

Big Ten Volleyball Media Days

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Chicago, Illinois, USA

Penn State Nittany Lions

Coach Katie

Schumacher-Cawley

Gillian Grimes

Izzy Starck

Press Conference



these guys. I think it's more of just always being present and enjoying the little things.

They know they need to put in the work and the time to be great. They hold each other accountable.

I think the standard is still the same, and we're looking forward to it.

Q. When you see a player like Kennedy coming into the transfer portal, who are you talking to? What conversations are you having, and how fast did that process move?

KATIE SCHUMACHER-CAWLEY: We recruited Kennedy the first time around, so we had had a prior relationship with her. Of course she's an exceptional player, but she's a great person. I really enjoyed her the first time around.

We got on the phone with her pretty quick. I think she only had a couple places that she really wanted to look at, and we were one of them. Had her and her family on campus, and the rest is history.

We'll see what she's got this year.

Q. What were your moments like after winning a championship, those 48 hours? What did you guys do?

GILLIAN GRIMES: I think we were just celebrating as a team, but it was also, like, very close to Christmas, so it was very -- just a bunch of events after another.

I think we kind of really -- it all soaked in and settled in when we came back from Christmas break, I think, us just still celebrating as a team but also just very grateful for everything.

IZZY STARCK: I think the first 48 hours was just complete shock. You don't really know what happened because that whole week was just one big whirlwind of emotions.

It really didn't soak in for me until we landed at the airport and drove back to Rec Hall with like everyone outside of

KATIE SCHUMACHER-CAWLEY: As always, it's great to be back in Chicago. I'd like to thank commissioner Petitti, Grace, Sue, and everyone affiliated with Big Ten that provides this day for these players. It's really special.

I'm happy that Gill and Izzy are here with me. They're excited to be here, and we're looking forward to the season. Thank you, everyone, for being a part of it.

Q. Gillian, how or if did your lives change by winning a National Championship?

GILLIAN GRIMES: Yeah, I think it was just mostly a dream come true. I think every little girl dreams of winning a National Championship, and just getting to do that with your best friends, and our whole family is there, I think that was really a dream come true.

IZZY STARCK: I think the same thing. It's like everyone wishes when they're younger that they're going to be at that level and win a National Championship and the fact that I got to do it with my best friends and my sister, it's just the craziest thing that could happen.

And now we're in grocery stores in State College and people come up to us, which didn't happen before, so that's pretty cool too.

Q. Obviously last year was a very incredible year for you professionally and personally. What are you thinking going into this new season? How have you changed if at all in terms of your coaching philosophy?

KATIE SCHUMACHER-CAWLEY: I have a new hairdo this year. I mean, sure, there's perspective with everything. I don't think I've changed a lot in the gym with



... when all is said, we're done.®

Rec that was still in state college just because it was right before Christmas and everything. I just think when you see all those people out there supporting you, you kind of realize what you just did and how cool it was.

Q. Do you feel any pressure now that you've won a National Championship to do it again? And what is the mindset to keep the team grounded, in the moment, not letting that get too much, to the players?

KATIE SCHUMACHER-CAWLEY: I think our goal is to always win, and these guys have really high expectations.

But you can do everything right and still fall short, so I think it's just coming to work every day and being prepared and being the best teammates they can be.

We do want to win again, and is there pressure? I think it's fun for these guys. I think they've handled themselves very well on and off the court, and that matters.

IZZY STARCK: I think there's always been pressure for us, so I think coming into this season it's just the same mindset we always have of how we work hard with each other, how we push each other. I definitely think winning the National Championship last year does help us because we know what it takes and we know how to help the new players in the program of how we can be the best functioning team together.

GILLIAN GRIMES: Yeah, I think it's just as they both said. It's the same standard. You come to Penn State, you want to win. Obviously Coach does a great job of recruiting people who want to be there and who want to win, so it's really fun to play with everyone on the court who is super competitive and wants to win. It kind of just all fits in.

Q. For Katie, what was your reaction to the recent deal that will allow schools to directly pay the athletes, and how does that change the landscape for you? And for the players, a similar question, how are you guys dealing with that with the school, and what's the balance between dealing directly with the school versus the collectives?

