

University of Iowa Wrestling Media Conference

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Clarissa Chun

Women's Wrestling Press Conference

CLARISSA CHUN: Thank you all for being here today. Really it means a lot that you guys are here, having interest in covering women's wrestling. You are the messenger to get the news out there, spread all the good stuff about women's wrestling. Thank you for being here today.

Really an exciting year, NCAA championships season starts this Saturday. It's official. It's recognized as a championship sport. The whole country, from USA Wrestling, all the institutions, NCAA institutions, are excited for this growth of where we're at. Hopefully it just continues to add more and more NCAA institutions at the DI level.

Just really want to thank the efforts from the NCWWC, formerly the WCWA, and the people behind the scenes and their work in advancing women's wrestling, making it an emerging sport to a championship sport status. Exciting times as the growth happens.

The transition from NCWWC to NCAA, now we can only bring 10 to the national championships, right, which there are so many good things with the growth, but hard decisions along the way for our program with 11 returning All-Americans, two of which are national champions. Really they're battling every day in the room, just earning their opportunity to hopefully be the one on the top of the podium come March 6-7.

We've got six awesome freshmen that have been added to our program this year, just really elevating our room in so many ways as far as challenging the room to be better each day. They're just great people on and off the mat.

I think for us, our program is about 'For Her'. You hear that a lot from our program. It really is about the people who help our women's wrestling grow. It's about you guys here today. It's about the ones that paved the way for us. Our women fight for that, for things bigger than themselves in that regard.

Really just happy to be here today. I'll take your questions,



if you have any.

Q. Nyla, what have you seen from her since getting back on the mat this summer, your expectations, overall status of health in terms of the roster this year?

CLARISSA CHUN: Really exciting time for Nyla, right? She's been off for two years. As far as being sidelined and injured...

Nothing has really changed for her in the sense of how she does business. Like, when she's off the mat rehabbing, she's working her butt off to be ready to go. You saw it after her first injury. She came off of that and stormed through last chance Olympic qualifier, U20s, Olympic trials.

It's no different. Her return to mat, it's an exciting time. I'm excited for her opportunity to have her very first college season, which is so bizarre to say. She is, too.

For us, it's like we want to make sure that we are smart with her return to mat and competition side of things. A healthy Nyla is a dangerous Nyla. We're very excited for her return, excited for y'all get to see her compete soon.

Q. What most impresses you about her on the mat and off the mat?

CLARISSA CHUN: Nyla just excels and pours everything of herself into everything she does, whether it's her academics, whether it's her internships, working in the lab, doing research. Just an amazing person. On the mat, she brings her teammates in, and they make each other better, she is always there for her teammates.

I couldn't say anything other than she excels in anything she puts herself into

Q. In your opening statement, you alluded to how the change is going to be tough with the lineup decisions going to 10 this year. How does that change your season ahead when you make decisions on who is going to start in duals, start in tournaments?

CLARISSA CHUN: Yeah, the great thing about where women's wrestling is, we do have opportunities to go to open tournaments, a lot of them. Our schedule is primarily half and half between duals and opens. There's a lot of

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opens in there, so it does give a lot of our women an opportunity to compete.

When we do duals, it's not just a single dual, it's usually two. The 'For Her' dual, there's eight teams. There will be plenty of opportunities with our women to be able to compete.

I think the harder thing is when it does come down to decision time, the great thing about our sport is you go earn it on the mat, you show your work and earn what you get, so...

Q. You mentioned the freshmen class from this year. What have you seen from them in practice that excites you? Does it remind you of last year's class with a few All-Americans?

CLARISSA CHUN: They've jumped right in. There's going to be battles at certain weight classes that we have from our freshmen. I think our freshmen, man, they're workers. It's one of those things for coaches, which is harder to try to motivate and push someone to do more or to try to like rein them back from doing too much.

There's a good handful of our freshmen that we have to say, 'Okay, that's enough'. They're just so eager. That's just so ingrained in who they are. They're soaking up just wanting to get better.

Q. How have you seen Kylie continue to develop since she won the national title and took gold?

CLARISSA CHUN: Yeah, Kylie, she's still growing. There's still areas of her to continue to work on, whether it's technically, tactically, mentally, emotionally.

There's so many elements to the wrestling match that as great as she is, winning College Nationals, being on the Senior World Team, those challenges are shown a lot more in moments on the international stages, and then trying to create those challenges within the room, working through those areas.

She wants to continue to get better. She's not satisfied with just a college National Championship or a Senior World bronze medal, U23 gold medal. She wants that consistent I want to be on the top, eyes on L.A. in 2028.

