

NCAA Volleyball | First and Second Rounds
Louisville, Ky. | Cardinal Arena
Illinois vs. Louisville Post Match Quotes

Illinois Head Coach Kevin Hambly

(Opening Statement) "Start with this, I thought having to come here and have Louisville host us and I thought they put on an amazing event. I thought the things they did from giving us little Louisville Slugger bats to the way that they treated us it was a great, they did a great job hosting us and we feel very welcome and it was a credit to the whole staff. I know there were a lot of people behind the scenes working on that so just from Illinois, thank you for that. I thought and again with that, congratulations to Louisville, they had a great season. We saw them first match of the year and they made a lot of improvements throughout the year and they were tough and in this place it was a battle. I think the key for us at least was they came out hot and you knew they could be an emotional team, we had to manage the emotions of the event in this place and I thought it got away from us in the first set and we started to kind of calm down and play a lot better until the very, very end when things got very, very dicey there. But, it was great to see our team makes some plays and see Louisville fight as hard as they did when they were down, it was just a good match to be a part of from our stand point and my stand point because it was a battle. Both teams had to fight for it and it was fun, it was a good way to end our first and second rounds."

(Getting down a set, could you ask for a worst start) "I mean we were playing pretty poorly. We were caught up in the emotion as you could see we looked scared. I thought being able to turn that in the second was a big deal. I mean we had a little huddle and I was like hey just chill out guys, it's going to be fine. We're outside of ourselves right now, our eyes are bugging out of our head. I Cracked a couple jokes, talked about the guys in the speedos. I said hey, look at the guys in the speedos. Just trying to get them to laugh. This is fun, it's a game. We're not treating it as a game, we're so worried about making mistakes that it's all over the place. Louisville had a lot to do with that, they put a lot of pressure on us, they came out hot. They did some things that were different than what we saw in the game plan, so we had to make some adjustments defensively. I thought if we didn't get that turn that it could've went really, really bad for us."

(On what he saw from his team in the fourth set) "I was proud of them. I wasn't really happy how we got in that situation but to see them kinda get composed and gather themselves then go make a couple plays. Usually it's hard to turn that around after you've had a big comeback. It was loud in there, it was exciting, and it was good. Our freshman setter especially she just settled down a little bit and that helped a lot. I mean she was able to make two plays there at the end, we haven't seen that all season. So hopefully we learn from the mistakes we were making earlier."

(On what they need to correct for next week) "Passing. We need to do a better job of passing and I think we need to get our L2 going, well L1 really but our other outside. Jocelynn (Birks) had a great night it's what you hope for from a senior and Naya (Crittenden) did a nice job. We didn't get to the middles very well because we weren't passing great. We need to get either (Michelle) Strizak or (Katie) Roustio

need to put the ball on the court and score some points for us. Otherwise, we're going to be in some trouble as we get in the Sweet 16. You have to be hitting on all cylinders if you want to advance in that."

(On what Jocelyn Birks means to the team) "Yeah she has been a leader for us all year, she doesn't want the season to end, none of them do but this is the best I have seen her lead the group. That is the thing I would say and even yesterday she was great, it wasn't her best match as far as statistically but it was probably her second best match as a leader and making sure the team stayed on the things they needed to stay on. She has been trying to figure that out all year and she has been looked at to lead and I feel that she has finally taken the reigns and just in time I hope to try and pull off something, make a run."

(On how much the height advantage played into tonight's match) "I think at the end when they started to wear down a little bit we were able to get some blocks but we were, our block, we were struggling to block them there for a long time and they did a good job of taking advantage of our size and making us run and chase balls down. Our big kids were trying to chase stuff down. We are not the nimblest team you know and they did a good job of taking advantage of that but I didn't think the block really started to show up until the fourth (set) when it really, really mattered. That happens we you kind of wear teams down physically, not that, they are in great shape obviously but when you are shorter, you have to bring your 100 percent jump all the time and when that goes away, the angles change just a little bit and maybe that played into but that is the only time I would say it kind of came into play."

Jocelynn Birks, Sr., S

(On playing on the road for the first time in tournament) "It was different kind of like watching the selection show was really weird for me because it was like suspenseful and kind of not knowing where we were going to go and kind of exciting so that cool. Yeah, just having to travel was different but other than that it is the same volleyball."

(On how they responded after the first set) "We were just talking a lot about not letting how loud our crowd was get to us. They were bringing a lot of heat and a lot of energy and were frantic and nervous so were just talking about focusing a lot about us and calming down and making plays and that's what changed. It was in and out throughout the match but I think we sustained it for a long enough time to close it out."

(What about for you Joce, how do you guys continue this play especially from the second to fourth set on to next week) "Well the next week in practice is going to be about whatever team were going to be playing. Focusing on us getting better and managing whoever we play and their style of play. Then just being prepared for that emotion and bringing that to the next round because it's obviously not going to be as crazy. It's not going to be someone's home court so were going to have to bring our own energy."

(On any adjustments made after the first set) "I mean we're always trying to swing high off the hands it's a good shot. So I think that's something we're always trying to do and it just happened to work out better for us after the first set."

Naya Crittenden, Jr., OH

(On thoughts after you get down a set) "I think we did a really good job of talking to each other after that and like Kevin said calming each other down. Going into the match we knew it was going to be a battle even though we beat them in the beginning of the season. You know, every team gets better throughout the season so we knew that it was going to be a tough match."

(On any adjustments made after the first set) "Yeah that's something I definitely I had to work on changing too because there's times when I go in and I bounce the ball and that doesn't work all the time. So that's something I try to change too throughout the match."

(On taking all this emotion and everything else from tonight and carry it into next weekend) "I was really, really happy tonight with the way that we played especially the emotional level like you talked about. We really fought for it even though toward the end it got a little away from us just a little bit. We really fought and it was really good to see that. I really hope we continue to carry that throughout."