KATIE SCHUMACHER-CAWLEY: Yeah, I think our athletic director, Pat Kraft, and Adam, who's here with us today, I think Penn State has always been forward thinking. They are ahead of the game and know what's going on.

I think they do the right thing for our athletes and they put our athletes first. A school like Penn State, our alum are the best and they want to see us be successful.

It doesn't change what we're doing as a team and as a

program and as a culture of our players. It's exciting that they can be rewarded and do some NIL activities and have some more shopping money or nail money, whatever it is they're doing.

It's a really unique time in college athletics, and I'm happy that the women can get a piece of it.

Q. Izzy, as a freshman you got pretty much every title there is individually and also as a team. What are you working toward? What is your motivation this year going forward as a sophomore?

IZZY STARCK: Yeah, I think just last year just set the expectation for myself even higher. I had a season that I could never have dreamed of that was going to happen. I think going into this new season, I set my expectations where I want to be, how I can be better, how I can be a better teammate, and I think just looking at the season ahead of me I'm excited to see how our team can be and how I can accomplish even more and it's a whole new fresh start.

Everything that happened last season doesn't carry over into this season. Everyone starts with a zero record and just seeing how I can adapt to how it changes this year.

Q. Gillian, what impressed you the most about Izzy's freshman season and how have you seen her improve?

GILLIAN GRIMES: Yeah, Izzy is awesome. She honestly probably -- everyone dreams of having a freshman start in season like Izzy does, but she also -- I mean, she deserves it and she works so hard. I expect nothing less of her throughout this season too.

She's always in the gym, always grinding, is such a great teammate. She's just really fun to have in my life and also play with her on the side of the court.

Q. Coming off your win, how have you been using your platform to give back to the community, certain activities that you do to build that relationship with a community that supports you guys so much?

GILLIAN GRIMES: Yeah, a few of us this past summer, we went to the children's hospital at Hershey Park and it was really cool to see those kids and that they are fighting for something much bigger than even a National Championship.

Just us going there and seeing and trying to be a part of that also really soaks it in and grounds us a little bit, too, which is good.



IZZY STARCK: Yeah, just being able to work with kids and talk with them, being able to have the experiences that we have, just being able to take time out of our day to sit there and have personal conversations with them about any questions they have I think is really cool.

Because you were in their shoes when you were younger, so doing anything you can to help them to get to the level they want to be at.

Q. Gillian, the league all preseason conference team, you were the only libero in a conference that usually has an inordinate number of really good liberos. Are you surprised, not that you made it, but you're the only libero?

GILLIAN GRIMES: I actually did not know that at all, so yeah, I did not know that. But no, yeah, I'm excited for the season. I couldn't be on that list without my teammates and without my coaches. I'm really happy for that.

Q. Katie, which one were you more nervous for and which one means more: ESPYs or throwing out the first pitch?

KATIE SCHUMACHER-CAWLEY: Oh, geez. We'll see if I screw that one up this weekend. (Laughter).

It's all exciting and fun. I was pretty nervous at the ESPYs, though, but I enjoyed it. Was happy my entire family was able to be there and the five seniors that were on the team last year were able to share in that with the assistant coaches as well, Brian, Mike, and Meg.

We had such a great time together, so it was good. But I'll let you know after Saturday.

Q. When you were a kid you didn't think about going on the ESPYs --

KATIE SCHUMACHER-CAWLEY: God no, not at all. It's overwhelming the amount of activities, but I'm happy to be back in Chicago.

Q. For Gillian and Izzy, looking back at the last season reflecting on the year you guys all experienced as a team, what your coach is going through personally, what is something you each have learned from your coach?

GILLIAN GRIMES: Yeah, I think the little things matter, and also just sticking with the people around you. They're going to make you stronger and better as a team.

I think we kind of lean on her a lot, and we gave her the opportunity to have her lean on us, just like trying to make sure that you stay close and keep your loved ones close, too.

IZZY STARCK: I think it's just what she always echos to me is just enjoy the moment and just be in the moment. I remember in the Final Four match, it was when we were down 0-2 against Nebraska and obviously as any normal person, I was really nervous and it's a stressful situation. You don't know how you're going to do the next -- like end of the match.

