

# Big Ten Volleyball Media Days

Tuesday, August 6, 2024

Chicago, Illinois, USA

**Nebraska Cornhuskers**

**Coach John Cook**

**Lindsay Krause**

**Kennedi Orr**

Press Conference



JOHN COOK: I just want to thank the Big Ten. Grace is here. I know she's a big part of it. This is a dream of hers to do these media days. It just gets better every year. Turnout is great.

It's an amazing experience for these student-athletes to go through all this and be a part of this Big Ten setup here.

So we're just very grateful that we get to be here and thanking -- I want to thank the Big Ten for all their effort that goes into this and bringing all these teams together. 18 teams now, it's mindblowing.

**Q. John, you have three players in the Olympics. As we speak, some of those players you've known 10, 15 years. Briefly with each of those players what's gratifying to you about seeing them playing in these Olympics?**

JOHN COOK: Well, this is the third year in a row we've had three players out of the 12 on the Olympic team, so it's a great testament and reinforcement for what we're doing at Nebraska to prepare these players to play in what is literally the biggest stage for volleyball in the world.

I'm in the tank a little bit because Jordan laid into me last week because I didn't go to Paris, and I'm like, Jordan, I'm the grand marshal at the Burwell Rodeo. I cannot go to Paris. So she's never, ever said -- this is her fourth Olympics. She's never said anything to me about not going.

But really proud of those guys. People really don't understand how hard it is to make an Olympic team because it's 12 players that get selected and it's a very tough process to go through and very competitive. It's a great testament for Nebraska volleyball.

**Q. What is the biggest unknown that -- they started**

**practice without you, but as you go into your first practices, but what's the biggest unknown you need to solve before you go into your first match?**

JOHN COOK: You know, what's really on my mind right now is how are we going to better our skills from last year. So how are we going to become a better serving team, better passing team. We broke down in the Finals last year, there's other times we broke down, so how are we going to get better in those areas.

That's going to be the focus right now. And then bringing four new players into our culture, and every year's team is a little bit different, so how are we going to integrate those guys and how is that going to work.

But really paying attention to the little things, that's going to be a major focus for me. That's where we're going to start.

Then also getting them to understand how much competition there's going to be this year. Non-conference, conference, it is going to be -- every match is going to be a very challenging match in different ways.

Our schedule is all over the place. We play every night -- every day but Monday of the week. The month of November, if you've looked at our schedule, we have seven road games and three home games. That's going to be tough in the month of November.

We have some other challenging matches we're working on, and our non-conference is going to be very challenging.

We've got to get them to understand what this is about and how tough and challenging it's going to be. But we want that to bring out the best in us. That's going to be the talk.

**Q. John, you've been on the other end of realignment back when you went from the Big 12 to the Big Ten. What's it like being on the other side of welcoming a team in, and what are some of the pros and cons you're looking forward to this upcoming season?**

JOHN COOK: Well, the pros are it's making it very



interesting bringing four new teams in. I think it's going to be great for fans. It's going to be great for the sport. It's great for the Big Ten, how they're going to coordinate all this, and the media exposure is going to -- it's interesting; people are going to be very interested in how this is all going to shake out.

The cons are there's going to be a little bit more travel, but I think the Big Ten did a great job of managing how to do that. But there's going to be more travel for us, but it's also going to be exciting and new for our players to go to new places.

The other con is it's going to be -- I don't think anybody is going to go undefeated, let's put it that way, and if they do, they're going to deserve coach of the century and team of the century because it's going to be really challenging.

But like I said, this is going to bring out the best in what we have, and we'll give it our best shot. So it's exciting for college sports.

College sports is on the -- right now there's more change going on than ever. The SEC changed, the Big 12 changed, so there's a lot going on; the ACC changed. It's going to be an exciting dynamic for college sports.

**Q. Lindsay, how do you feel about your career to this point, and what are you hoping from your final season both individually and as a team?**

LINDSAY KRAUSE: Yeah, I think I've definitely had a very creative college career. You could say that. I think it's been a little bit all over the place, but I wouldn't trade it for anything. It's taught me so much about who I am as a person, who I am as a volleyball player, building relationships and everything that comes along with that.

