**Baylor Pre-Regional Press Conference**

**December 7, 2022**

**Head Coach Ryan McGuyre**

(Opening statement)

“I’m really proud of this team this year, where we started and where we’ve arrived. It’s been a different season than the past three or four. Really want to cherish the opportunity to be here in the regional. With this team it’s been about growth and humility and we’re just trying to extend it because I feel like we keep getting better each day as we move along. I thought maybe the expectations some people had on this program weren’t as high and to see what we’ve done with great leadership of a couple of our seniors with so many young freshmen – I’ve just been really proud of that. Here at Louisville, we’ve been treated well by the host school and the host family and we’re facing some storied programs that have been really successful the past few years as well. Looking forward to the test and the battle and again right now cherish the opportunity and just feel really proud of the team and what we’ve done so far.”

(On the regular season schedule preparing them to get to this point)

“Most certainly. Both probably in the RPI and then just the balance of the tough schedule. Opening weekend you’ve got Minnesota and Wisconsin – two teams that are always battling to win the Big Ten. I thought in our first match way back in August, we were a lot different then, but we learned a lot about ourselves and played with good grit and you’ve just got to learn. One thing this team didn’t have was experience and so each game we could learn from and we were really able to apply it to the next one and battled and got a win over Wisconsin. I think since then there’s been ‘hey, we can do well.’ We’ve got to be a lot more consistent with what we’re trying to do and trying to accomplish and grow in each of those areas. The Big 12 has done well in this tournament. I think probably people didn’t realize how tough our conference was top-to-bottom where everybody was kind of beating up on everybody through it, so we felt very battle-tested in conference with some good teams. We were disappointed that we couldn’t get that win at Texas, but we were right there in the match. Again, knowing we could be one degree better and keep growing… there’s always very specific things we could work on. The game of volleyball is going to be fun as long as you are learning so we’ve just been able to learn as a team quite a bit this year.”

(On the importance of blocking against Louisville)

“Ultimately, we are not always caught up on the number of blocks that we have. Our block needs to have an impact on the match as far as changing what our opponents are doing. Kara (McGhee) has been on the forefront of not only doing that herself, but also teaching her teammates as well.”

(Is there any team that you may have faced this season that resembles Louisville and their style?)

“Probably go back to Wisconsin. I think when they are moving their big 6-8 girl around. They have pretty versatile outsides. It’s probably not one single team, but I would say similar athletes from different teams. We would defend this person maybe like the opposite from fill-in-the-blank. These middles hit a little bit more like these athletes a little bit.”

**Averi Carlson, Fr., Setter**

(Is the approach different in the postseason or do you just do the things you’ve been doing?)

“I would definitely say that our approach is the same for any game. We know that our opponents are really good in this round. We’re just ready to play Baylor volleyball.

(Is this just like a road game?)

“Yeah. We are traveling here in Louisville. It’s been kind fun just getting to travel and play. We’re just really excited.”

**Kara McGhee, Sr., Middle Blocker**

(After the 2019 Final Four, was there motivation to get back to that point?)

“Yeah, I think when you go there and taste it a little bit, making it to the semifinals my freshman year then coming down to my senior year, I think ‘man, I want to get past that point that I hit my freshman year.’ Yeah, I definitely think that’s motivating.”

(You earned All-Region and are eligible for All-American which honors hard work and great teammates - how rewarding that has been for you?)

“Any recognition, I am honored to receive. At the end of the day, I want this team to succeed and I want to win a national championship. It is so exciting to receive those awards because half of that is Averi Carlson and how amazing she is as a setter. And passing, Lauren Briseno is a great libero. It is great because when one is honored, all are honored. At the end of the day, that just goes to show how great we can be and just how much further we can go as a team.”

(Can you talk about the importance of blocking versus Louisville?)

“Blocking is key in any game. It is such a momentum changer, getting a good block. It’s key in any game. This team specifically because they are so dynamic all the way around and they also are a great blocking team. Just to be competitive in that aspect will be huge.”