

USC Press Conference

Moderator: *We have USC the No. 3 seed. They are 20-10 overall and 13-9 in the MPSF. They were the MPSF Tournament Champions. They will play Thursday at 7 p.m. versus the No. 2 seed Penn State in the first semifinal match. This is their first NCAA Final Four since 1991. We have outside hitter Tony Ciarelli, second-team All-American; Setter Riley McKibbin; outside hitter, Murphy Troy, first-team All-American.*

Question: Tony, what do you remember about the match at the beginning of the year in Hawaii and how do you think your team has changed and evolved since that first match against Penn State?

Tony Ciarelli: Well first of all, we moved Murphy to the right and put Tri Borne in the outside – that was the biggest move we have made. And we have also progressed as a team, we all felt we were young at the beginning of the season and we have definitely matured as the season has gone on because we do have a bunch of sophomores starting, me as a freshman, one junior and one senior, so I believe we have matured a lot.

Riley McKibbin: I definitely agree with Tony, one of the biggest changes we made was moving Tri Borne to the outside. He was hurt all season, he has a herniated disc, but he has worked through that injury and I think the Tri Bourne is one of the best pin blockers in the nation and that helps us a lot defensively.

And putting Murphy on the right definitely opens up our offense and makes it a lot easier on me.

Question: Coach, coming into this you guys had some good momentum, winning the MPSF, could you address the state of your team?

Head Coach Bill Ferguson: I think we're in a great spot. We have been real loose and we continue to be real loose and that is something that helps us out a lot. We don't have a lot to lose here – we're really young and we're not supposed to be here until next year or the year after that so for us being here, this is fantastic. We know we can be here, we knew it in September. We're thrilled about being here and we've got something to prove. We are feeling pretty good about it and we're just going to keep rolling.

Question: What would you feel like your greatest strength as a team is?

Coach Ferguson: We're serving the ball really well and I think we're competing at a real high level. If you look at us, we've been out everything on the stat chart the last two matches, however we're making big plays at the right time. We're not getting a ton of stuffs, but I think it was Tri [Bourne] and [Austin] Zahn got a stuff early in the fifth set against Paul Carroll, which helped us out a lot. We weren't digging a lot of balls against Pat, but all of a sudden Tri and Zahn are touching balls in the latter half of the fifth set, so I think we're just playing good volleyball at the right time.

Question: Murphy, talk a bit about the switch to opposite and what that has meant to you and how comfortable you feel now since the switch.

Murphy Troy: It was a little tough at first, it is obviously a big change for me, but at the same time it was something that I was somewhat used to as an outside hitter I would hit from the right side in one rotation. We did do stuff last year when I would hit from the right side, so it's not something that I'm completely new, but it did take time getting used to. I think it was a good thing that we made that switch when we did because I think it has really helped me come into the position and play at my best level at this point in the season.

Question: Coach Ferguson, I heard you talk about getting USC back to the Final Four – this is your first since 1991. Talk about that process and where you feel you are in that process.

Coach Ferguson: Going backwards, for the most part we're here, so that part is great. It all started with recruiting and getting the right student-athletes in. The guys to my left are a testament to that. You can coach all you want, but if you don't have the right student athletes it's going to be real tough to be successful. The first thing we did was identifying the right student athletes and getting them in the door. The other thing was getting the alumni back as well. My first year as head coach we had a lot of alumni,

be it volleyball or football. We had come in and speak to the team as well as former All-Americans from our volleyball program. We just needed to create that culture again and reconnect the younger guys with the people that had success. The alumni have been fantastic – they have spoken to the guys this year and have been at the MPSF Tournament. To have all those guys and have their support is unbelievable. The phone calls, the text messages, the emails from the alumni base has been unbelievable. It is phenomenal to see these guys that have given our group that much to be proud of and this is something that we expected. It used to be the culture that we were here at this final four every year competing for a national championship. These guys have done what we've asked them and then some, and they deserve to be here. To us, there is no question why they are here.

