

Big Ten Volleyball Media Days

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Chicago, Illinois, USA

Ohio State Buckeyes

Coach Jen Flynn

Oldenburg

Sydney Taylor

Mia Tuman

Press Conference



year, and we are excited to get back into this conference and get us ready for the postseason. That's our mission.

Q. Gen, you guys added Ella Wrobel through the portal. What do you like about her, and how have you gotten to know her and what do you like about her off the court or on the court?

JEN FLYNN OLDENBURG: She's a big physical presence. Six rotation outside that was highly recruited, and just didn't have the opportunities that she probably wanted at Wisconsin.

Now she's here with us and she feels like she's home, which is really exciting. I think she brings a lot to us in the gym. Just the level of play, the expectation, the standard; I think she's elevated that.

Off the court, she fits. I think that's a big part of our culture is the people that you have in it, and she's a Buckeye, and she'll be one for life.

SYDNEY TAYLOR: Yeah, she's been huge voice for us already throughout spring and through summer, so just getting to have her right away before things get started is huge for us.

But the way she's fit in and raised the standard, brought her voice, been a leader for us has been huge, but also just her as a person has fit with our team so well and has been a glue to our team of bringing everyone together. I look forward to playing next to her coming up shortly. Yeah, I love her.

MIA TUMAN: I agree. She fits right in. She's so funny and brings a great energy every day to practice. Her voice is loud and it's effective. I think I'm excited to play with her and see what she's all about.

Q. We've heard players talk about playing at Covelli and how special that is for them coming in as an outside team. What makes that so special? What does make it so special?

JEN FLYNN OLDENBURG: I think it's how it was design.

JEN FLYNN OLDENBURG: Welcome back to the Big Ten media days. I think it's year three and it's bigger and better than ever. And appreciate everybody that's here, but Grace, going to give you a shout-out. You did it again. You and your crew just set the standard and continue to do more for the sport of volleyball, and we appreciate it.

I think it's cool for our athletes to get that opportunity, and I like this touch this year with these elementary school students. You're part of the process, and you can see what's next.

I think for us, we're always talking about what's next for our athletes and what their careers are. There's a path ahead of you. Welcome to them, as well.

Thanks again. It's going to be a really cool year of volleyball adding four schools. I think that's really exciting. Yeah, we're ready for it.

Q. Last year was a bit of a rebuilding season for you. What have you seen in the gym in the spring that you're looking forward to showing the world this fall?

MIA TUMAN: Yeah, I think we're just ready to go. Having Lony and Rader back is huge and we're just happy to have them. They bring such a great energy and atmosphere.

The freshmen that came in, they're so ready, they're so excited, and I feel like we just feel super connected. We're just ready to show everyone what we've been working on, and we're just super excited.

JEN FLYNN OLDENBURG: Yeah, I think we have more depth, which is important. I think that's something we were lacking last year. We took more losses than we wanted, but we were going to use that rebuilding year to fuel us this



... when all is said, we're done.®

I think the lower bowl where most people sit is close to the court and it gets loud in there. I think you never miss a point.

So if you go get a popcorn and a water and you need your snacks, you can still watch every point in the match, you know, the concourse level.

I think that environment is really special. This year that revealed a new court so that always adds a little bit more excitement.

I think it's the knowledge of our fan base is big. We're a volleyball city, so to have that support of our fans and just have it every day in Covelli is super special.

MIA TUMAN: I think going off of that, Buckeye Nation alone, they always show out and they're always giving 100 percent to every game. They never disappoint, and I love playing for them and I'm excited to play for them again this year.

Q. Mia and Sydney, you both come from a family of athletes. Talk about how that inspires you and drives you and what it means to represent the Ohio State University.

SYDNEY TAYLOR: Yeah, my family is full of athletes, but my oldest brother played football at Ohio State, and when I was getting recruited and going through the process, that was just a big -- he was just a big role model for me, but seeing him be a Buckeye and what it means to go to the Ohio State University was so special.

He's been like a mentor in everything, whether it's school, faith, family, all those things. He's just been a huge role model for me, so having him down the road 10, 15 minutes has been so awesome.

But yeah, my family is there every step of the way, and just having athletes, a good day or bad day, they love and support me no matter what.

MIA TUMAN: Yeah, my dad played at the team up north, but I think it was just really cool to go through the recruiting process where he's like -- I mean, you know where I want you to go, but I want you to make this decision for you.

