would say about us now is I really feel we've got our feet underneath us. We are starting to play ball at a really high level. I wouldn't tell you that we're the best team in the conference or the best team in the country, but we do some things that'll stress some people out, and we're going to focus on us.

One of my favorite sayings lately is you want to find a group or find a tribe of people that you're okay to lose with. You're not going to win every match, but you want to have fun. You want to believe in your people. You want to trust in your people. You want kids who come early and stay late and care about each other.

That's the vibe I have with the group right now.

We're going to do what we do. We're going to do what we do well. We're going to try to represent the school at the highest level and we are going to have a heck of a lot of fun doing it.

That's what we're doing to do. We're going to keep the blinders on and just worry about IU.

Q. Why did you pick that team to name with?

STEVE AIRD: Why did I come to Indiana? For me, I'm from Toronto, so I'm a Canadian guy, but I've been in the Big Ten a really long time. When I decided to take the job at Indiana, a lot of it was the support and the people.

Indiana is an unbelievable volleyball state. It has incredible coaches, incredible players. For me, the distance from home was awesome. I could still see mom and dad and my brother and my friends back home.

I just thought it was a sleeping giant. I thought if we did the right stuff and recruited the right people we could have a lot of success and have fun doing it.

The administration at Indiana has been incredible. The support in Bloomington has been incredible. It's really close by. You should come check it out, man. When you get a chance, come visit. I'll take you out to dinner.

Q. There's been so much made about the growth in attendance, TV ratings, how much the sport's exploded in the last few years. Why do you think that's been the case? Why the increased popularity now? How would you like to see college volleyball kind of capitalize on this moment y'all are having?

STEVE AIRD: Yeah, I think the confluence of social media, streaming access, getting to know the players and the people I think has been a huge deal. I was doing a thing this morning about the 2007 to 2010 Penn State streak that I was a small part of. But some of the matches early we played Stanford it wasn't on TV. You really couldn't get to know the players.

But now through social media I think people are really getting to know the kids. I think the sport as an entertainment event for a family, for people, is incredibly fun. It's fast. It's fast paced. They're incredible athletes.

I think it's a confluence of a lot of stuff. The groundswell of it. I remember 2008 when the Olympics indoor stuff was rolling and beach was rolling and it kind of took a bump. Obviously incredibly proud now of where the national teams are in the Olympics and beach teams.

Delaynie would know it better than I would. But people care about stuff get to know you, get to know the kids, and they get to spend time and you get to tell them the story.

I think through social media, through television, through streaming, it's been able to do that at a really high level.

If you watch any of these documentaries on Prime with the football stuff or the soccer stuff, I just think the more we can tell the story of these people -- I mean, these two are just incredible people and they work so hard and they're so good at what they do that there won't be many people in Bloomington that meet them that aren't going to want to root for them, and I think that's hopefully what's happening with the sport across the country.

RAMSEY GARY: I would say for me it's kind of cool to be in it right now. I could say just having an impact on little girls is huge, and I want to continue to tell my story for little girls to see and just to look up to. I was a little girl once looking up to them.

DELAYNIE MAPLE: Yeah, I also think that the NIL space has grown viewership, too. I think you're able to, if you follow somebody on let's say Instagram and you see the brands they partner with, it usually aligns with what they're passionate about. I feel like it's a different way to get to know people and get to know if these are players you really want to follow.

For me being in beach volleyball last year I felt like I knew Ramsey just through so many of the different media opportunities that these players get to have, and I'm really excited to be a part of it and see where it goes.

But I think honestly it's just the beginning for volleyball, which is really, really exciting.

Q. Ramsey, you spent time this summer in the U-21 level. Talk about how playing in the Big Ten prepared you for success there and some of the takeaways you're going to bring to the court this year.

RAMSEY GARY: Yeah, great question. It was really cool to train with them. I think half of the team was Big Ten. Just playing with them really helped.

I competed with them all season right before we went there, so it was really cool to see them and just the competitive level with our team. We train every day in the spring; really got me ready for U-19. It's super cool to see.

I think my biggest takeaway from it was probably my leadership role. I really took that on during the summer and spring, so just continuing that during the fall is my big takeaway.

Q. Steve, did you pick up some Buffs while you were in Detroit picking up newer jacket or is that against

your Canadian heritage?