Question: Tony, has the team embraced that culture and that feeling about trying to bring USC back to prominence?

Tony Ciarelli: We all know the history and what happened in the 80s and 90s and I think we always have alumni come in to talk to us and I think we all know what happened and we do embrace that – to bring USC back to the "Glory Days."

Question: There is much talked about Penn State being the 'east team' and are they really ever that good. Do you respect them more

than the casual west-coast volleyball spectator?

Riley McKibbin: Penn State is a great team and we played them early in the season and they have a bunch of great players. I'm looking forward to this upcoming event. It is going to be a great match. We are going to play our best game and see what happens.

Question: What is the feeling around the USC campus now that you are here in the Final Four?

Tony Ciarelli: A lot of the guys on our volleyball team are in fraternities and they have really embraced the volleyball team and have come to support us at our matches. That has helped us a lot.

Riley McKibbin: I live with a few members of the water polo team and it is pretty inspirational because they just got their championship rings last Sunday. Seeing that has inspired not only me, but also a bunch of other guys on the team. It's right here for us. It's cool talking to them about it because they have been there – they have been to a bunch of Final Fours. It's real cool to be a part of something like that.

Coach Ferguson: It has been pretty phenomenal, we haven't been on campus much to witness it, but as I said before, you've got all the emails, voicemails, text messages from all the staff and administration and it's pretty phenomenal. To have the band with us will be a cool environment to play in. They are the best band in the universe.

Question: How do you feel about this championship being played at an MPSF institution that you've played at before?

Coach Ferguson: This is a neat facility. Even though BYU is newer in MPSF history, they have had quite a run over the last 15 years. It's a really old building, it is unique; there is no other building in the conference like it. My roster and the UCI roster have played a match or two in here and I think that is part of the uniqueness of it. It is a nice thing for us being in the MPSF and understanding our surroundings for the tournament.

Question: Murphy, what needs to happen Thursday night to take care of things?

Murphy Troy: I think my coach kind of touched on that we are serving pretty great, so we need to keep doing that. I think a reason why we've been successful in this playoff run so far is that everyone on this team has bought into our abilities. I think if we remain confident and keep playing the way we've been playing it will go well for us.

Penn State Press Conference

Moderator: *We have Penn State, the No. 2 seed. They were 27-3 overall and 12-0 in the Eastern Intercollegiate Volleyball Association where they were regular-season and tournament champions. They play Thursday night at 7 p.m. against No.*

3 USC. This is their 24th NCAA Tournament appearance. We have head coach Mark Pavlik; setter Edgardo Goas, a second-team All-American; middle hitter Max Holt, first-team All-American; middle hitter Max Lipsitz, first-team All-American.

Opening Remarks: Head Coach

Mark Pavlik: It's always great to be back and playing this time of year, especially to be part of the very first one that is being played here at BYU with the volleyball tradition on both the men's and the women's side – just makes it a natural selection for an NCAA men's volleyball national championship. Our year has been a good one. We have had to find our own personality the whole year and I think we have been playing better the last four weeks than we have all season. We will see if we can continue that tomorrow night against SC.

Question: Do you feel like the altitude has affected you here?

Max Lipsitz: I think yesterday when we came here and we were practicing at the high school we all felt like we were sucking wind pretty early, more quickly than usual. But I haven't felt much of anything today, so I think we're doing pretty well.

Question: Where do you think you are now compared to the beginning of the season when you played USC?

Max Holt: I think we have improved greatly. We have changed a few things and our offense is a little

quicker. We are blocking a lot better and we're just playing a lot better.

Question: With so many weapons at your disposal is it easier to find a rhythm?

Edgardo Goas: I feel it is a lot easier because I have a lot of good players around me. If I'm not having a good rhythm with one player I go to one of the other five players. I think having a lot of good hitters around me makes my job a lot easier.

Max Lipsitz: We really work to make his job easier. Everyone loves the ball so I think we make his job easy.

Question: What have you heard about playing here?

