



2018 MEN'S NATIONAL COLLEGIATE VOLLEYBALL CHAMPIONSHIP FINAL POSTGAME QUOTES (MAY 5, 2018)

LONG BEACH STATE HEAD COACH ALAN KNIPE

opening statement

"What can you say about that game? It doesn't surprise me that that's the battle we had with them. I know that we won both times earlier in the season in four [sets], but that is a really good team. They moved some pieces around and found a better lineup, at least for production. They were prepared and played well. They created a lot of pressure from the end lines, so it's a credit to them. And congratulations to all four teams that were here at the Final Four, because the volleyball was amazing. So, what it means for us – Kevin and Paul from TV were asking me, 'Does this vindicate or anything from the last couple of years?' And yeah, I guess it gives me a perfect platform to answer that question now. It's not vindicating – it's a process. Instead of a lot of praise to these three guys, especially, who are sitting up here that went to the Final Four as freshmen and sophomores, and now won it as juniors, it's part of a process. It's growth. It's development. It's maturity. They deserve it. They played hard and trained hard. They committed to a process with their teammates. We had four new pieces this year besides these three and still found a way to do a good job in all areas of the game and actually do a better job. I'm very proud of our guys, of not putting their head down after some failure. It's just with any other life lesson. You get some failure and what are you going to do with it? Our guys decided to have some determination and do something about it. They trained like that every single day from the fall all the way through, winning the first-ever Big West Conference regular-season championship [and] the Big West Conference Tournament and into the NCAA Tournament and winning the national championship. That's growth and I'm super proud. That was a gritty, gritty performance tonight, as was the one on Thursday night. I could not be more proud or happy for our guys and for the entire Long Beach nation that came out tonight, whether they were former players or administrators, our president, our mayor – everybody that was here. All the fans and our parents, that was packed into this place. I don't know if it felt like the Pyramid, but it certainly did not feel like an away match. Thank you."

on what he credits the victory to

"Our guys, executing and a lot of grit. It's all them. They're the ones out there wearing it and battling and dealing with all of the stresses that come into being an athlete in this kind of an environment. I mean, 100 percent, our guys. They did a great job."

on this team being in uncomfortable situations in the past, and how that paid off in this match

"Yeah, there's no way to reproduce that. It's really, it's our group in the gym that gives us as much pressure as they can and creating an anxiety as close to game-like as you can create in your own gym. But there's no substitute for going through these moments. We've had so many opportunities to go through these moments this year, and to grow and embrace the moment that we were in, whether it was our trip to Canada early in the year or the trips to the East Coast, trips to Chicago, throughout our season and then ending up in Hawaii with two really good matches against a really good Hawaii team that went five on both nights. We had to deal with a playoff-like atmosphere there. I give our guys a ton of credit because those matches there, at the end of the season, they had no bearing on our seed. They had no bearing on anything other than our pride. Hawaii was playing for a lot. Yeah, I think that we used those moments and even Thursday night's moment. We'd talked about that in our pregame. We talked about it at different times throughout the match, that there were reference moments that we had been through this before. But I have to give a lot of credit to my administration

and to our president for allowing us to grow our sport and to grow our program and allow us to take those trips and to invest in our athletes. It's an entire family that has allowed this to happen this year."

on what kind of mental training he's done with the team

"Quite a bit. Yeah, we have spent a lot of time on that aspect of the game. I'm not going to really get into a whole lot of what we do. People can figure that out for themselves. But our guys are pretty tough. We've spent a lot of time on that aspect of the game. This game is a game of failure. Every point ends on an error. It's just a matter of whether it's your error or their error. And an ace for us is a great point, but an error for them just like it is the other way around. You've got to deal with moving on to the next play and being present in the current play. You've got to get out of the last play. There is a lot of mental training that goes into that. There is a lot of different approaches to it. This team has invested into how we teach it, the way we talk about it, the way we spend one day each week on it. They did a great job of executing it and using it. We were able to talk through it in big moments. I think it really helped. It helped our staff, and it helped the team to have something to lean on. But as far as what we do, it's pretty good."

on Long Beach State freshman Ethan Siegfried

"Ethan [Siegfried] has ice in his veins, man. He hasn't played a ton for us this year, but as the year has gone on, he has become more of a factor. He really had a breakout trip when we had gone to Hawaii, and he was a big factor in our match that we won there. He has continued to build confidence. He's an incredible confident kid. He embraced that role, as did a couple of other guys. Louis [Richard] did a good job of serving tonight, too. But Ethan was the guy who got some separation and helped us to get back into some sets. For a true freshman in that role in that moment, we needed every point. I am super proud of him."

