



2018 MEN'S NATIONAL COLLEGIATE VOLLEYBALL CHAMPIONSHIP SEMIFINAL 1 POSTGAME QUOTES (MAY 3, 2018)

LONG BEACH STATE HEAD COACH ALAN KNIPE

opening statement

"I can't start this off without saying congratulations to Ohio State. They played the extra match last Thursday, played a long one on Tuesday, and we got to see tonight first-hand why they've won the last two championships. Hats off to them, that was some big time serving; I'm so proud of our passers tonight, they hung in there and came through but Ohio State did a great job applying pressure. I'm really happy for our guys and I'm looking forward to getting back and starting to get ready for Saturday when these guys get the chance to play for a National Championship."

on mechanical changes to the serve-receive as the match went along

"Well I think I need to recruit a seven-footer and get him out to the gym. You don't see that very often, the ball coming from that height with the ability to be all over the board. [Ohio State's Jake Hanes] was down the line, cross-court. It's easy for me to say from the sideline, but we were passing some balls were out of bounds early, I think that was one of the adjustments we made and then trying to not be perfect passing the ball. You can talk technique all you want, but it was little bit of a gut-check so it was nice to see them respond."

on his team's second-set comeback

"We executed and scored some real points. A lot of Ohio State's execution was just bringing heat [on the serve] and they were able to score some endlines. And our [execution] was getting them out of system and scoring points on the block or in transition. We got on a run, they couldn't get a stop because they weren't getting as many aces."

on reaching the national title match after falling just short in the last two seasons

"We've been preparing for this moment all year long. In reference to the semifinal losses, we didn't play well in those matches, not to take anything away from our opponents, but it is nice to be on the flipside. These guys have taken us to the National Championships as freshmen and sophomores, now they're a different group and they've done a wonderful job. I've been through these situations before as a player and a coach and I hope some of that rubs off on our guys and obviously we can talk through it and understand what it feels like and all that emotion pumping through your body. How are you gonna handle it? Is it going to be frustration or determination? There's a real thin line between those in sports, but determination has you focusing on the next point while frustration has you with your head down. At the end of the day today, we were executing with determination. And that comes from resiliency and frankly lessons learned from failure."

LONG BEACH STATE SETTER JOSH TUANIGA

on the decision to dump the ball on the match-winning play

"The boys played some nice defense on that play, but they got jumbled up so I didn't have any big hitters to set to so I decided to just take a chance. It was kind of a back-and-forth thing in my head, and as it was falling I thought 'please get down, please get down.'"

on being named the AVCA Division I-II Player of the Year earlier in the day

“It’s a big credit to my team. We establish a great environment in practice to really get better every single day. It’s a product of all the work this group has done. It’s being able to be confident and be in a position to make good plays. It goes to my teammates, my coaches, and really the whole program for creating an environment where you can succeed. “

on the team’s success on the block vs. Ohio State

“It’s just making sure we keep working and we stay in our system. We have a very dialed-in system. Credit to the boys for sticking to that even though we felt some pressure from the serving.”

LBSU OUTSIDE HITTER TJ DEFALCO

on Tuaniga’s accolades

“I’ve said it for I don’t know how long but it’s about time that he gets recognized. I mean we do our jobs passing the ball, but really nobody helps him do his job. He does the hard part. Outside hitters have dominated the [Player of the Year award] because they do the fancy part and kill balls, but nobody recognizes the guy who makes the second contact so it’s about time.”

on the large contingency of LBSU fans in attendance

“Our fanbase has been great all year. We’re so thankful to our school for getting it out to the fans, to the students, we’re thankful for all the people coming out to the games and seeing volleyball. The coaching staff does a great job leading us as well, setting an example of ‘we’re just here to have fun’ and that starts a domino effect. So thanks to ‘LB Nation,’ it warms our heart that we had that much support. It means a lot to me.”