Max Holt: None of us have ever been here. It is a nice venue – nice to see the sport court out and all the hospitality of the place.

Question: Your women's team has now won two-straight national championships, is there any pressure on you?

Max Lipsitz: I don't think it's pressure to match what they have done, but I think we're all just excited for the opportunity we have. Not necessarily to go back-to-back like they did. We're just looking forward to what we can do this year.

Question: You are the defending national champions; do you feel any more pressure because of that?

Max Holt: I don't think there is a change in feeling.

Max Lipsitz: Like what I said before, it is a new year. To talk about what we did last year is useless at this point. I think we are a new team with a new personality and I don't think there is more pressure on us. We are going to play the best we can and the best team will win.

Question: Edgardo, do you feel you have had to step it up this year after the other setter left last year?

Edgardo Goas: We are here to win it all. This year we are going to represent the school well. We are excited to be here and to play.

Question: You seem pretty relaxed. Is that a mood you're always in, or do you act that way to keep your players at ease?

Coach Mark Pavlik: This is pretty much the way I am. I believe that the hard part of coaching happens in practice. In the training gym where people don't see how much these guys put in – I believe my impact on the game is minimal unless I really screw up, what I have been known to do. I think one of the benefits of being blessed to be here so many times there hasn't been anything new in the last 10 years here. I think the guys have to be comfortable. There are a lot of things choreographed – the guys have to learn how to roll with the punches. I think that is the roll with men's volleyball; we put them into tough situations and try to get them to understand there are things you can't control.

Question: You are more experienced at this venue than all of your players. What have you said to them to get them prepared to play here?

Mark Pavlik: I think we have an advantage of playing here. We play in small gyms. This gym reminds me of many different gyms we have played in. I don't think we make mountains out of molehills. Each player will come in and play and get used to it and have his own manner of preparing and getting comfortable in this situation. You just give them opportunities to do that. You give them opportunities to ask intelligent questions and you give them intelligent answers and let them work it out from there. When it boils right down to it, the best team is going to win it, and you hope that the volleyball things you've done in training come through.

Question: USC and Irvine have both played here and understand the altitude factor. How do you feel that plays into it for your team?

Mark Pavlik: My background is engineering. I think that yes, there is a velocity aspect with altitude that is affected, and there is a distance aspect – but I don't think we're talking feet here, we're talking inches. And maybe when that ball hits the line it is out by one or two inches, but I firmly believe if these guys rely on their mechanics and are true with their mechanics, we are going to be in a pretty good situation. So the last thing I want to do is get in their head. They are good players, I will tell them to go play.

UC Irvine Press Conference

Moderator: *UC Irvine was 25-5 overall in the regular season and 19-3 in the MPSF, being regular-season champions. They are the No. 1 seed and will play No. 4 Ohio State Thursday at 9 p.m. in the second semifinal match. This is their third NCAA Tournament appearance in the last four years. They were the national champions in 2007. We have head coach John Speraw; setter Ryan Ammerman, a first-team All-American; opposite hitter, Carson Clark, a second-team All-American; and opposite hitter Taylor Wilson.*

Head Coach John Speraw: Obviously we are very excited to be here. When we began this season we were sixth or seventh in the MPSF. We probably weren't expected by many people to be sitting where we are sitting right now – and maybe we didn't even expect to be sitting here right now. Based on the fall that we had, we had some losses against some of our teams in conference and pre-season matches, but we started winning early and just kept on winning. Over the course of that time we learned how to win ugly early and developed our confidence and developed our game and became a pretty good volleyball team, and at this point we're still playing great volleyball. We ran into a pretty hot USC volleyball team in the semifinal that played a pretty outstanding volleyball match. It is important to note that we didn't play particularly bad ourselves; it's just that SC served the ball so

incredibly well in that volleyball match. We were fortunate enough to get the at-large bid and we are excited to be here to see if we can finish this on an up note.

Question: You are the only team to have played on this court this season, how do you look at coming to play the championship here?

