



2018 Big West Men's Volleyball Tournament

Match 1 - First Round Quotes

Final - No. 3 UC Irvine def. No. 6 UC San Diego

25-18, 25-18, 25-16

No. 3 UC IRVINE ANTEATERS

Head Coach DAVID KNIFFIN

(Opening statement) "This is really special. It's unique in men's volleyball. The coaches – that we have the opportunity to work with and compete against all year – willingness to come together and make this thing happen. There's nothing like Big West volleyball, and this tournament and this field and this conference anywhere else. Just grateful to be here."

(On identity of UCI volleyball) "It comes down to leveraging our given talents in any given year and making it work together as one unit. Irvine volleyball really is when we figure out what those strengths are and allow our guys to lead with them. Everybody gets to be the tip of the spear at a different point during the match. We're still a young team and if you look at our lineup right now, we returned one starter from last year's squad, so there is still some identity formation that's going on with this team. I have enjoyed the process of watching these kids grow up together."

(On playing Hawai'i next) "They play the whole game too. We've had great matches with Hawai'i over the years. They're a really fun team to play."

Senior Outside Hitter AARON KOUBI

(On sets 1 and 2 being close) "Even though the score was close set one and two, for us on the court, it just felt like we were doing our jobs and calibrating to how they were playing. We were just playing our game."

Junior Opposite KARL APFELBACH

(On being successful against Hawai'i) "When we play at our best, we are competing for every point. Splitting in Hawai'i is an awesome thing that we achieved. Hawai'i is a tough place to play, but it's also a great place to play with all the fans. Going into tomorrow against Hawai'i, we just got to play our game point by point and compete as good as them."

(On playing in the Big West) "I love playing at the highest possible level. Of course there's other conferences and they have very good teams in them and they compete hard, but this being the first year that the Big West is a conference for men's volleyball, having that level the first year is a really awesome thing. It's awesome to be a part of it."

No. 6 UC SAN DIEGO TRITONS

Head Coach KEVIN RING

(Opening statement) "Credit UC Irvine, I thought they played very well tonight. Certainly from the service line they gave us some trouble. We were certainly trying to be in system a little bit more. I thought Milosh Stojcic did a nice job running the offense. We certainly wanted to allow him to be in system a little more often. I thought Alec Flowers had a great night hitting over .500, but I think we only set him like six times. Being in system a little bit more and get him the ball. I think Tanner (Syftestad) got going really well there in the second set. Even in that second set I thought we sided out at 70 percent, but we did struggle a little bit trying to score points, they didn't block many balls, I think they had three on the night. I think we had two stuff blocks on the night. The big difference is I think they got a lot of touches and they definitely won the dig statistic. I think they had 12 or so more digs converted into quality swings, pretty big difference there in the match. But credit Irvine, I'm proud of how hard the guys fought and disappointing loss, but that's the way it goes."

(On the tournament) "Having this tournament, I thought it was great. The guys were very excited to be a part of it. I thought our approach on the season you have a big chunk of nonconference matches and then you get into your regular season and conference play. We really talked about this phase three, the championship. I thought we had a nice week of practice and there was a little bit of buzz in our department, it was kind of fun to be a part of that and to be in this position."

Senior Middle Blocker/Outside Hitter ALEC FLOWERS

(On his performance) "When Milosh (Stojcic) could get me the ball, I thought I was playing pretty well. I could see the openings. Unfortunately, as coach was saying we didn't have too many times where I was allowed to swing. It was really fun to play out there and I think Irvine really spread us out blocking."

Senior Opposite TANNER SYFTESTAD

(On UC Irvine) "They're a tall team, probably the tallest in the nation. It's a different beast going up against a 7-foot middle and they got the 6-8 opposite. I'm not sure how tall the outside is but he's a pretty big guy. It's certainly tough to go against but I like a challenge like that. They just passed very well tonight and we couldn't do much on the blocking side."