

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Hawai'i vs LSU

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Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA

Pete Maravich Assembly Center

LSU Tigers

Alexis Morris

Angel Reese

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: Alexis, let me start with you. I know from a recent interview I saw you saying that you are not supposed to be here. There's been no expectations. You are not supposed to be here. Then again you are 28-2. You are a host. You are a 3-seed. Has that been the mentality that you have used to carry you to the part where you are today, going into this tournament?

ALEXIS MORRIS: Yes, it has been our mentality. We have been using it to keep us motivated. Our team this year is to piece it together. We're a young team with a lot of new pieces, and sometimes it's really hard to gel. We have been doing really well this year. As Mulkey likes to say, we're the underdogs. It feels good to be the underdog, because it keeps us motivated, like I said.

THE MODERATOR: Angel, I know you have got a lot of attention nationally because of your statistics and the streak that you have had with double-doubles. In a recent magazine article you said that one thing you enjoy about coming to Baton Rouge. To quote you, "Allowing me to come out here to figure out who I am and I can be myself." Are you referring to figuring out who you are on the court, off the off, or a little bit of both?

ANGEL REESE: Honestly, being able to embrace who I am. Coach Mulkey and even all the coaching staff, they love who I am and they don't let me just not be who I am and just shy away from that. They knew what they were getting when I came here, and I just appreciate that. They keep it real here. I really love that. On and off the court I have been able to embrace myself. I think that's kind of how I've been able to get known or go viral for things because I have been able to be authentic.

THE MODERATOR: LSU wasn't on the list. You got a



phone call from a current teammate. "Hey, do you want to think about Baton Rouge?" The next thing you know, you landed here.

ANGEL REESE: Yeah. We go way back. We had known each other since I was 13, 14 years old and she told me to consider it. I had other visits already scheduled. And then when I came down here on a visit, it was everything I imagined. I loved everything about LSU: The program, the community, the fan base. And everything that Coach Mulkey could do with them in one year. Being able to see that I could come here and develop into the player that I want to be.

THE MODERATOR: We will open up the questions.

Q. I would like both players to answer this. Flau'jae and the impact she has had as a freshman. What kind of a teammate has she been? How have you seen her progress? Really to be competitive offensively and defensively at such a young age. What are your impressions of her?

ALEXIS MORRIS: She is a sponge. She just wants to learn. And she cares about her teammates. A lot of people just thinks because she does both that she can't give both of her careers 100%, but she's dedicated. She gets up before everybody. She puts in the most extra work on the team. I'm actually -- I was surprised. Her impact, you see it on the court. She was a Freshman of the Year for a reason.

ANGEL REESE: As a freshman, you don't see freshmen coming in as confident as Flau'jae. Coming in to be as confident on the team. We have a couple vets and a lot of new players. She's our third leading scorer. To come in as a freshman and to have her rap career that she's doing, it's hard work. She puts in a lot of work. She wakes up before everybody, she's in the gym before everybody, at night she's in the studio. You got to give kudos to Flau'jae for everything that she does. Her impact on the team has been amazing.

Q. Alexis, just because you go back with Coach Mulkey quite a ways, could you touch on some of the



attributes that you think have allowed her to come into a program that was really struggling before she got here. And post more than 50 wins and two straight host sites just right away. And then -- what are some of the things she does to try to get you guys to keep that in a proper perspective going forward and not resting on the immediate success? Some of the things that she does to try to get you guys, the team, to keep the reason for the success in perspective in terms of the challenges that you still face.

ALEXIS MORRIS: I'll start with your first question; her attributes. Coach Mulkey is a dedicated individual. And her will to win is what makes her stand out as a coach. That's why she can perform and produce and piece us together as a team in this era. Because Coach Mulkey's -- she's the OG in this league, in this game. And her will to win and her way to evolve and adjust to the new generation has been incredible. I started off with Coach Mulkey at 12 years old. And at 17 I was playing with a whole different generation. Coach Mulkey has put most of us in a great position to succeed on their side of things. And like I said, you see what Coach Mulkey do. Her work speaks for itself.