Ryan Ammerman: Personally, I'm very stoked about it. Not only did we play here in the pre-season, but also we played here in the fall and in BYU's last home match. We are very confident in what we know about playing here.

Question: What would you say are your biggest strengths as a team coming into this championship?

Taylor Wilson: I think our biggest strength is team chemistry. We are all really good friends and we hang out a lot and I think that transfers to the court. Each one of us cares a lot about each other and we definitely don't want to let each other down. I think that's a big drive about how we win.

Question: How does winning the 2007 national championship experience help you in your play this year?

Taylor Wilson: I think we have a little less nerves than the first time. We were a little younger and a little less experienced and I think we can harness those nerves a little better and step it up and be better examples for this team.

Question: Carson, have you noticed anything different in terms of support with your team winning so often?

Carson Clark: Irvine volleyball is all about family. Not even just within the team, but we have a great amount of fans that help us out. We want to do our best to represent our school to the best of our abilities.

Question: Carson, this is your first time at a national championship, how do you feel about being here?

Carson Clark: We have a great team and I am a little nervous, but nervous is always good. Hopefully I can play my role to the best of my ability and my players can depend on me. Hopefully we can bring home that NCAA Championship.

Question: Is there any team that you've played this season that you feel has best prepared you for this tournament?

Ryan Ammerman: I think the matches that we played here in Provo prepared us very well. It is such a different atmosphere in terms of the altitude and how to play the game and the serving/receiving. Just being here and being able to experience that in a non-playoff high-pressure situation is good and hopefully we can translate that in the playoffs and perform at a high level.

Question: Could you talk a little bit more about the chemistry of your team?

Head Coach John Speraw: Having the opportunity to come here and

play as we have over the last year, we have been really fortunate in that regard. We have played very well against a great BYU team here last year and this year and we know we can play well in a playoff game here. These guys understand how to play the game – it is very different. The press and everyone talk a lot about how different it is to play here and I think it is true. It is very different here and you have to adjust to the altitude. How you serve the ball and how you play at altitude does affect the way you play. I think we have a great advantage playing here.

Question: Do you think not winning the MPSF makes your team extra hungry to win?

John Speraw: I think they were a little stunned to lose that semifinal match against USC. We went out the next day and had a good practice. We had a sense of relief when we got the at-large bid. On Saturday we had a pretty sleepless night to see if we were going to get the bid. I think we're in a great frame of mind.

Question: What have you done to bring UCI from an average team in the MPSF to a leading team each year?

John Speraw: It's a pretty broad question because I think there are lots of components to it. I don't think it's one secret or one thing. I think there is an incredible team component to the administration and support staff to the way we train and the way our athletic trainers take care of our players. Also the winning attitude of the coaches and support

staff all adds to our success as a team. You have to have good players and train them at a high level. It is pretty significant to get here multiple times, and we are happy to be here. There isn't a long tradition of academic or athletic excellence, but we come to play and we can win a title. This program is something more significant and it is very special.

Question: How much have you really gotten to know Ohio State and the way they play the game?

John Speraw: This year it has been tough. I have played Ohio State or Penn State in just about every year since I have been the coach – except for this year. I know a little bit less about these teams than before. I know Ohio State is a pretty well balanced team and I know they are athletic and are the best team in the Midwest. They know that I have tape from west-coast opponents, and they have tape of us playing their opponents, but my guess is that neither of us knows a lot about either team. It will just be about who can learn as quickly as they can to be adaptable and creative and who can play better. We need to go out there and play our game and get our groove back.

Question: Are there any individual players that stand out on your team?

John Speraw: My concern going into this year was that we didn't necessarily have one guy that we were going to make our team captain. I have had tremendous leadership in the last seven years,

and now going into this year, I don't think you can say who dominates our team. I think it has been collective – you will see our collective energy on the court.