STEVE AIRD: Again, shout-out Hot Sam's, Detroit, Michigan, fine menswear. Those are my guys. Shout-out Jalen Rose. Yeah, man, Detroit is my city. I grew up across the border, and that's where I meet my parents and my brother and whatnot. If you need some fine menswear, that's your spot.

Q. With the revenue sharing House settlement coming, how does that impact your program for the future and how do you plan to use that?

STEVE AIRD: I've got a couple pretty strong opinions on this. Number one I feel like the athletes should make money. I remember my days at Penn State where you would show up to the football stadium and there was 100,000 people at a game and half of them are jersey No. Blank, and I would see those guys trying to find money for dinner and couldn't afford jeans and stuff like that. I do feel like I want athletes to get paid.

I don't think any of us know right now what that's going to mean. I think our responsibility as kind of these guys have said is to try to do a good job and entertain, keep growing the sport, get in front of people. More and more people see it, more eyeballs, more people buying tickets, more revenue.

As a coach I want everything I can possibly get for these guys. Delainie not so much because she just got here, but Rams will tell you I spend a lot of time -- anything we can provide for them we're going to do it. That's something, again, to Indiana's credit. I think they care. They understand where the sport is in the conference. They really want it to be well.

But when I see young women with endorsements and doing stuff and having success, I am 100 percent there for it. I want to make sure it continues.

I think the big elephant in the room for all of us is we don't know that that's going to mean or how that's going to look. I think some really, really smart people are in rooms trying to figure that out, and when they let me know, I'll let you know.

Q. One of the things is the scholarship limit and the roster limit. Are you having conversations with administration, and what are those conversations like, and do you think 18 is an appropriate number for roster size?

STEVE AIRD: Yeah, I was happy to see 18 as a number. We didn't really want to go lower in terms of opportunities

for women to compete. I didn't think that would have been a very good thing.

Again, I think our administration presidents, ADs, especially in the conference, are sitting down and trying to figure out what's going to be equitable, how is it going to make sense.

And then a lot of decisions are going to be made locally. I'm very fortunate, Scott and Jeremy and Mattie White, they're really smart and they care and they're going to sit down and say, hey, listen, this is what we're trying to figure out and how it's going to work.

Like I said I've got a business background. If it turns into a general manager type of situation, I'm going to be really comfortable in that space. I'm going to enjoy it, and I am going to try to do what I can to build the best roster and represent the school the best we can.

I think there's just so many unknowns right now. I think once they figure out how football is going to work, and it's the Title IX component, it's where is the money going to go and how, who's generating what, all of those things I think are being talked about kind of at the sea level, and my hope is that sooner than later we'll start to have some answers about what direction we're going to do and then be able to locally kind of navigate and figure out how that's going to affect the volleyball program at Indiana.

Q. Have you ever thought about quitting volleyball before?

RAMSEY GARY: Great question. Many times. Especially hard practices. That's the first thing you want to think of is just to quit. It's the easy way out.

But I think we're kind of wired -- we want more. We're very competitive. We like to win. Honestly I love the sport of volleyball. I love everything about it, even the hard workouts. I know it's hard in the moment, but it's all worth it in the end.

DELAYNIE MAPLE: Yeah, I'd echo that, too. I think if you ask any top competitive athlete they're going to say at one point in their career they were like, this is it for me.

It gets really tough. But I also think when you overcome those days, it makes it all worth it. It honestly pushes you a lot more. I know the days throughout my undergrad at USC there were a lot of days where I thought, this is the hardest thing I've ever done and I don't know if I can do it tomorrow, but then when the next day comes it's the most rewarding thing.

And I think it's why so many top athletes always go back to the sport when they say that they're strong people or how their personalities have emerged and whatnot, and I think that's a huge thing to credit and it's been really cool watching the Olympics because I feel like a lot of also Olympic athletes they get asked this question and all of them and the same thing.

So it's cool to know that you're not alone. I wouldn't be able to do it if I didn't have 17 other girls with me every day.

STEVE AIRD: My advice for you is on the other side of hard is always total joy, and you'll get to a point in your career where you've got to make a decision and you're like, man, this is really tough. If you can just get past that part, the other side of it is a lot of fun.

I think these guys will tell you the same thing; these guys are in the one percent of one percent, but it takes a lot of hard work. Kind of what you guys are doing right now and learning more and being here when other people are maybe sleeping. It's a pretty good move by y'all.

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