I would say looking forward to this season, just going into every day being so grateful to be where I am and being so appreciative of every single day.

And I think that's something that being injured taught me, was how much I love what I'm doing and though some days it can be monotonous, it can get tiring, I genuinely love it and I missed it so much when I couldn't do it.

So just being very grateful and appreciative of every day that I'm able to do it.

**Q. Obviously no stadium game this year, but how is this team working on building the game? Is that something you're thinking about, and how is this team's culture in particular helping bring fans into the sport?**

KENNEDI ORR: I think every day our team just works on what we know we can do for volleyball and Nebraska volleyball as a whole. I think we also just work on culture, and our culture means a lot to us and I think it shows our commitment to women's sports and volleyball as a whole and the way that we're more than just volleyball players, we're also people and we're a team who loves each other and our relationships with each other, and I think that goes to show a lot for what we do.

**Q. Coach, you've seen the sport grow. What would you like to see happen to help maintain that positive momentum?**

JOHN COOK: I don't think anything has to happen. I think everything is happening. It's on a rocketship right now, all women's sports. It's pretty exciting to see.

I have my theories on why that is. I think people are really identifying and want to be a part and connected to women's sports because these are great young women who are -- connect and reach out and they're developing names that they can follow.

I just think with everything going on in men's sports, there's so much movement and all that stuff. I think women's sports is on fire right now, and I don't think anything -- it's happening.

**Q. John, I'm just wondering how this league with the new teams coming in changes or enhances your preparation to try to win a National Championship. The Big Ten has obviously been right there for a number of years, but how does this change it if at all?**

JOHN COOK: I don't know if I've figured that out yet. We've played these teams in the tournament or in non-conference before, so it just -- it's adding four more great teams. You're not playing everybody twice. I think there's only three teams we play twice. There's a lot of big matches because you're only going to play that team once.

So that is going to, I think, create even more of an intensity and pressure to beat that team. It just raises the level of competition.

But we've been seeing the level of competition go up across the board for years now in volleyball and specifically in the Big Ten. There's no easy nights in the Big Ten. That's something we learned quite a while ago.

**Q. Kennedy and Lindsay, you both got your undergraduate degree in May, closing a chapter of life. What made you want to come back for one more**

**season, work on a graduate degree and get one more run through Nebraska?**

LINDSAY KRAUSE: Yeah, I would say this is home. We've put three years into this same program and kind of just with the experiences we've had together, and for me specifically, it's like, why would I want to go anywhere else. The environment, the team, the fan base, Coach, everything, it just seems like everything we have here is -- it's beautiful and we can keep this momentum going forward for women's sports.

I think with the platform that we have as far as all women's athletics can go even worldwide. It's like we have that responsibilities to keep driving that forward, so it's something that would make sense to want to be a part of.

KENNEDI ORR: Yeah, I'm just grateful and honored for everything that volleyball has given me. I love the sport and specifically Nebraska volleyball, the program. Every day I'm excited to get into practice and be with my girls and learn under our coaches. I think that this is such a unique opportunity, and I would never even dream of walking away from it.

I'm just so excited to have every moment of my senior year, and I can't wait for what the season brings.

**Q. When you bring in UCLA, USC, the West Coast but a lot of the schools on the East Coast and in the Midwest, there's a lot of different play styles of volleyball now in this conference. How do you see that build the momentum around volleyball and push that forward, too?**

KENNEDI ORR: I think we're just going to get to see teams play against each other that we haven't seen a lot. I know growing up, especially a lot of teams when I was growing up, were winning National Championships like UCLA, Washington, and now we get to see them integrated in the Big Ten, and I think that's really cool.

I haven't gotten to a lot of Big Ten play, like West Coast teams a lot in the past. I'm just really excited to see the competition. It's going to be an insane year.

LINDSAY KRAUSE: Yeah, it's just a great, I would say, expansion of volleyball. Like Kenna said, that's kind of the way conferences are supposed to work. You kind of play each other geographically.