Ohio State Press Conference

Moderator: *Ohio State University is the No. 4 seed, 16-10 overall in the regular season and 9-1 in the Midwestern Intercollegiate Volleyball Association. They were the regular-season and tournament champions. They will play UC Irvine, the No. 1 seed at 9 p.m. on Thursday. This is their 16th appearance at the NCAA Tournament. We have head coach Pete Hanson, libero Mik Berzins, setter Steven Kehoe and outside hitter Robbie Klein.*

Head Coach Pete Hanson: It's certainly a pleasure to be here. Just like all of the other teams in this tournament, playing to this event is the culminating event for your season. We are fortunate enough to be here for the second time in a row. We are hoping that our experience will help us out. I like the fact that our guys have played well in this last stretch.

Question: Have any of you played at a high-altitude venue, how do you feel about playing here?

Robbie Klein: I haven't grown up playing at high altitude at all, but since we've been here I haven't noticed any difference.

Question: How do you feel about playing in the tournament two years in a row?

Steven Kehoe: I think we are anxious more than anything. A couple years back we held the tournament at Ohio State, and it was a letdown for us. I would like to think that we are only growing in experience.

Question: What are you doing to get ready for UC Irvine?

Steven Kehoe: UC Irvine is a great team and they are a lot different than most of the teams we play.

Coach Pete Hanson: They spread their offense to their outside hitters. We have watched game film and have seen them a little bit, but they are a great team.

Question: Have you noticed any changes on campus or in the community?

Robbie Klein: I have noticed a little change, but most people in Columbus love their football. We have been receiving a little attention from the campus and it feels good.

Question: How satisfying is it to be here at a national championship? What does that mean to you?

Steven Kehoe: I know for me a lot of what I play for is my teammates. It is great to have fans and your family, but when it comes down to playing on the court, it is my team. Having the opportunity to play for a national championship is gratifying for me.

Robbie Klein: There is a ton of time that you put into it. It sounds kind of cliché that we do it for our teammates, but we spend so much time with each other that that is how it is.

Mik Berzins: I feel like our team has really turned our season around and we are excited to be here competing for a national championship. I think it shows how much we care for each other and how hard we have worked with each other.

Question: What has helped you make the turnaround this season?

Mik Berzins: I love that our seniors and our captains have helped us come to play every single day.

Question: UC Irvine has a lot of balance on their team – talk about that from a coach's perspective.

Pete Hanson: You would think that you could focus on one guy that they go to all the time, but UC Irvine is a very balanced team with many different hitters. Their system is pretty well established and if they are in a good pass scenario their guys are going to keep hitting the same shots. Their offense is fairly predictable. All we need to figure out is how to defend those three guys. They are a very good offensive team.

Question: What do you see as an important element on the offensive side of your team?

Pete Hanson: We are a lot like UC Irvine in that aspect that we spread the ball to a lot of different players. We are the only team in the tournament without an All-American, but we have a bunch of guys that play hard and really well together. They play for the good of the team and they don't care who gets the sets and who gets to swing. We have a freshman libero and hopefully he won't play like a freshman but like a veteran.

Question: Do you think the altitude will play a role in your adjustment?

Pete Hanson: I haven't spent enough time training or competing in such an environment, but we're not going to worry about it. We might tell the guys to take a step back when they are serving, but we're just going to go out there and play our game. If you let something like that creep into your mindset, you're worrying about something that you can't change. If we're struggling with it we'll deal with it as it comes, but I don't have enough personal experience to treat that as an issue.

Question: How are you going to use your time tomorrow?

Pete Hanson: I think we are going go over some game film one more time and a pass and serve practice. I don't think we need to get them up early or get them pumped up. We just need to keep them relaxed and get them ready to play.

Question: How do you feel about your group playing Penn State?

Pete Hanson: When you play Penn State you have to be really good. They are a team that puts you on your heels with their serves. I would say they are one of the better-serving teams in the tournament.

Question: UC Irvine knows how to play USC and you know how to play Penn State, but how do you feel about playing UC Irvine. I

I think it is better for our guys to play someone different so they don't have a pre-conceived mindset. It just gives our guys a sense of focusing on the current team, not worrying about past history.