



2018 MEN'S NATIONAL COLLEGIATE VOLLEYBALL CHAMPIONSHIP OPENING ROUND (MAY 1, 2018) OHIO STATE 3, UC IRVINE 2 POSTGAME QUOTES

OHIO STATE HEAD COACH PETE HANSON

opening statement

"First of all, congratulations to UC Irvine for an incredibly well-played season and a well-played match tonight. They proved that they belong in this tournament and gave us everything we had and hopefully we gave them everything we had. In the end, it comes down to making a couple of plays at the right time and we had some guys do that, but it wasn't for lack of UC Irvine trying to stop us. Again, it was a great match. Our guys now have a chance to play another day and that's kind of what we talked about in the locker room was get through this one today and come back on Thursday, play another good team and see what happens."

on Jake Hanes and his performance as a freshman

"He's a redshirt freshman, so we'll give him a little bit of slack on that, that he had a chance to practice with us a full year and learn from a guy like Miles Johnson. Jake's just been having a great season and getting better and better every match. He's someone that competes really hard and has a will to win and a will to succeed that's really, really exceptional. And I think that he wants to be a guy that can be counted on in those situations. And I believe he is that guy now. He's proven that in some big matches and some playoff matches and certainly proved it tonight. It's nice to know that we've got not only a guy like No. 9, but now we've got a guy like No. 16 that can get some big kills and do some big things when the moment's the biggest. Hopefully that's something we can continue to have going forward."

on using postseason experience in match like this

"It clearly helped guys like No. 9 and No. 10 and No. 11 who did that the last couple years. But No. 16 and No. 1 and No. 3 and No. 12 weren't on the court the last couple years for us. So we've got some young guys that are playing, too. But I think, again, it's a comforting thought knowing that you've got a First-Team All-American that kind of anchors your team and can get you out of trouble at the right times and things like that. That's helped our guys. We've seen growth by all of those new guys and they've just kind of bought into what's been established the last couple years. And certainly, I'm not going to speak for Jake, but I'm sure Jake is feeling like 'Hey, I don't want to disappoint this guy next to me, so I've got to do some things.' It kind of goes back and forth like that and that's what has developed culturally within the program the last few years. Credit that to those guys that were there the last couple years."

on how this match prepared them for Long Beach State's Bjarne Huus and TJ DeFalco

"Hopefully we can get some big blockers in front of either Huus or DeFalco. Serve it off the net a little bit so we know where the ball's going and get dialed in. Those are two great players. A Player of the Year in T.J. and I think Huus has had an outstanding year. I haven't personally delved into their stats, but I know he's taken a step up from last year. Certainly he's playing better. And then it's Kyle Ensing on the back side. So that's a three-headed monster. For us, we'll do our due diligence tonight and tomorrow with our vid and our block-and-D. We'll try to put together a game plan and do the best we can. That's all we can ask of the guys."

on his team's defensive effort

"We're not the biggest team and we're not the best blocking team. So we do have to rely on the quality of our serve to hopefully get a team a little out of system and we have to rely on the quality of our backcourt defense. When we've got guys that can kind of get dialed in and understand what the opponent's tendencies are, I feel like we're a pretty good defensive team when we put our mind to it. I think we knew we had to put our mind to it against a team like Irvine. We were just tryin to make sure that every point that they did earn that they truly earned. That we weren't going to give any free points based on our lack of effort. Thought we did a good job of that tonight."

OHIO STATE REDSHIRT FRESHMAN OUTSIDE HITTER JAKE HANES

on if he didn't want to disappoint seniors tonight

"This is their last year, so, I know [from] my senior year in high school, it sucks when you lose that last point. So I'm trying to fight as hard as I can for these guys who aren't going to get another chance once this is over."

OHIO STATE SENIOR OUTSIDE HITTER NICOLAS SZERSZEN

on if team has preference between being favorite or underdog

"Being in those three contexts, coming to the three Final Fours, I kind of feel the same way as 2016. We knew that last year we just came in the semifinal and had everything set up for us. This year, we had to play King and we had to play UC Irvine. So it's like two decent teams that we had to pass through. We knew that we had our chances. We knew they had our chances. We just played our best. This was a really tight game. It could've gone either way and we just made a couple good plays at the right moment. Now we have nothing to lose, really. We're playing No. 1 Long Beach. It's really, just put everything in and play hard."