on being able to see his teammates from the 1991 title-winning squad

"Well, those guys are salt-of-the-earth guys, like these guys. They'll figure out when they're older and bald, like me, that these moments they spend with these guys are some of the greatest moments of their life, you know. I get to live in this world constantly, year-in and year-out. So I'm able to experience it all the time. But that group is really special to me because those were my playing days, and we were able to accomplish some great things and win a national championship. But between that one and this one, it's not like we went dormant. We have played in a lot of Final Fours in between, and it hasn't gone our way. But there have been teams, there are a lot of guys who played on teams – we lost in a five-setter in overtime in '04. We played here in this building in '99. We played in '08 [and] in the last two Final Fours. All of those guys were out there, too. I know that it's easy to give a lot of credit to the 1991 team because they won, but there are probably 150 former players out there. So, a huge hats-off to all of those guys and all the guys on all of the other teams who're committed to the process of Long Beach State volleyball. This is not the only game, though. They're not front-runners. They weren't here tonight and this was the first time that they'd jumped into the limelight because were playing in the Final Four. We've had matches this year [that] we have had over 40 alumni at. We've had events with over 70 former players. It's an incredibly special place. It's an incredible culture that has been created and nourished with a lot of people who really care about it. Yeah, it means the world to me that they were here. But it also means the world to me that there were so many other former players that were here too, and coaches for that matter, too."

LONG BEACH STATE OPPOSITE/OUTSIDE HITTER KYLE ENSING

on what championship means

"It means the world to us. Looking back on our last two years, losing in the semifinals, that's always in the back of our minds and going into the match we always had that in the back of our mind. We really pushed ourselves a lot this match and we came out on top and it means the world."

LONG BEACH STATE JUNIOR OUTSIDE HITTER TJ DEFALCO

on Kyle Ensing

"Yeah, I think having the other piece in Kyle was sort of a natural fit. Soon as we got to Long Beach, we started training, we all had the same goal, maybe if it wasn't spoken or anything like that, it was definitely in the way we trained, the way we practiced and the way we all competed. When it was going good and when it was going bad. There's no instructions to our flow of any type. Kyle's been unbelievable, working hard in the gym, the weight room, stuff like that. He's come along a whole long way, just like both of us have—me and Josh (Tuaniga). I wouldn't want any other teammate."

on doing it for the Long Beach community

“I just wanted to let the fans know—and all the alumni who made the trip up here, I saw a group of guys and they were alumni from the '91 team that were just looking for it. They supported all season. Then, I want to say thank you for all of the support, but then also all the fans, all the people who we've accumulated to come and watch our games throughout the season—that's one of the reasons we relied on some of that fire that they were bringing for us—because UCLA's a very emotional team, they rely on the crowd, as well. We kind of needed a little bit of that and they helped out a lot. I want to say thank you to all the community and LB nation.”

on what lone regular-season loss meant to team

“Funny you mention that. We were having a talk, I think in the locker room after we lost in Hawai'i. The vibe in the locker room was, well, yes, you learn from a loss, but there's also a side of that where you can learn from a win. He said something in the locker room of like, 'As soon as we do what we need to do and learn from this and take this, you guys won't care about this loss.' All this stuff happens and really, we try to learn as much as we can from a win as we do a loss, but then that loss really kind of slapped us around a bit and was like 'Alright, this is the stuff that's blaring' in these types of cultures, like a lot of fans and stuff like that. That definitely exposed a lot of stuff we needed to work on and we've definitely improved and so, yes, we don't care about it, but then yes, we also do.”

LONG BEACH STATE JUNIOR SETTER JOSH TUANIGA

on Kyle Ensing

“I think one of the coolest things about Kyle is he's one of the easiest guys to play with. Honestly, I can just throw anything back there and he's kind of flying around doing his thing. It wasn't so much trying to fit in, it was just like put him out there and let him do his thing. Kyle, this season as well as the past three years we've been playing together, has taken over games and some people don't notice that sometimes. He's a big force on this team. If anything, he can step up at any time.”

on ace to send match to fifth set

“The main focus for me was just my mechanics. Just making sure I wasn't being small or trying to be safe. All of that was just focusing on my mechanics, not so much taking in the pressure of the loud crowd... Just do what I usually do when I'm back here and do what has gotten me this far. Honestly, when I served that ball and it landed, I don't know how close it was, but I thought it was out. I was devastated. And then I see a linesman just do that with a flag... it was all good from there.”

