

NCAA WOMEN'S GYMNASTICS REGIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS
Rec Hall; University Park, Pa.
April 5, 2014

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

Opening Statement – Head Coach Rhonda Faehn:

I would first like to thank Penn State University for hosting a really well run regional championship. The hospitality was exceptional and the event was really well run and organized and we had a great experience. Our competition tonight was off and was not what we are capable of. I thought we started off well and finished well. We rebounded really well on vault and that was the fight I was looking for. I thought we had some uncharacteristic mistakes. It was just different routines and different individuals. Definitely consider it a little bit fluky and not from any particular lack of training or anything like that. I know that our athletes are excited to get back and we advanced to the national championship and the regional championship is always a very challenging competition this one always has some of the most stressful environment. Now we are going to prepare for the national championship.

Q: Were there any teams that you were worried about stepping on your toes?

Bridget Sloan: Today's performance was a little uncharacteristic, but at the same time these competitions are what make us stronger are what make us think and work harder in the gym. Obviously we didn't want to happen quite like this, but in the end you have to look back on it and take it and learn from it. And as a team I think we are really learning every time we compete I know personally I always learn more about my teammates and more about myself. I think tonight we just came in here and it was just a little bit of an off day, and we are all human. We all make mistakes and it just goes to show we are not robots and at the same time we have things we can work on and as a team I think we can really pull it together and as Rhonda said we had a great first and last event, but I don't know if there was any team we were really worried about. You never know how a team is going to be like and how they are going to compete. We have actually never competed against any of these teams that were at this regional, so we weren't worried about this or that team. It's all about us out there; we are in our own little bubble.

Q: What can you tell us about your floor routine?

Kytra Hunter: It's the same routine I do every year. It's definitely my favorite routine of all three years and so I think with me loving the routine and being able to sell the dance and the tumbling putting it all together definitely helped me get a good score. It just pumps up the crowd and my teammates. It's sassy and that's what I am. It's definitely not any different preparation than we had before, but just listening to coaches and the assignments each day.

Q: What did coach say to you leading into beam following a few falls?

Kytra Hunter: Honestly I didn't have any emotions at that point. Before my series I took a longer rest time than I usually do. Any doubts I had, just like any routine, I knew that I couldn't have that. And I had a chance to go after it and I definitely did. Rhonda told me for every routine just go out there and show your sass. I think it made me more confident in myself and I just got myself in my own zone and I definitely nailed that beam routine. It's definitely a pressure set I wanted to be able to do because there is any given time anything could happen and I wanted to show not just Rhonda, but my team that I was comfortable in that anchor spot.

Q: After the first rotation and a couple mistakes leading into the bye, how did you overcome it?

Mackenzie Caquatto: Well in the locker room we were pumping each other up. We were really trying to get our minds in the right place before our beam rotation. We knew how strong we are on vault and floor, so we came out knowing that. And we did a great job of giving it our all on those events. And we came out strong in the end.

Q: Coach was there anything specific you told the girls after the beam?

Head Coach Rhonda Faehn: I told them that we just had to expect that this happened and focusing on making sure we came back out on floor with tremendous energy and know how strong we are these events. Just go out and have fun and we know what we are capable of.

Q: Will you do anything different with the routines in Alabama?

Head Coach Rhonda Faehn: The routines will be the same, the thing that will be different though in Birmingham is that things will be on a podium. It is a raised level that the athletes will be competing on. We are fortunate that we just had the SEC championship there in that exact same arena on that same podium so we will at least feel a little more comfortable playing there. Our athletes remember what it was like just a week ago there, but we will be doing the same routines. We just don't know what event and who is in the competition with us yet.

Q: What do you plan on focusing on before nationals?

Head Coach Rhonda Faehn: We are really fortunate to fly back to Gainesville tonight, so the girls can get a good night's rest in their own beds. We really just have to recover a little bit, it's competition mentally and physically and then of course to build back up. We of course will put some more pressure situations in the gym and under those pressure situations really focusing on the fine tuning details. But it is really going to come down to the competition type things

Q: will the uncharacteristic on beam cause you to focus more on that?

Head Coach Rhonda Faehn: When they fell it was really uncharacteristic of the both of them. I think that was the first time Mackenzie [Caquatto] had fallen in two years and Bridget is a 9.95 almost every time she goes up there. We will go back and do a little more pressure sets to put them in that scenario. But I have no doubt they will do just fine.

PENN STATE UNIVERSITY

Opening Statement – Head Coach Jeff Thompson

Well if you were in the building you know how exciting it was. The margin was one tenth between us and Florida going into the last rotation. When I walked into the locker room [during our bye in the fifth rotation], I said to the girls 'Do you want to know the score?' And they said 'Yes, I mean we are going to see it anyways.' I told them we were down by one-tenth of a point. We knew Oregon State was going into their best event, they are ranked eighth in the country on balance beam. We also knew we were going into our best event ranked ninth on the floor exercise. I told them to just go out there and do what they do every day in practice: Go out there and be us. We got off to a great start and we hit all of our routines. We had the right rotation tonight. We started on vault and ended on floor. The floor scores were great. Beam scores were a little tight and they stayed tight all night. For Oregon State to end there and for us to end on floor was a really great draw for us. [Sidney and Cassidy] did an awesome job maintaining their composure tonight. Sydney followed a fall on uneven bars with a good routine to get us back on track. This is a really fun group to coach. At the beginning of the season, I don't think people expected a lot from us. We graduated some important student-athletes, but this speaks volumes to the hard work that these girls have put in and how much they believe in each other, how

much they believe in the coaching staff and our system. I think they just went out there and had a lot of fun tonight and it paid off.

