

NCAA Men's Volleyball Championships
BYU Press Conference Quotes
NCAA Semifinals – May 4, 2016

Shawn Olmstead | Head Coach

Opening Statement

SO: First off, thanks to Penn State University, the AVCA and the NCAA for hosting this wonderful championship. We are excited to be here. Our guys have put in a lot of work over a long span of time to make it here and it is one of their goals to do all that they could to put themselves in a position to [compete for a national championship]. Again, hats off to the hosts. We appreciate all of the hard work and energy they have put into it. It is an exciting time for our program and our players. I am excited for them and the opportunity they have to play a little more volleyball.

Q: How different is the experience here than it was in 2014 [when you took BYU's women's program to the National Championship match]?

SO: Right now it is very similar, because it is just the day before. The excitement, the energy and all of the wonderful things that go along with the championship experience are all really familiar. We as a staff have tried our best to mentor these guys and talk them through the emotions and pushes and pulls of this experience. We have tried to monitor their requests – who is asking them for what – and who is asking for their time. But, it is exciting to be in a great venue [like Rec Hall] and be surrounded by wonderful people who are going to compete and support the sport of men's volleyball.

Q: Do you think Long Beach State has an advantage after playing last night, from a comfortability standpoint in the facility or anything like that?

SO: I think you can look at it two ways. They [Long Beach State] had to travel earlier than we had to. There is no doubt they were able to get a feel for the lights and the arena last night, but we have been in the gym today for practice and will have an opportunity again tomorrow to get on the floor, so I think you can look at it both ways. I do know that there is no doubt that our guys will be ready to play when the whistle blows. We know that our guys are going to play and execute at a high level, and we know that [Long Beach State] is going to compete at a high level. Again, we spent some extra time at home, were able to practice and prep, instead of being on the road. So we will see what happens.

Q: You have talked all season about your team's depth, can you talk about how that prepares you for an event like this?

SO: I think our players can probably speak better than I can about this, because they know firsthand when we [are in practice] going this group against that group that it is going to be competitive. We want those guys to beat up on each other in that setting and we want them to be competitive. We want them to put themselves out there and they do that [every day]. You can see that there is a lot of depth on our team and that has helped us. It has allowed us, at times, to rest some of our guys in either the practice or match setting. We have tried to take full advantage of that, but we know that it is hard for some of these guys who are really talented not to get as much court time. I believe that everyone's attitude has

been a team attitude and everyone sees that work. I think that our players see the work that everyone is putting in and that is helping them all improve.

Q: There is a lot made about serving in the altitude when people come to play you [in Provo, Utah], but when your team travels is there an inverse effect on your serving?

SO: I have noticed that our guys love to play at sea level. You see that Jake is nodding, so there is clearly some confidence that those guys get. Whether or not there is major scientific movement of the ball, I don't know. I have always told those guys, 'if you're feeling and want to get up there and bang the ball, then do it.' There is something different and our guys have felt very confident in their approach outside of the Smith Fieldhouse. They have also gotten better in the Smith Fieldhouse, to be honest, and that has been more impressive. To be able to improve some things that weren't where we needed them to be at the start of the season, and for those guys that we have given the green light we have encouraged them to be assertive and to be aggressive.

Q: Do you guys have any team activities or do you have anything planned? What are you going to do all day?

SO: They will be busy enough. They will have a little down time here and there, but we've got preparation for these opponents. We've got different film activities as a team and individually, so they'll stay occupied. And if it comes to where we've got some down time, we'll make sure that they're smart about what they're doing and possibly do some things together. But as of right now, these guys don't care about any of that. I think they want to play a volleyball match and so we're going to keep them focused and keep their time centered around that and be wise with their time.

We need to individually give these guys some time where it is completely free because they go through an individual preparation for the match and so it's really important for us to honor that and to make sure that we find the time for that and we're not going here or there for lunch. We're going to keep on track with what we've always been doing. So the schedule for us, as much as we can keep it normal in terms of how we've traveled all year, we're going to keep it completely normal. We're not going to do anything outside of that unless we have to. We'll do this and then any other thing that's mandatory. These guys know, they've done a phenomenal job at that, so they know what they're doing.

Q: Coach, why did you not grow a mustache this year?

SO: I told somebody that I didn't want to go that long without a kiss from my wife. The way that that happened that year, we've got the honor code where you have to be clean shaven and there was a little time with the women's team where you had about a week before selection Sunday. So the girls went home to their families and when I was going back to the meeting, I just looked myself in the mirror and I was like, ok I need to shave. But at BYU you can keep a mustache, but it's got to be above your lip. So I thought ok, let's see what happens here. When we got there, the girls just thought it was the funniest thing ever and so I think nobody believed I would do it through the first round of the tournament, or the second, and then it just went from there. There was no intention to it, but it was fun and forever those pictures with that team that made a great run, I'll have a creepy mustache.