UC IRVINE HEAD COACH DAVID KNIFFIN

opening statement

"I'm really proud of the effort tonight and the work put together by these guys. Any time you come into a tournament, you want to demonstrate that you're championship-relevant, and anytime you're going deuce-game in the fifth, you're making that statement. We play the game to win and it's great to be on this stage, but this feels like unfinished business. I think there are some learning moments here for our guys. Obviously, I'll go back and start mapping next year's journey as soon as I get home. I'll start thinking about what it's going to take to get back on this stage, and the team is gonna change a little bit, but to have been on this stage three times in the last six years, to continue to be championship-relevant with Irvine in the changing landscape that is Division I athletics, is pretty special. I'm grateful to the administration for the support, grateful to the NCAA for adding the opening rounds, grateful to all the people behind the scenes who have got this thing from four teams to seven teams to wherever it goes next. An even number would be great. "

on starting senior outside hitter Tucker Pikula

"We talk a lot about the imagery with our team. Who we are, what we're about. Our mission as a program is to cultivate champions and win championships. You have to act like champions before you can be champions. We think about what being a champion looks like, and one of the things we talk about is the imagery of failings. This group of guys that is fighting together, protecting each other with the shields on their left and spears on their right. It's an opportunity to put our best foot forward and we put Tucker out there because he fills a role for us that we were inconsistent with. So we put him out there and we knew that [freshman outside hitter Joel Schneidmiller] was going to be there to back him up in some of the areas where he's strong and Tucker is not so strong. The opportunity to fight as a team tonight and to demonstrate that through action and through utilizing our subs was an opportunity we couldn't pass up."

on the team's first-set performance

"We went out to play Ohio State last year at Ohio State, and I remember some of our guys the night before – we were watching them compete against UC San Diego – and you watch a guy like [Ohio State senior outside

hitter Nicolas] Szerszen serve and, you know it's fast on video, but you see it in real life and it's even faster. Then you get in a game and it's whizzing by a guys head and you say 'that's even faster than when you're watching on the sidelines.' So I think it takes a little time to calibrate to something like that. I don't know that you can simulate the way that Ohio State attacks the ball from the service line. What I did think was that we got better as the match went on, certainly from the passing facet of the game. We got off our heels and started playing offensively as the match went along."

on the team returning a majority of players next year

"Well first of all, we're really grateful to our seniors: Tucker [Pikula], [senior outside hitter] Reid Dominguez, [middle blocker Ben] Sebastian, and Logan [Zotovitch, setter]. Obviously those guys had limited roles on the floor for us this year, but they were absolutely cultural captains for us behind the scenes. You saw Tucker and Reid shine tonight and do some really good things for us. I think the thing for me is we're system-strong and we're process-oriented. The [current] team is a different look than what we had for the NCAAs in 2015, which is a very different look than the team we had at the NCAAs in 2013, which is different than 2012 and 2009. As we continue to bring in "UC Irvine guys", we continue to build our system around the personnel that we have. It will be a completely different look next year even though it might not seem that way right now. To not have the [seniors] around and having those skillsets around, it will change everything about how we train and approach the season and that mapping starts now."

on expending his six allotted substitutions early on in the fifth set

"You're going to run out of substitutions eventually. You'll either run out early or you'll run out late, you only get six either way. The choice was to use them early; we wanted to be on the attack and wanted to be aggressive. You don't play defensive volleyball against Ohio State. You have got to go out there and lead. We made the most aggressive moves we could early and put ourselves in a position where it was gonna be tight but we knew the way we play the game that we were going to be a deuce-game team down the stretch and it's often going to come down to two points. We still haven't been swept this year. We're in every single match we play."

on the team's mental makeup and resilience

"We knew that we wanted to be a team that found a way to battle. Our mantra was 'we're going to get one. And if we can get one, we can get two. And if we can get two we can get three. And if we can get three before they do, we're gonna win some matches.' I think it says a lot about the buy-in into the system. We're very aware of our limitations when we look at the field out there [in the NCAA Tournament]. We're just not built the same way that some of these teams are. How do we leverage our strengths? The buy-in mentality is part of it."

UC IRVINE SOPHOMORE MIDDLE BLOCKER SCOTT STADICK

on how Tuesday's match can help the team in the future

"I don't think this team needed any more motivation to be here. We're all very driven. I don't think anybody around the country questions our work ethic. We're a hard-working team with guys that really just want to compete. So to get here, to get this experience, it gives you a taste of what you're going to fight for next year. So that's awesome, but I never questioned our team's drive to get here."

on the value of the NCAA Tournament experience

"Getting here and feeling the pressure, and [dealing with the media], it's different. Any time you can get to a place like this, it's awesome. It's a great experience. Obviously the game didn't go how we wanted it to, but now we know how it feels to be in a deuce-set against a good team. Hopefully next time we'll get them."

UC IRVINE JUNIOR SETTER DANTE CHAKRAVORTI

on the team dealing with outside distractions regarding the selection process

"We don't listen to noise from outside. We keep it within ourselves. We're really grateful to the committee for the opportunity we got. We scheduled hard and put together a great resume over the year. Hawai'i is a great team, we're a great team. We're just grateful for the opportunity. I hope that the tournament keeps growing to the point where we have eight, 16, 32, 64 teams. First we have to get 64 programs though."