

WOMEN – #9 Kelly Claes / Sarah Sponcil (USA)

- USA is 1 of the 2 countries with the maximum of 4 Olympic teams (also BRA)
- USA has played in one World Championships as a team (placed 9th in 2019)
- USA gained berth by finishing 6th in Qualifying
- Finishes during qualifying period (3, 9, 2, CQ, 5, 9, 9, 9, 33, 2, 5, 9, 5, 9, 9, 5, 5, 33, 5, 5, 1, 1)
 - Played 22 events (but 21 officially with a CQ loss), 5 semifinals, 5 medals (2 golds, 2 silvers, 1 bronze)
 - 75-28 match record, 163-75 set record (enter Tokyo with a 12-match win streak)
 - 5-1 in country quota, 6-2 in qualifiers, 32-8 in pool play, 25-14 in bracket play, 4-1 in semifinals, 1-0 in Bronze medal match, 2-2 in Gold medal match
 - 65-8 when winning the first set, 9-20 when losing the first set, 19-13 in third sets
- Began their partnership in October 2018... duo won a bronze in their first ever FIVB event together in Qinzhou, China on 10/4/18
- Entering Tokyo the duo has played 23 FIVB tournaments (2 golds, 2 silvers, 1 bronze)... in 8 of those, they had to play in either the country quota or qualifier (5 times in both CQ and qualifier), including finishing 5th after advancing from the qualifier in the 2019 test event in Tokyo
- USA edged out Brooke Sweat and Kerri Walsh Jennings for the Olympic qualifying spot... the duo was 0-2 against Sweat / Walsh Jennings (lost in a country quota and the next week in a 5th-place match)... after getting 2 medals in their first 3 events in the qualification period, Claes and Sponcil had just 1 medal in their next 17 events before their 2 golds in the last 2 qualifying events... those 2 wins meant USA became the 10th American duo (and 24th international) to ever win gold medals in consecutive FIVB events
- Claes and Sponcil are the youngest team to ever represent the USA in beach volleyball Olympics... along with Alix Klineman there are now 19 players from America to be beach volleyball Olympians
- On the AVP Tour the duo has played 7 times, finishing second 2 times, and third 4 times (the other finish was a fifth)... 10 of their 13 AVP match losses have been to teams seeded either #1 or #2
- USA has a 25-18 record against the field... there are just 3 teams which they have played but never beaten (0-1 against #5 AUS, 0-1 against #10 CAN, 0-2 against #16 LAT)
- This is the 1st Olympics for Claes
- Claes has played 44 FIVB tournaments prior to Tokyo, and 3 of her 6 partners are Olympians... she has played 23 times with Sponcil, 11 with Sara Hughes, 7 with Brittany Hochevar, and 1 each with Kerri Walsh Jennings, Kelly Reeves and April Ross
- The first time Claes had ever gone out of the country was when she and Sara Hughes won a bronze medal in July 2013 at the FIVB U-19 World Championships in Portugal
- In her first career main draw match on the FIVB Tour, Claes (and Sara Hughes) defeated top-seeded Laura Ludwig and Kira Walkenhorst of GER in pool play... the Germans went on to win 13 straight matches including winning the gold in the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics
- This is the 1st Olympics for Sponcil
- Sponcil played 4 FIVB events with two partners before teaming with Claes for 23 tournaments... she has made 6 semifinals (all but one with Claes) in her 27 events... she won a bronze medal in her first ever World Tour event (with Caitlin Ledoux in Haiyang, China in July 2018)
- Entering Tokyo Sponcil has played twice as many FIVB tournaments (26) as AVP (13)
- Sponcil is the 2nd youngest U.S. women's beach volleyball Olympian (Misty May-Treanor was 23)
- This will be the 3rd time in 4 years that Sponcil has played an event in Tokyo (5th with Lauren Fendrick in a three-star event in 2018 and 5th with Claes in the 2019 test event)