He really just took a back seat and said I want you to pray about it, think about it, talk about it to all your loved ones. He let me make the decision gave me his full support.

He's definitely not a Buckeye fan, but he knows that you can't deny what Ohio State brings to the table, and he knows this is a perfect fit for me. I'm just excited to kind of

pave my own way here. I'm the first one in my family to be here, so I'm thrilled and excited.

JEN FLYNN OLDENBURG: How about your mom? Let's talk about your mom a little bit.

MIA TUMAN: Oh, yeah, my mom is a stud. But she, honestly in the volleyball world, she was everything, just so supportive and like just someone I could talk to about anything. She's been through it, played at the highest level for the Women's USA Volleyball team. She's just such a strong -- I'm like getting emotional. She's such a strong role model for me, and I couldn't even imagine my journey without her presence and her guidance through the volleyball world.

Q. Mia, does dad wear gear?

MIA TUMAN: He does. As long as it says Tuman No. 9 and volleyball. It has to say volleyball on it. But he will rock it to the home games, which I appreciate. He's my biggest fan, guys. I promise.

Q. Both of you have serve-serve responsibilities. What is the most difficult serve to receive and why? And Coach, who around the conference has some of the best serves that you've seen?

SYDNEY TAYLOR: I've got to think about this one.

MIA TUMAN: I'll go. I said the second ball, but they do a great job of handling all the tough serves. I think we just talk about get it nice and high in the middle of the court. I'll just go chase it down.

When we know a tough server is on the other side of the net. They do a great job, I just kind of follow in their lead.

SYDNEY TAYLOR: I think overall in the Big Ten we're a great serving conference, so there's some heavy serves and good floats on all teams. I think some of the top spins are great. Indiana a few top spins back to back, so they're fun. We love tough serves.

JEN FLYNN OLDENBURG: Yeah, Camryn Haworth comes to mind. She's set a record, so she's super competitive. I think she's going to go after it again this year. Brooke Mosher presented some challenges -- is it Mosher or Moser? Do we know? Brooke, I'm sorry. But she presented some challenges.

At the end of the day we have to have the mentality of getting the ball up and forward. Mia does a good job at running the offense, and if we're in system, out of system, we need to take good swings.

So regardless of that first ball, we need to have a heavy third contact.

I think the onus is on that second contact, especially in our league with how aggressive and powerful serves are, but also defensively what we have to create on defense.

Q. Coach, there has been an increase in the number of female coaches in the Big Ten. How does it feel to be a part of that movement?

JEN FLYNN OLDENBURG: I think it's something special. I think I maybe took it for granted and something I didn't think about early in the career, but as we get into it more and more, I think it's important for our younger generation to see that.

I think it's important for our athletes to see that you can have a family and a dynamic that we do and still compete and do a great job at a high level, and that's regardless of what profession.

But I think in our sport, since it's a female sport, the more female leaders that are taking over programs, I think it's super important and it's cool to see it across the conference and cool to see it across the nation. That's a great question. Thank you.

Q. Coach, for this upcoming season, what are you looking most forward to for your team?

JEN FLYNN OLDENBURG: It's hard to sum up in just a couple sentences. Another good question.

I think we're looking forward to getting back on the court together and really taking last year and the rebuild that we had and putting it forward and getting back into the postseason.

We're on a mission to get to there, and whatever it takes to get there inside of a really tough conference is going to be a task ahead of us but one that they're ready for. Just getting back to competing.

Q. Have y'all ever went home and worried about y'all's teammates?

MIA TUMAN: Yeah, all the time. I think we're super close and I'm always thinking about my teammates. They're my best friends. They're like my second family. I worry about them a lot. Like if something is going wrong -- hopefully nothing goes wrong -- but I do worry about them and think about them all the time. They're like second family.

SYDNEY TAYLOR: I think overall we have very good communication with each other. Whether it's something good or something is up with them, we're in very good communication with each other. And whether that's our team text group chat or Snapchat even before practice or at class, people are texting each other going, how are you and all that stuff. Just our locker room is a very safe place for us and always checking in on each other.

Definitely when we go home we're still texting each other and checking in on each other all the time.

Q. Jen, you had one of the more difficult non-conference schedules last year. Did you learn anything from that? Did you change your approach? Also did adding the new four West Coast teams change your mindset for how you go about scheduling non-conference?