I think Katie just came up to me and said, just relax and enjoy the moment and enjoy what's happening right now, and I think that's just a different perspective that I really see in that because you just want to enjoy what you have in the moment right now and not what the actual outcome is going to be.

Q. Coach, what makes Gillian and Izzy such great representatives for Penn State volleyball but also the sport as a whole?

KATIE SCHUMACHER-CAWLEY: I think they're fine examples of -- they're great student-athletes and representations of Penn State and this program. I think it's the way they live their daily life. They're exceptional teammates, and we talk about that a lot on our team. Regardless of what's new in college athletics, we want that to stay the same.

I think how they treat each other and the community and -- they're competitors. They're fierce. They're going to do some special things when they're done playing volleyball too.

Q. I saw on the news that Maggie Mendelson is going to go back to being a two-sport athlete. What were those conversations like with Coach Kieger? And her teammates can weigh in too about seeing her back on, well, the other hardwood.

KATIE SCHUMACHER-CAWLEY: Yeah, we're excited for Mags. She's passionate about playing both sports. I'm proud of her for wanting to do it. She's going to have a good time at Penn State after our season. She knows she's got some work to do on our side first, but no, I think she'll be a perfect fit for them. She's going to help them. She has the love of the game.

Q. How is this reminiscent of your National Championship victory yourself and what did you learn about your season back then that you carried forward as a coach and into that season, also leading into this



upcoming one too?

KATIE SCHUMACHER-CAWLEY: Well, that was really long ago when I won, so that's what we're talking about.

It's always surrounding yourself with great people. We have some great players for sure, but I think they've made some really quality changes in what they do on and off the court together to have that chemistry. I mean, the season is relentless.

This conference is top to bottom the best around, and if you're not prepared and ready to go, you will lose.

I think just taking every day and being prepared and getting better. We talk about getting better every day in the gym, whether you're in there for two hours or 45 minutes. You have to use your time and be focused and be present.

Yeah, I think these guys will use what they learned last year to help these newcomers and with their experiences and be ready to go.

Q. Gillian, I believe you went back to your elementary or middle school earlier this season after you won. What was that experience like for you?

GILLIAN GRIMES: Yeah, that was awesome. A bunch of little kids in front of me just trying to tell them that even if you come from a small town, you can do big things in college or whatever you want to do.

I think just kind of being there, my family all being there, that actually had me -- it settled in why I was there.

Q. Katie, how do you plan to figure out who's playing where?

KATIE SCHUMACHER-CAWLEY: Don't you want to know? Hey, we're going to put the best lineup on the floor and that's something I tell my players every semester: It's a new team. If the goal is to win and to win the Big Ten and win a National Championship, the best players are going to be on the floor.

CJ can play outside, right side. She can hit all along the net. She will make an impact. Kennedy will make an impact. Several players will score points for us. It's competitive, and they know that.

Our players know that. It's nothing new to them. They want really good players to be on their team because they like to win and they like to compete.

Caroline will be just fine.

Q. (Indiscernible).

KATIE SCHUMACHER-CAWLEY: Sure. She can hit all along the net as well. I haven't been in the gym with them yet. We'll start August 3rd when I get back from the Cubs game. But I know they've been in the gym. They've been doing stuff, and they've been competing together. It'll be a special group.

Q. What stands out about Emmi Sellman and Gabrielle Nichols and what were they able to accomplish in the spring with you guys?

KATIE SCHUMACHER-CAWLEY: I think it's great when -- I think it's tough when the younger kids come early, but that was something that Gabby wanted to do, and I think it's been great for her, it's been great having Emmi in the gym in spring semester just to get to know the players and get to know our routine a little bit in the strength room, and I think it was really beneficial for them.

GILLIAN GRIMES: I think they both bring such a competitive energy to the gym, and I think that's all what we need, and like I said, Coach does a great job of recruiting players that want to be here and are really competitive.

I think they just bring such competitiveness to the team that is needed, too.

IZZY STARCK: And I think just the entire spring with both of them, like working on our connection and everything, it's hard to get new players and build that connection fast, but the nice thing about having them in the spring, I had this whole spring to build a bond, know what they want and everything, and I think it's made progress in a really great way, and I think we have a really good fluid system going right now.

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