

Big Ten Volleyball Media Days

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Chicago, Illinois, USA

Purdue Boilermakers

Coach Dave Shondell

Taylor Anderson

Kenna Wollard

Press Conference



DAVE SHONDELL: Always great to be here at this event. How thankful we are for both the Big Ten Conference and the Big Ten Network for opening the doors a few years ago to make this happen. It's great for our athletes. It's great for our sport. We're very, very appreciative of that.

Big season awaits for Purdue. We had a great campaign a year ago where a lot of things went really well for us. We just didn't go as deep as we wanted to go into the NCAA Tournament. But we have 18 players on our roster. We are going to play volleyball at Purdue again this year. I'm excited about the people we have.

I think the sisterhood that is being developed there -- I've never used that before at a press conference, but I think it's a good way to describe what's happening in our program right now.

But it'll be a tough, tough season for almost everybody in the Big Ten because I think it's going to be a couple of teams that probably have more talent and experience than everybody else. But after that it's going to be a real street fight.

We just have to be really competitive and win some close matches, and we'll have a shot at playing in the NCAA Tournament.

Q. Kenna and Taylor, you guys go from that underclassman role, now it's more of a leadership role. The first two years who did you learn the most from and how are you embracing your roles as leaders on this team?

KENNA WOLLARD: Yeah, definitely we had to take on bigger leadership roles this year, and I think Raven Colvin did a good job of portraying that type of role last year. She's a very vocal leader but she knows how to talk to and teach each and every one of her teammates. I think I

learned a lot from her my first two years.

TAYLOR ANDERSON: For me, I would also say Raven, just playing next to her, it really grew my game. And I'd also say Sydney Yim. Being a setter looking up to her, she was like a rock for me, so it's kind of scary now thinking that I'm now the oldest setter. But it's okay.

Q. Coach, I wanted to ask about Raven's graduation. She was such a force at the net defensively. Maybe you don't replace her with one person, but how that transition happened, especially on the defensive side after she graduated.

DAVE SHONDELL: Yeah, transition will be really unique because it'll be filled by four new people that have not been really in our gym a whole lot. Three middles transferred in and one freshman. So there will be a lot of teaching, a lot of training, a lot of developing and understanding our systems.

But hopefully we've got -- I think we've got four really good athletes that are going to be capable, and I think they're willing to do the work and put the time in. I think that it won't be Raven, and there's not going to be another Raven Colvin in our gym. There will never be one like her. I think sometimes I thought she was underrated as an athlete and as a middle blocker, but the numbers indicate she was really, really good.

Had a great match yesterday for USA's under-23 team; led them to a win. So excited about her future professionally and with the USA.

Q. What did you learn about the transfer portal during this off-season? Because you lost a number of players but also you rebuilt your team through there. What was that experience like to rely on that so heavily?

DAVE SHONDELL: Well, it started out not very good, and then it got better is how I would describe it.

Quite honestly, I was just floored by what happened at Purdue, to be honest. Didn't see it coming. Call me a



whatever you want. But we just didn't see it coming.

It hit really hard and took a while to recover, but we did. Purdue means a lot to me. I was a high school volleyball coach running a club out of Muncie, Indiana, helping run a club out of Muncie, Indiana, and Morgan Burke gave me an opportunity to coach at Purdue University in the Big Ten, and it's been an unbelievable ride.

We have players like the two to my left that love Purdue University. They will die for Purdue University. I needed to be part of their program and be part of their lives and give back to them like our staff always has.

After a couple days of feeling sorry for myself, I got up and got on the telephone and the portal then became very, very good, because who I thought were the five best players that were on the portal said they'd love to come to Purdue, sight unseen come to Purdue.

But what I've learned is that it's the game we're playing. Don't be surprised if something similar happens again, and it's going to happen at a lot of different schools. No matter how good the program or how bad the program, it's going to continue to happen.

I think it's in the best interest of the players, but that can be discussed for a long time. But right now that's what's happening.

I think the revenue sharing aspect of it is going to come into play a lot more than what it has in volleyball so far once people find out that there's money out there. Good news is we're going to be a player in that, which is nice.

Purdue has shown great respect for our program, is going to give us the necessary funds, I think, to be really successful on the portal.

Q. I think it's easy sometimes to think of the negatives that come with having such a new team, with all these new players, transfers, freshmen. Can you talk about some of the positives that have come from having these new players join your team?

KENNA WOLLARD: Yeah, I think it's been really cool to see everyone coming from a different situation and they're coming into this new situation. Everybody has come in with such a positive mindset and energy and I think it's just kind of a refresh for everybody depending on their situation.

