

NVL Rizing Read

NVL Academy Alumni Ali Denney Properly Prepared for College.



After two weeks of play in the books the South Carolina Gamecocks are 8-0 and moving up in rankings climbing to the number 10 spot in the most recent polls. The Gamecocks have a match record of 35-5, part of the success comes from Adrianna Culbert and Ali Denney who are 7-1 this season. Culbert and Denney started the season as the number two pair but recently have competed at the number one. Head coach Moritz and his team look to continue their momentum this weekend at the Tiger Beach Challenge where they will face Tulane (8-1), #8 LSU (2-5), Florida Gulf Coast (3-0), and UAB (4-4).

Q&A with freshman Ali Denney



Q: Did you feel nervous going into your first ever college volleyball match?

A: Going into my first collegiate match, I was a little bit nervous but that's natural. It came from excitement more than fear. Our first match was against one of our rival schools who were ranked and we were not, but a lot of the nerves came down as we started warming up! Another thing that helped was just trusting in my partner and her abilities and our chemistry bringing out the best in each other. I kept in mind that every team is beatable we just had to exploit their weaknesses which we did right from the start.

Q: What were you thinking going into the tournament not knowing your spot?

A: Our coaches kept us on our toes about which spot we would be in. We had an idea of a lineup but did not actually find out where we would be playing until the night before. When Moritz told us that we were at the twos, we knew that they trusted us to play our best and to take the win at the two spot!

Q: What did you learn at the academy that helped you focus in your matches?

A: The academy helped me a lot in my matches in the aspect of keeping things simple. A lot of the time, I would put a lot of pressure on myself and I was really hard on myself rather than just having fun and playing simple volleyball which comes in handy when you're playing in really tough, tight matches. Al-B and I would talk a lot about not overthinking offensively and sometimes in scramble plays or even having to get out of a serve receive run, coming back to just simple pass, set, hit volleyball. And there were definitely times throughout the weekend where we would be in the middle of a long rally and the shot that would win it would be a jumbo or a short pokey. So I've been able to win long volleys and plays with just playing simple volleyball and getting out of ruts with just simple volleyball. The academy also taught me a lot of skills that have set me apart in college so I came in prepared and ready for this level.

Q: What does wearing the South Carolina jersey mean to you?

A: Wearing the South Carolina jersey is such a cool and fun honor and experience to be a part of because we are a program that has gotten a little bit better and better every year. We like to call ourselves the underdogs because we haven't made it to the tournament yet and we get closer and closer and this year is so cool and special because we have all of the talent it's just proving it now and we work everyday with that in mind.

Q: What are your goals for the season individually? As a team?

A: As a team, we want to make it to NCAAs. Make it to the tournament and show everyone what we're made of. As an individual, I have a lot but I want to be the best teammate I can be and keep having a positive impact on the program. I want to bring the best out of all of my teammates by bringing them my best everyday. And make sure everyone is happy and having fun.