Q: Can you talk more about Long Beach as a team, what makes them so successful.

SO: They (Long Beach State) have a lot of great players all over the place, at every single position. Their pin hitters and their middles are going to be really active. They are always available to be set at all times and they are going to look for them. I think they are similar to all of these teams at this point, they've got good players at every position and so it's going to be about how can be steady throughout the entire course of the match. Not right from the start, not right at the end, but you have to be able to make good plays and make good decisions as well throughout the entire course of the match. They've got a couple of kids you might want to call elite players, and they have a few of those, but so does every team here now. If you look at each team here, they are all pretty similar there are good players everywhere. There are going to be players who stand out and who will be honored tonight at the All-American banquet. No doubt Long Beach is a good team, Alan (Knipe) has been there forever and he's been consistently successful and that's what you would hope for from a coach – to continually push their guys year in and year out with a team that's battling at the top of the MPSF each year.

Ben Patch | So. | OPP

Q: Can you talk about the differences in your team since you played Long Beach State at the beginning of the season?

BP: We are really excited play Long Beach State. They are a different team [than they were earlier in the season], but so are we. I think that it is going to be fun to get out and play [them again].

Q: It has been over a week since you have played a match. How will that effect the team, if at all?

BP: It had an effect on us in practice [last week]. We didn't take the week off, we practiced every day. We worked really hard and treated the week as if we were preparing for a game. So, we have been very streamlined coming here and keeping in the mode of competition.

Q: You have played with both Taylor and Brenden [Sander], so what is your perspective of their personalities off the court?

BP: I don't know. I think one of them has better game with the ladies, but I won't say who. All kidding aside, they are both different. I have known Brenden since he was 13 or 14 years old, so he is kind of like little brother and Taylor was my idol growing up, so it is different dynamic. Both are really good guys and both are fun to play with. They are both very different players. Brenden is not his brother, he is his own player in his own right and has worked hard to be where he is.

Q: Long Beach is one of the few teams to beat you this season, how will that play into the way the match goes and do you think that gives them any confidence going into tomorrow?

BP: It gives us confidence. We are just excited to get out on the court and compete. Volleyball is such an organic sport and it is always changing. We have changed since then and we ready to see Long Beach State again tomorrow.

Q: When you guys played Long Beach State, you probably had your worst weekend of the year. What was going on there and how have you dealt with that?

BP: It was a very interesting weekend. I don't make excuses, but I was not feeling that well. I took some medication I probably should not have taken. It was just not the best weekend, but it was only uphill from there. Again, we'll see Long Beach State again tomorrow night.

Q: I know you have probably been asked this question 10,000 times so I apologize for that, but I wanted to ask. You went on a mission trip for two years – what was the biggest thing you were able to learn as a person? Not as a volleyball player, but what were you able to take away from that experience as a person?

BP: That's a great question. Honestly, just determination and character. I think a mission is an environment where it's high pressure a lot of the time because you're trying to serve other people and you take into account their lives and their responsibilities and you try to benefit them in some way. So it's kind of a high pressure situation that you're taking on someone else's life.

And that transcends into volleyball, where you're just in a high pressure situation all the time. Character-wise, you're doing this for a very long time and leaving your life behind so it teaches you more about who you are and the kind of person you want to be. So coming back, it was really beneficial for me to go on a mission so that I could kind of build up who I was and the kind of person I want to be athletically and also just as a person for the rest of my life.

Jake Langlois | Jr. | OH

Q: You had a new setter this season, so I wanted to know how long does it take for you to get that connection with a setter and feel comfortable with him?

JL: I'm not sure if I am the one to ask, because I have only had two setters. It didn't take too long, though. In the preseason, we worked on that connection, but since the season started our connection has been pretty good .

Brenden Sander | So. | OH

Q: Can you talk about your progress throughout the season? You have a pretty successful older brother [Taylor Sander] and at times you have looked like him out on the floor, so can you talk about the progress you have made?

BS: My brother is a really good player and I try to model my game after him a little bit because we are similar in some areas. He is a really good player to look up to, but I think my success has to do with the guys around me – my teammates . Ben [Patch] and Jake [Langlois] are both hitting the ball very well and our middles getting up hard, so that really opens things up for me and makes things little bit easier.

Q: One of the things that is a little unique with you guys is that you have already finished up all of your finals. Do you think that gives you a little bit of an advantage over other teams who are trying to balance all of their final exams and everything?

BS: I guess so, but we had our finals and everything when we were playing in the MPSF Championship so we had to struggle with that back then. It's not easy but it's something you have to do when you play volleyball and also go to school.

Q: So much has been made on BYUtv about your grandmother's juice. Did she bring some for you, is she coming to the match?

BS: They (my family) were unable to make it, but she would have made some juice if she came out here.