But I would say bringing all this kind of nationwide conference all together, it's going to be very cool, it's going to be very special. Private schools now mixed in a conference that's mostly state schools, I think that's going

to be really cool, and I think everything together is going to be really awesome.

**Q. Kennedy, the reception they had last night at Navy Pier, I think it's a unique thing in college sports where they can bring all those players and coaches together. What did you think of that experience, and who did you know there from USA, from club, from other experiences?**

KENNEDI ORR: I thought it was beautiful. I was talking to Coach a little bit on the rooftop and I was like, I'll probably never get to be on this rooftop again. This is a really cool experience.

It was a lot of fun and I'm just really grateful for the Big Ten for putting it together, because I did get to see so many girls I played USA Volleyball with. I got to see Ally, who was obviously on our team last year. Yeah, I think it was just a little blast from the past. It was awesome.

LINDSAY KRAUSE: It's something especially because when we're all young and we all play USA together we're all very close, and then as we get older we have much busier lives. So it's a little bit hard to always stay in touch and keep in touch.

So it's also really special seeing all the girls that we got to play with when we were 15, 16 years old and now what they're all doing at their universities. I think it's something really cool to see, very special. So these days where we get to come back and connect now that we're 20, 21, 22 years old, we get to catch up and see how our lives have been because we're all living very different lives, but at the same time we're all living the same life.

KENNEDI ORR: Very full circle. I would say our last year of volleyball was our first competitive team.

**Q. For all of you and Coach Cook, after last year's loss in the National Championship, a lot of you said you never want to feel that way again. How are you using that moment to fuel this team this season?**

JOHN COOK: Anytime you don't play your best it sticks with you. It's something we've talked a little bit about. I think it's all in our minds. You guys bring it up, so it's out there.

But I framed it for them the other night as we should be the most motivated team in the country.

LINDSAY KRAUSE: Yeah, Coach said it best. We're the most motivated team in the country right now. We left a lot out on that court, and I think we're all really fired up. I think

we're balancing things stuck in the past while at the same time using it to fuel our future.

I think we have found that healthy balance, and I think that's really making us all so excited to get back in the gym.

KENNEDI ORR: Yeah, I agree. I think that's definitely motivation, No. 1 motivation for our team, but at the same time we have four new players, we have a whole different team this year, and just got to take it game by game and see what we can do with this season.

**Q. John, you had players that were playing with different age groups, playing Canada, playing in the Dominican Republic. Who do you think really benefitted from that and took a step forward in their level of play?**

JOHN COOK: Well, I think anytime you do an experience like that, it's completely different than Nebraska volleyball.

So they get exposure to, okay, how do we become part of this new team, how do we build relationships with those players, we're together for three weeks or whatever it is. So there's an experience that goes with that. The ball is different. The rules are different. You're playing against different teams.

It's all great exposure for that, so all those guys take something out of it. But did somebody come back different? I saw some things some of them that were really cool. Olivia, even though she didn't make that team, I saw her stats were really good. And Laney was playing great until she got banged up.

I think they all really take something from it. I don't really like it because I want them here in Lincoln, but the dates worked out pretty good this year. I think it was a really positive experience for everybody, and I think they really enjoyed it, and some of them got to travel to a couple different countries. All I heard was how hot it was in Dominican Republic.

But you look at that final match those guys played, that was against the Olympic team for Domenica, and they had them right there. You can't buy that experience for those guys.

**Q. Last year with so many young players coming in, you really had to rely on older more experienced players for that mentorship. What are you seeing in the gym this year from the sophomores and how their voices have progressed?**

KENNEDI ORR: Yeah, I think going into last year

especially, a lot of times on teams you see this seniority pyramid, and we had to lean on each other last year because it's not like one of us had especially more experience than the other.

Of course we did. Like we were juniors, but we weren't seniors, and I think same thing going into this year. Everyone has a voice. We try our hardest not to look at age.

I think that the sophomores specifically are coming in with a different mindset because it's hard as a freshman. Everything in your life changes. But now they have a year of getting used to it, and same kind of thing, they're competitive, they're an extremely competitive class. It's going to be a good year.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.