JEN FLYNN OLDENBURG: I think you could see the approach was changed, so appreciate that. I think scheduling is one of the most difficult things we do in the non-conference. The Big Ten schedule we're presented, but the non-conference we choose. The first couple years it's a lot of guarantees and returns, things that were promised that I wanted to hold onto from the previous staff.

Some of those things that happened were because of years past.

I also like to schedule tough. You saw that the last two years. I think that prepares us for the Big Ten.

I think the unknowns of the Big Ten this year change my philosophy just because we get a shot at everybody once and maybe three people twice, right? You have to look at RPI. You have to figure out what is going to get you in the best position to host first and second round, or can you host regionals, regional Finals.

I think you look at all those things, but the biggest thing for this group is getting back to the postseason.

I think the approach changed with the unknown of the Big Ten, but also we want to host first and second round, and that's our path.

I think the schedule reflects that. I think we have really good RPI teams in the non-conference, and we're excited to compete against them.

Q. You talked about how Columbus is a really great volleyball city and you're getting more fans by the day. What's it like having the professional team in the city and what interaction are you having with their

organization?

JEN FLYNN OLDENBURG: I think it's just cool globally, in our nation, but to have it in our city, I think it's extra special. Having players that they've watched play join that team. Michelle Bartsch joined the Fury late last season.

To have her in the morning in our gym working with our players and then going and training in the afternoon or playing in a match that night, I think it's important to see that it's possible. And that connection is certainly there with the Fury, but also throughout the whole PDF with love coming up.

I think you're seeing more and more players that they've played against or watched growing up competing on U.S. soil, and that's super important.

I think the connection with the Fury, but also both leagues are there with all of our connections that we have as a staff, and it's just good. It's good for the sport, and I'm excited to see the growth.

Q. For the players, when you get older and when you start a family and stuff of your own, if you want to, do you think you will still be talking to your teammates a few years from now?

SYDNEY TAYLOR: Oh, for sure. Definitely as volleyball ends, it ends for everyone, those relationships will definitely be carried on. And the memories and laughs, the cries, all the good and bad, will all make the relationships with each other definitely carry on. And whether it's weddings, good days, bad, anything, we'll definitely stay in contact.

Just being in Columbus, definitely have good alumni weekends and catch up with each other all the time.

MIA TUMAN: Yeah, I think the saying you don't always remember what people say, but you remember how they make you feel kind of resonates with this team. We're not going to remember every individual game or practice, but just the way we are with each other, how we care about each other, we'll never forget those.

And I think this is family. This is lifelong relationships for sure. 100 percent.

Q. It may be easy to take -- Emily has been great for a number of years and it may be easy to take her for granted, but how have you seen her elevate her game and challenge herself and continue to raise her level?

SYDNEY TAYLOR: Yeah, she's done so much for Ohio

State. Just growing up with her, she's like my big sister because I played a year younger than her. Just seeing her confidence from high school, beginning of her college career until now has just grown tremendously, and she's been that leader for our team and has really took on that role with that confidence that the rest of the team also needs because when she's confident everyone else is confident.

But just her as a person, too, her as a woman, she is awesome. She keeps the glue to our team together, and yeah.

JEN FLYNN OLDENBURG: Yeah, I think she's always had a presence. She was a threat as a freshman, and in each year she's keyed on. She's the scouting report, with some additions. I think this year she's going to bring a consistency. Last year she took a huge load on for us playing on the left and passing and we kind of threw her into the fire with that and she held her own, if not more.

But this year the consistency that she brings, leadership, presence, production, I think it's just going to take off even more.

Look out, world. Londot is ready.

Q. You guys mentioned the freshmen adds early. What do you say to them to get them ready for the Big Ten, for the gauntlet that is the Big Ten, both physically and emotionally?

MIA TUMAN: Yeah, I would just say something that I learned is just we put on so much work in practice and in preseason and then when it's showtime, just do your thing. Don't overthink it. Don't think about what you need to do or supposed to do, but just play your game. It's going to come naturally.

We're so supportive of each other. If you are stressed just make eye contact, squeeze someone's hand. We're all in this together but just do your thing, play your game.

SYDNEY TAYLOR: It all starts with just the standard in our gym, from the coaches to the captains to every single person on our team. That standard is raised and raised, time and time again, and the minute they walk in that door they're held to that standard and they know that.

Coming into the Big Ten isn't a surprise to them because that standard has been held the day they walked in, whether that's in the spring or in the summer, in the weight room, conditioning, off the court, on the court, all those things. They know what's expected of them, and they're ready for it.