So I think that's a huge positive because it's like a reset. I've been able to see that in the spring, this past spring, and in the summer, and I think it's just been refreshing for

us two as returners to get some of that new energy.

TAYLOR ANDERSON: Like Kenna was saying, it was like a refresh. We had trust in our coaches and they recruited amazing people that I call my best friends, so it's been a joy to get to play with them all spring and through the summer, and I'm excited to play with them this fall.

Q. You mentioned Muncie; how about your brother getting back in it and going to work for Sheffield? Thoughts about that?

DAVE SHONDELL: Yeah, really excited for John. Anybody that's ever been coached by John or watched John in a gym understands what an incredible human being he is and what a great coach that he is, and these two could speak on that as well as I can.

He was with the Indianapolis Ignite, Indy Ignite I guess was the squad, the pro team, and they loved him down there. But when Kelly Sheffield, who many people don't know, Sheff and John went to high school together and have known each for a long time. John was the All-American player, Sheff was the guys just working at a local bar and coaching with Munciana and taking his time graduating from college, and then Sheff got serious about it. He's a really smart guy.

But he reached out to John when he knew one of his assistants was going to move into a different position, and John was real to get back into the college game. So that will be -- it'll be fun to watch those two, and luckily we just play them one time this year. It'll be in Madison. But that will be a fun opportunity.

But really excited for John. Super, super happy for John.

Q. Do you have one Kelly and John story?

DAVE SHONDELL: I'm not going to share that. I've already gone deep enough. That's it.

Q. You get to play in these venues that hold 15 to 20,000 people. What does that say about the prestige of your program and the growth of volleyball overall?

DAVE SHONDELL: I think it speaks about the growth of our game more than anything else, and what's happened the last couple of seasons led by Nebraska and John Cook's journey that has helped lead that cause. It takes people like Cook. Sheffield has been similar. My father, Dr. Don Shondell, was probably the pioneer of all of that growth, at least in the Midwest. We want to be a part of that and we're excited to get to play. You didn't mention Hinkle Fieldhouse and Worthen Arena at Ball State and Pauley



Pavillion, and different places.

So it will be a fun year providing we can win our share of those. It won't be fun getting beat in those places, I can promise you that. But I think if we compete, it will be fun.

Just to sit back at this stage of my career and see the sport continue to explode the way that it has, it just brings a certain amount of joy. I hope that our players understand that it wasn't always this way. That's kind of what they've grown up in, club volleyball going crazy, now college athletics doing what it's doing for the sport of volleyball.

I hope all these athletes can appreciate what people before them did to get to where we are now.

Q. For the players, where are you looking forward to playing this season?

KENNA WOLLARD: I'm definitely looking forward to playing in Mackey Arena again. It was an amazing experience, and it's going to be the same, I'm sure, this year.

Then I'm also looking forward to playing our rival in Gainbridge.

TAYLOR ANDERSON: I'm also excited for Mackey Arena. Last season I had chills running out, so I'm just excited to have almost 15,000 of our fans supporting us for three matches instead of two last year.

Q. Dave, there was a waiver that came out that you could start practices earlier than you could originally. How much did that alter your plans and what benefits could that bring?

DAVE SHONDELL: It altered everything. Everybody was planning on starting a week later, and then because there was the ABCA, I think, and I think they may have sponsored both of those events, the NCAA gave a waiver to those to start a week early.

Then if you're like me you're standing around, why are they getting to -- they're already getting to play in the matches on national TV. That's kind of an advantage already. Now they're getting five or six extra days.

So I was one that felt like they need to look at that and either eliminate that extra week for them or compromise or add an extra week, and they added an extra week so everybody is starting at the same time.

So we certainly had people that had made plans. One of them is on the stage right now. I think she said she was

shedding a tear when she sent me a text because she was planning on going home to spend some time, which most of these kids will do. They're here all summer. They want to go home and get a little bit of relief from what's going on here before they come back and go through the grind.

But everybody just kind of adjusted their schedule and made those trips maybe five, six days earlier.

As I told them, nobody needs those seven days more than we do. We're going to make those seven days more valuable than anybody else in the country. So that's what our approach has to be. We need them. We've got 10 new players on our roster. Nobody thinks we're going to be any good. We need those days, so we're going to try to take advantage of them.

Q. Did that change your plans? What did you have to do to accommodate?

TAYLOR ANDERSON: I just moved my flight like a week earlier. But I'm pretty dramatic sometimes and I was just thinking, I can't eat all my favorite foods, but I went home last Wednesday and got back yesterday, so I'm all good, ready for the season.