Yeah, she's just one that loves wrestling so much that she wants to get better, so she's going to continue to grow and develop.

Q. She went through the entire year without conceding a point. Is that something that is pretty

much unheard of? How insane was that to you?

CLARISSA CHUN: Gosh, yeah. I don't even know if she recognized that until it was done. That's just how competitive she is. I mean, she conceded four points at the U23 World Championships. Pretty sure she's not happy about doing that either, giving those points up.

I think she just goes out there and just executes what she does best. That's just the result of it, so... I don't think she goes in thinking, I don't want to get scored on.

Q. You talk about the freshmen. What has it been like coaching Libby Dix?

CLARISSA CHUN: Yeah, I think for Libby, it really is just about getting better and growing. She always has a smile on her face when she's wrestling. That's fun because it's like she can utilize her athleticism that she has from being in different sports.

I think that's the greater thing is that she chose wrestling over all the our multi-sports, whether softball, track and field. It really was the love for the opportunity to continue to grow within wrestling, see where she can go from it.

Q. You've talked a lot over the last years about growing the sport of women's wrestling. Watching someone like Kennedy, go back to the Olympics, you see a lot of girls who I think posted or tagged, Look, I did something similar, is that something you've seen as a point of what Kennedy has been able to do, being able to not only win but do it in an exciting manner, being a good thing for women's wrestling, growing the sport that way?

CLARISSA CHUN: Yeah, like you said, it brings excitement. It's like that 'wow' factor, that element of holy cow, someone just threw someone over themselves onto their back, hopefully not head. That excites people to try to, like, execute that, right?

I think anytime you have someone who has the ability to spark interest in anyone, whether it's a young girl or just any other person, doesn't matter age, gender, whatnot, anytime you can get someone excited about women's wrestling, that's always a great thing.

Q. One of the things we hear from Tom with the men's program is they put together a tough schedule every year. We look at your schedule this year, it's really similar, how tough it is. What goes into your decision-making process when you put that together and bring in high-level competition all season?

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CLARISSA CHUN: Great question. It really is, it's all about challenging our team, everyone on our team, our program, throughout the season. We don't want to shy away from competition. We want to lean into it. We want to see what areas we can continue to work on so we're better prepared for March 6-7.

It's a little bit I think about the growth of the sport. You see that Oklahoma State is on the schedule. I might get asked, Why would you schedule a club team? To me it makes sense. It's Oklahoma State. They've got great athletes on their program, student-athletes. Why wouldn't we challenge ourselves against a team like Oklahoma State?

The Missouri Valley Open is a beast of an open. It's a nice one to kick off the start of the season to kind of see where we're at.

All of this is just preparation for at the end, right, March 6-7. There's not too many competitions where there's back-to-back weigh-ins or back-to-back days where you have to weigh in.

We know that Nationals is a two-day tournament. The great thing is our women want to compete in that. They want to know where they're at at the beginning of the season. That's what I enjoy about this team, is they want to continue to grow and learn.

Q. What do you have to say about Kennedy, very similar to Welker, but also in terms of the honors she's earned recently?

CLARISSA CHUN: Yeah, no, I mean, when I can have two back-to-back superpower national champions, world medalist, Olympic medalist, back to back on our lineup, that's always a great thing.

Kennedy brings a fun energy as far as the dynamic with the team when she's around. She helps her teammates in other ways.

They both, Kylie and Kennedy, push each other in the room. We've had match simulations the last few weeks. We put them together quite often to go against each other. Sometimes people are like they would pay the price for admission to come see them scrap, right?

Having them two in the room together only helps themselves, each other, elevate in a room and an environment when they're continuously trying to get better.

Q. Seems like there's always something new in the sport. You have two new staff members, after losing Hannah and Leandra. What has it been like integrating

two new members to the overall staff?

CLARISSA CHUN: No, Brandee has been great. Love her. She's been so helpful for me. She's getting introduced to our team. She's got great experience. I love this part of it.

We have a new hire, Lillian. She hasn't officially started yet. That will be a nice addition to integrating a new person on staff.

I do miss both Hannah and Leandra. They've been so great for our program. Super grateful for the work that they've done, how they've moved our program forward.

Yeah, with Lillian, it's going to be a new move for her. She's not from Iowa. It's introducing her to everything Iowa when she gets on board. That will be fun.

Really it was work to get to where we are, but in everything we do, we want to do things in the right way and make sure it's a right fit for everyone involved. We hope this is all a win-win situation for everyone.

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