OHIO STATE HEAD COACH PETE HANSON

opening statement

“First of all, congratulations to Long Beach State and their team and their staff and their administration. That’s a very, very good team and they played exceptionally well tonight. I thought that the guys in scarlet and gray played exceptionally well tonight, too. At the end of the day, somebody is going to come out on top, and somebody is going to not come out on top. It wasn’t for a lack of effort on our part. I think it was the fact that the number one team in the country made a few plays at the right time, kind of like we did on Tuesday night against UC Irvine. You know, we had walked out the door last year and had to put some new faces and some young men on the floor, I’m very proud of what they’ve accomplished, how they handled themselves, how they competed in this tournament, and I think the future is very bright for Ohio State volleyball. I’m really proud of those young men.”

on how much playing on Tuesday might have added to possible fatigue in today’s match

“I don’t believe it did, quite frankly. I thought our guys were as physically good in set number four as they were in set number one. In set number one, it’s all about nerves. Set number two was, you know, we had a lead, and we kind of let it slip away with some not great disciplined plays. Set three, we got the lead and ran it out. And then in set four, I thought we were playing good volleyball. We just had a couple of misfires at an inopportune time, and a veteran team like that takes advantage of it. It wasn’t for lack of conditioning or the fact that we had played on Tuesday.”

on the team’s hitting percentage improving as the match continued

“I think our passing steadied out. I don’t know how Long Beach State felt, if they’d served it really well. But, I thought we handled their serves better as the match went on. I thought that our centers did a much better job as the match went on. They understood what they were doing with their blocking. And then, Nick [Szerszen] and Max [Hervoir] and Jake [Hanes] just kept firing away at it. Those are three pretty good offensive guys, and they found a way to keep scoring.”

on his reflections of this season

“Take this young man who is sitting to my left [junior Aaron Samarin] who medically redshirted last year. He had surgery on his shoulder. He did not practice a minute last year. He came back and trained and he rehabbed, and he came back with the idea that he wanted to be our starting libero. He has put in time with the

program, and he earned the spot. You know, he got better every day. I fully believe that today was the best match that he'd played all season long in the biggest circumstances, with the most pressure. That is something that you don't know is going to happen back in January, but you keep putting him out there and keep patting him on the back, telling him 'Aaron, we believe in you and we know that you can do it.' He did it. The young man, Sanil Thomas, who watched Christy Blough run the offense for two years and then steps on the court and has to set guys and kind of carry on that tradition. The growth, the maturity and the ability for those guys to deal with what has been about Ohio State volleyball for the last couple of years and then you throw in Jake Hanes, who is one of the biggest guys in the gym and has some of the biggest expectations, and yeah, he didn't have a great January. He had a little bit better February and then a little bit better March, and then he figured it out in April, and then here we are in May. He looks like a fairly decent college volleyball player. So, it's been a gradual process. Every day you have to remind him that, yeah, you want to make good plays and put in a great effort and the other team is going to try and stop you. And they'll win a few of those battles, but at the end of the day, you've got to just keep working at it. He's doing that. I'm really proud of those guys. And then I'm really proud of Nick Szerszen, who gave of himself to help these guys and to keep supporting and encouraging them. He believed in them. That says a lot when you've got a three-time All-American who continues to slap you on the back and say, 'You guys belong out here and I need you to help me, and I'll help you.' That's what a good team is all about."

OHIO STATE JUNIOR SETTER SANIL THOMAS

on Max Hervoir's performance

"Yeah, I think that Max started off, like Coach [Hanson] said the first set is a lot about nerves. Maybe he was a little down, or maybe it was me. When we needed him, he definitely stepped it up. He definitely got the confidence to give it his all on his swings and to put some more pace on it. He was attacking pretty well, and I was just trying to give him a hittable ball. It's just a testament to him to not give up and to not put his head down. He had a slow start, but he finished off great. I think he hit .412, I mean, that's amazing. It's just a credit to him."

OHIO STATE SENIOR NICOLAS SZERSZEN

on his time as a student-athlete at Ohio State

"I have had the opportunity to win two times. That was great. My first year, my freshman year was a little rough and I didn't perform that well, but we had a great new team and got back together, kind of like Long Beach State did, the last two years – they're young and they've been able to play together and now they're good. So you can kind of see my story in Long Beach State's story, a little bit. It was a great ride. [I've] never regretted anything. Today was one of the biggest fights of the year, if not the biggest. I think we put it all out there. It was awesome. It was awesome and I enjoyed every single bit of it. I couldn't have asked for anything else. I wouldn't want to do it with anybody else."