Q. As a team and then individually, where is the biggest areas of improvement before that first match?

KENNA WOLLARD: Yeah, I think kind of like Dave was saying, I think more experience, more time with each other. I think we have to learn each other, learn how to play with one another, just with all the change and all the new. Then individually I want to become more of a six-rotation outside, so consistency with that, and being able to play both back row and front row.

TAYLOR ANDERSON: I would say just getting to be with each other more on the court, and that's very important for me as a setter. I'm only really setting Kenna again with all of our hitters, so working on those connections will be very important.

Q. Taylor, what has the transition been like when there are so many new arms and tendencies and preferences for you to learn?

TAYLOR ANDERSON: I would say I probably had to like been more intentional during practice and really communicating and not just setting the ball and not talking to my hitters on what they need.

I feel like I am a perfectionist, and I feel like it's gone up another level to make sure my connections are perfect.

Q. Dave, you mentioned that expectations maybe are a little bit lower this year than maybe they have been in the past. Still top half in the preseason poll in the Big Ten. Does that add pressure to you guys or is that kind of a freeing feeling of people don't really expect us to be good so let's go out and prove them wrong?

DAVE SHONDELL: I haven't thought about the level of pressure yet. We've had a few other things to try to get organized with.

But our expectations will remain very high. I can guarantee you that. I also realize we don't have some of the same players that we had a year ago. It's going to take some time. So there has to be a certain level of patience.

But I'm not a very patient person. So we're going to push really hard and we're going to demand an awful lot and we're going to practice hard. But we're also not going to kill anybody while we're doing it. Having healthy bodies is a big part of success.

There will be a lot of years we haven't had a lot of people that can really play at our level, so they had to all stay healthy. We probably have more balance. If our team walked in right now, you'd be pretty impressed by looking at them. There's a lot of really good athletes that can jump and can swing and can do a lot of good things. They just haven't played a lot of volleyball and certainly not a lot for us, although we have some that have.

These two kids right here can play the game, and I think people will find that out eventually.

Q. Kenna, as the top returner in terms of kills per set, the kind of jump that you can see her making this year. She talked about working toward being a six rotation outside and really using that connection that guys have.

TAYLOR ANDERSON: I'm excited for everyone to see Kenna. I have a lot of faith in her, and I would say all of our teammates. Like this is our go-to girl, and I'm excited for her to be able to flourish this season. I really want her to believe that she can do it, and she will.

Q. You had the chance in the spring to play against your son. That match is on the schedule for this fall. What's this experience like not just for you but for your entire family?

DAVE SHONDELL: Yeah, I think playing a real match in the fall will be a lot different than playing an exhibition spring match, but it will be a lot of fun to go to Hinkle Fieldhouse. If you're not from Indiana then you may not

recognize the value of Hinkle Fieldhouse. But if you're a basketball guy like I am, you know what Hinkle Fieldhouse represents.

My son is trying to build a program there, and he's doing a great job. He's working hard. He's got the best team that he's had this year.

But we don't plan on holding anything back that day. Every win is so critical. They're all so critical. They'll be good enough to beat us if we don't play well. So we're going to have to be ready to go. But I'm sure it will be a big family affair. Most of my family is in the Indy area right now, but I think it'll be great for Butler for us to be there. They're already marketing that match.

I think the Boilermakers in Indianapolis will come out and support that, so I think it will be a lot of fun, and we're looking forward to that one.

Q. Kenna has taken on a lot of different roles throughout her time here. What does that say about her adaptability moving forward?

DAVE SHONDELL: Well, it says more just about who she is, that she was willing to adjust to whoever was going to be best for our team. She's a born left-side hitter, but the last two seasons she was playing on the right side where she had very limited experience, but she is a terrific athlete, and she was able to learn that, and even as a freshman, she did a really nice job playing out there.

But this past year with Grace Heaney not being available, she was locked in. Did anybody ever -- I guess one player played a little bit out there. But basically she was out there 98 percent of the time and developing shots.

She's a really, really good blocker, which we're going to need on the left side because we got eaten alive at times over there. So we're going to be a little bit bigger, more physical in that position.

She's a great athlete. She didn't just play volleyball her whole life, she did some other things, and I think that's helped her become the kind of player she is. But now she's going to have to pass and play defense and swing and block and serve and all those things, which she can do really, really well.

But mostly, she's the epitome of who we try to have at Purdue. It's not about her. It's never been about her. It's been about us. So we're looking forward to her now stepping into a more valuable leadership role where people can see how things are supposed to be done.