Q: On the floor routine after you had it going with the 9.90 and another 9.90, were you guys feeding off the energy? Could you feel that from the crowd?

Kassidy Stauder: Yeah, the crowd was great all night and fed off the energy from the crowd tonight. There was also a lot of energy on our team and we felt that from one another, too. We had a huge fan section of our alumni and our family. We really used that energy to fuel us to do well, especially during our floor routines, and it helped us come out with a qualifying spot for nationals.

Sidney Sanabria-Robles: I think we all knew what we had to hit [tonight]. We had that focus and excitement in us. We knew we could do it and we just went out there and did what [our coaches] have been telling us all along: just be us and have fun.

Q: Kassidy, how did it feel being a senior and having this as your last meet in Rec Hall?

Kassidy Stauder: Competing for the last time in Rec Hall is awesome, but there is no other way I would rather to leave Rec Hall than to qualify to the NCAA Championships with my team. It was an incredible way to go out.

Q: How was practice leading up to the meet today?

Head Coach Jeff Thompson: The past two weeks have been great since the Big Ten Championship. Our last event [at Big Ten's] was balance beam and we had a couple of falls and that took us out of the running. We switched the beam line-up around a little...and I think it set everyone at ease. Practice is pretty much the same everyday this part of the year. It is just getting in the gym and hitting routines. We didn't really change anything ...We kept doing what we do and I think they felt comfortable enough to just go out there and do what we do every day. Doing what they do every day was good enough tonight.

Q: How much does going to nationals mean for the program?

Kassidy Stauder: It is something that we have been working for since the day that I walked onto campus. We haven't qualified since 2009, but we've been so close the last three years and to finally qualify in Rec Hall is the best feeling ever. It really showed the hard work that this team has put in since preseason started. It shows how close we have become as a team throughout this year and how much trust we have in one another.

Sidney Sanabria-Robles: After season ended last year, we had a meeting and the coaches talked to us about some changes that we were going happen; a culture change and other adjustments that we were going to make. We made the commitment and now we are headed to nationals. Obviously it worked.

Head Coach Jeff Thompson: This is the first year that the entire team has only coached by our staff. We had girls that were coached by the previous staff and we didn't change a lot of things. We changed small things but we didn't make big changes. When the last two graduated last year we went to them at the end of the season and said 'If you want to make nationals, if you want to be one of the top team, these are the things you need to buy into.' The senior leadership and the junior leadership has been tremendous this season. Sydney was at another school before she transferred here and she knows what it was like in a winning program. She knows what it takes to be successful and through her leadership and our seniors we got everybody on board. Everybody decided that they were going to buy into the system. We have a lot of fun. We accomplished our goal. Now we have a new goal, Super Six.

Q: What were some of the changes that you made after last season?

Head Coach Jeff Thompson: "That is something we will keep within the team. It was mostly being more dedicated. School comes first and gymnastics comes second, but it has to be a true second. It had to be school first and gymnastics second. It was that simple"

Kassidy Stauder: We had focus on being a Division I student-athlete. Our expectations had to be to do well in school and then do well in the gym. We owned that to ourselves and to our school and I think that ultimately that has led to our success this season.

Q: What do you think was the biggest difference from the Big Ten Championships to today?

Sidney Sanabria-Robles: I don't think we changed much. We just knew what was at stake and what our goals were. We just came out here and we did what we do in the training gym. We had to cover a fall on bars, but we knew we could do it all along. It was staying true and trusting ourselves.

Kassidy Stauder: We started the year climbing Mount Nittany, went through all the conditioning, all the morning workouts and everything we did was to get us to this point. We have had a successful season and we used all of that tonight and brought it. It's all of our hard work that paid off tonight in our routines.

Head Coach Jeff Thompson: You have to remember twenty-two of the twenty-four routines at the Big Ten Championship were brilliant. They were our best routines of the year. Unfortunately we had two falls on the same event and none of the other teams had that. That made a huge difference. We basically came out tonight with one less fall. They have been super consistent, having a lot of fun, and we are going to have even more fun in Birmingham.

UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY

Q: You scored a 9.85 on beam to win the event, what are your thoughts on becoming the only NCAA Championship qualifier?

Audrey Harrison: It is really exciting. It means a lot to me. I wish my whole team would have made it but it is still exciting to go [to nationals] as an individual.

Q: What was working so well for you especially on beam?

Audrey Harrison: For each event, I just tried to think of it as this could be my last [routine]. I didn't want it to be my last [routine]. I just did the best I could.

Q: As you prepare for NCAA's what is the excitement level you are going through?

Audrey Harrison: It is going to be really exciting. I just can't believe that I qualified for nationals.