on his decision to go for dunk tied at 24 in fourth set

“I knew I wasn't very offensive kind of going through the match and the opportunity was kind of there. It was either, just trying to go for it and hope for the best... I did it and it went down, I was super stoked, my guys were stoked. Just being able to kind of free up in that moment was kind of awesome. It was a great feeling.”

on winning for senior Bjarne Huus

“Bjarne is one of the hardest workers I've ever encountered. He does extra training during season. He understands his role on the team and he thrives in that. For somebody who's put so much work and to come out on top—I was just so stoked for him because sometimes he gets overlooked. I was just happy that he was able to get that ultimate goal that he's wanted for the past four years that he's been here. It just shows how much love that's circulating through this program.”

on what coaching staff means to players

“The coaching staff went above and beyond what a normal coaching staff would do for us. They were constantly there for us whenever we needed them and we felt like we had all the resources there to succeed. Paul Munoz is an amazing guy, Scott Touzinsky is an amazing guy, McKay (Smith)—that whole group. Coach Knipe just setting up great practices for us, setting up the entire schedule. It's tough to kind of explain because you don't see a whole lot of it as a player, but they absolutely killed it...”

UCLA HEAD COACH JOHN SPERAW

Opening statement

"I'm very proud of my team. All year long, we've talked about getting to the peak performance state and trying to figure out what that was for each individual player and us, collectively, as a group, and I think the last two matches we achieved that for the first time all season. I think we should be incredibly proud of the journey that we had to get there. I told this team in the locker room that I've never had a team that traveled so far personally, collectively as a team to get to this moment. Teams that I've coached in the past that have won have been a little bit settled at the beginning of the season. This team had to reinvent an offense, add new components in place. I'm disappointed, obviously, because we had our opportunities. Sometimes when you're up in the fourth set and the [opposing] team comes back, they have a little bit of momentum coming into that fifth. I think we'll look back on that fourth set with a couple of regrets here and there. Obviously, Long Beach State is a very good volleyball team and I've said that a bunch of times here. They're a deserved champion. I really thought we had a shot to beat them today, even before I stepped on the court and when we were down in the first set, I believed, but it wasn't meant to be. Congratulations to them."

On why Long Beach State won the match

"In the first set, they were doing such a good job of terminating the ball, particularly when we were serving tough. Their offense from ten feet in the first set was really incredible and we had some opportunities that we couldn't capitalize on, so that certainly gave them the first set. In the fourth set, I feel like we were doing exactly what we needed to do all the way through there. Through the second, third, and halfway through the fourth set, we were just bombing serves. We needed to do that against this team. They're such a good offensive team. I wanted to go out there and bomb [serves]; that was the only way we were going to win. I think somewhere in the middle of that fifth set, we probably fatigued a little bit. We had a run at the end of that fourth set when we had all of our best servers go back and error, and I think it was a lot about fatigue. That was a big part; I think when we were serving real tough in sets two, three, and early four, I thought we were in pretty good shape. And then we've had some problems in Rotation 1 and it cost us at the end. So not for lack of training, not for lack of trying to figure things out in that rotation. That was a good matchup for them and we'll have to just continue to see how we can make that rotation better."

UCLA JUNIOR SETTER MICAH MA'A

On his decision to continually set Daenan Gyimah throughout the match

"It was pretty obvious that everyone in the gym knew where I was going and we've been okay with that all year. So we didn't really think we needed to change it up. He's our guy. He's everybody's guy on this team. So we were going to pass as well as we can and we were going to get him the ball and we were going to ride with our guy. So that's what we did. He went up against double blocks, triple blocks and I don't know what he hit on the day but he still hit at a really high clip. He's one of the sole reasons we are even here in the first place. So we run with him and whether he was killing it or not we were going to go back to him. That's just how volleyball is."

UCLA JUNIOR OUTSIDE HITTER DYLAN MISSRY

On what it's going to take to get the team back to the NCAAs next year

"I mean it's going to be tough losing all the seniors. We had four seniors playing on the court tonight. I think it's going to take a lot of work in the offseason and being on guys to really try and play as much volleyball as possible because there is a large discrepancy being play in practice and play in the game. We really need to get guys playing as much as possible. I think we can get some guys on the court and win some games and once you make playoffs you really never know what is going to happen as we proved this year so we are just going to give it everything we have."

On whether he felt fatigued while serving as the match went on

"No. I just did the same thing I did all game – hit it as hard as I can and hope it goes in. I wasn't thinking about fatigue at all."