

# Atlanta – Stadium Court Notes – Sunday, Aug. 15, 2021 – Championship Match

## 2:15 pm – #2 Kelly Claes / Sarah Sponcil vs. #14 (Q4) Taryn Kloth / Kristen Nuss

### Head to Head

- This is the first meeting between the teams
- None of these players have ever faced their opponents before

**Claes / Sponcil** are playing together for the 8th time on the AVP Tour and 32nd time overall

- The team has a best of 2nd twice on the AVP Tour, but has 2 FIVB wins
- In 2020 the duo had a 6-5 match record, with 3 losses to Alix Klineman / April Ross and 2 losses to Sara Hughes / Brandie Wilkerson
- In their partnership Claes / Sponcil have only had one AVP tournament in which they have not advanced to the semifinals (placed 5th in the second Long Beach event last year after losing a pair of three-set matches to the event's top two seeded teams)
- As partners on the AVP Tour, the duo has a 24-14 match record, is 23-4 when winning the first set, and is 5-6 in three-set matches
- Claes / Sponcil had to come through the contender's bracket to reach the championship match... just 2 of the last 22 AVP titles have been won by teams which had suffered an earlier loss... the last to do it was Karissa Cook / Jace Pardon in Austin 2019
- Claes / Sponcil are trying to become the 4th women's team to compete in the Olympics and then win in the first domestic event following... the others:
  - 2004 Misty May-Treanor / Kerri Walsh Jennings (won gold in Athens, won in Chicago)
  - 2008 Nicole Branagh / Elaine Youngs (5th place in Beijing, won in Cincinnati)
  - 2016 Lauren Fendrick / Brooke Sweat (19th place in Rio, won in Chicago)

**Kelly Claes** – age 25 – 6'2" – hometown Placentia, Calif. – currently Fullerton, Calif. – Southern California

- This is Claes' 24th AVP event... she has 1 win, 4 seconds and 12 thirds
- Claes has now been in the semifinals in 18 of her 24 AVP events (75% of the tournaments entered)
- Claes won her AVP title in Chicago 2017 when she was 21 years old... she has since played 14 AVP tournaments (before Atlanta) without being able to secure her second AVP victory
- In 2020 Claes led the Tour in kills (9.0 per set), was 3rd in hitting percentage (.444) and 5th in blocks (0.9)
- In Atlanta Claes is 2nd in hitting percentage (.581), tied for 4th in aces (0.62 per set) and 6th in blocks (0.85 per set)

**Sarah Sponcil** – age 24 – 5'10" – hometown Phoenix, Ariz. – currently Phoenix, Ariz. – Loyola Marymount / UCLA

- Sponcil is playing in her 14th AVP Tournament, with 3 2nd-place finishes and 4 3rd-place finishes
- Sponcil reached the championship match in her 2nd ever AVP tournament (Austin 2018)
- In 2020 Sponcil was tied for 5th on the Tour in digs (6.7 per set)
- In Atlanta Sponcil is tied for 4th in aces (0.62 per set) and is 5th in digs (5.62 per set)

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**Kloth / Nuss are playing together for the 1st time on the AVP Tour**

- This weekend they have a 7-0 match record and 14-2 set record (including qualifier)
- The finals will mark their 5th main draw match, and all have come against teams seeded #7 or better
- Kloth and Nuss both played for LSU beach volleyball in 2019, 2020 and 2021... Kloth and Nuss were teammates on court 1 in 2021, finishing the season 36-0

- Since the start of the 2001 season, there have been 11 women's teams which have won when competing for the first time as partners on the AVP Tour... the last two to do it were both in 2018, when in Austin April Ross and Alix Klineman won, then in New York City Sara Hughes and Summer Ross won
- This the 5th time in the history of the AVP (180 women's events with seeds known) that a qualifier has played in the championship match:
  - Cincinnati 2013 – Emily Day / Summer Ross (#14 MD, #1 QT) won
  - San Francisco 2016 – Kelly Claes / Sara Hughes (#13 MD, #1 QT) finished 2nd
  - Austin 2019 – Kimberly Hildreth / Sarah Schermerhorn (#14 MD, #7 QT) finished 2nd
  - Hermosa Beach 2019 – Kathryn Hogan / Megan Rice (#21 MD, #13 QT) finished 2nd
- The Cincinnati event in 2013 marked the only time in AVP history that a team seeded as low as #14 in the main draw won the title... a victory by Kloth / Nuss would tie that mark
- Kloth / Nuss are just the 6th team in the history of the AVP seeded #14 or lower to play in the championship match... Emily Day / Summer Ross in Cincinnati 2013 were the first (and they won), but since then teams seeded that low have gone 0-4 in title matches

**Taryn Kloth – age 24 – 6'4" – hometown Sioux Falls, S.D. – currently Metairie, La. – Creighton / Louisiana State**

- This is Kloth's first ever pro beach volleyball tournament... outside of the early days of the AVP, no other player has ever won an AVP title when making the beach volleyball debut (in Glendale 2009 Julianna Felisberta / Larissa Franca won when both players were making the AVP debuts but were already one of the top teams in the world)
- Speaking of firsts, Kloth was ranked 18th on PrepVolleyball.com's Senior Aces list, believed to be the first player from South Dakota to rank that high on the list
- And for another first, Kloth played indoors at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska, and is the first player known to go to Creighton in the bvbinform.net database of 20,238 players (which also includes international players)
- Kloth went 50-0 in matches her last two seasons of beach volleyball at LSU... the last time Kloth lost a match was on April 21, 2019 when she and Maddie Ligon lost to Florida State's Payton Caffrey / Molly McBain 21-16, 21-11
- Kloth leads the field in Atlanta in hitting percentage (.583) and is 2nd in blocks (1.40 per set)
- Kloth is looking to join an elite group of players who have won a title when making their AVP debut:
  - 1984 Florida – Linda Hanley and Nina Matthies won when both made their AVP debut
  - 1984 Chicago – Dale Keough won making her AVP debut
  - 1993 Phoenix – Holly McPeak and Angela Rock won when both made their AVP debut
  - 1999 Clearwater – Elaine Youngs won making her AVP debut
  - 2003 Fort Lauderdale – Kerri Walsh Jennings won making her AVP debut
  - 2009 – Glendale – Juliana Felisberta and Larissa Franca won when both made their AVP debut

**Kristen Nuss – age 23 – 5'6" – hometown New Orleans, La. – currently Metairie, La. – Louisiana State**

- This is Nuss' 6th AVP event, and the 3rd time she has played in the main draw... this marks her first title match appearance
- Nuss had 139 career wins at LSU, the most in program history
- Nuss is 2nd in Atlanta in digs per set (7.60)