Q. Also for Alexis. The end of last season you're thinking about -- you're coming back for this year but you knew all the players you were losing. Were you wondering how good you could be? How you could get back to this kind of point? What were your thoughts -- or were you thinking Coach Mulkey and the staff are going to figure it out. Because you didn't know Alexis or recur were going to come in and contribute the way they have.

ALEXIS MORRIS: I never doubt Coach Mulkey. She's always going to go for the best players, managers, coaches. Like you said, I didn't doubt her. I never wondered either. I never was concerned about it, because I knew she was going to bring in pieces that fit well with me and fit well with her system.

Q. Angel, you mentioned a lot that you wanted to be pushed by Kim. And obviously she has a history with bigs and kind of being able to do that. In what ways did she push you? And in what ways did you want to push yourself? And how do you think you have grown the most from last year to now?

ANGEL REESE: Mature-wise, she has humbled me a lot. A lot of players probably can't be coached by Coach Mulkey. I just appreciate how much she pushes me. No matter if she thinks I might be one of the best on the court. I never want to feel that. I like how she keeps me on and keeps me going. She never makes me be higher than anybody else on the team. I think she keeps everybody

level-headed. Of anybody she gets on me the most. I remember a humbling story. I have "4 rebounds" written on my locker because that's from the South Carolina game. That's something I need. And that's just a humbling moment to keep me going. I just love Coach Mulkey. And I think this is something I needed, especially for my game.

Q. Alexis, what does it mean to you to be in this position given your route from multiple schools to be All SEC and playing for one of the top teams?

ALEXIS MORRIS: I can barely hear you.

Q. What does it mean to you to be in this position, having gone through multiple schools and to be All SEC and being starting point guard on one of the top teams?

ALEXIS MORRIS: It's everything I asked for. I remember when I was at Rutgers and I left Rutgers. And I went to spend some time with a friend in Reno, Nevada. And I remember I was at a park. Every morning I would get up early to go work on my game, because I didn't know if I was going to continue playing basketball. I remember asking God: "If you gave me another opportunity to be in a similar position that I was in my freshman year, that I would never self-sabotage." And you're just seeing a product of pain, a product of relentlessness, a product of tenacity. Yeah. I just never gave up on myself. And I advise anybody who is going through anything -- it doesn't have to be basketball-wise. It just could be life, school, just keep persevering.

Q. Question for Alexis. Coach Mulkey says she's known you since the 7th grade. What have you noticed over the years? Is there anything she does different here that she did at Baylor? Have you noticed her progression? Any differences in her over the years?

ALEXIS MORRIS: Coach Mulkey is way more lenient than she was when I was a freshman. I think that's due to her being able to evolve with this new generation. They are just different. Not in a bad way. Just different. People change, things change. They like to say about us, they like to call us all, Coach Mulkey, the older generation. They say things about us. She just evolves and she knows how to get the best out of each individual. One thing I haven't seen change about her is her will to win, how she pushes us and gets the best out of us. Like Angel said earlier, she keeps us all humble. Never let us get the big head. Yeah, she was definitely way more feisty when I was a freshman. And another thing that never changed about her, she's never going to lower her expectations for nobody. She doesn't really care how good you are. She has an expectation that she requires us to meet, and I think that's why we were

able to elevate and do things that we sometimes don't even think that we can do.

Q. Alexis, a year ago it was a different story for you. You were kind of watching from the sidelines and not yourself. Would you talk a little bit about how it felt then and how it feels now to play in the NCAA Tournament at full speed?

ALEXIS MORRIS: I actually thought about this this morning. I was like -- it hit me this morning that I was injured last year, because I guess -- I'm excited. The last time I played in the NCAA Tournament was at A&M. I really didn't get much playing time to perform. The last time I played was my freshman year. I think that's kind of crazy. It's kind of like déjà vu in a view. I'm just happy to be here. I just want to survive and advance and get to the Final Four.

Q. LaDazhia, Jas -- just the supporting cast. They are all your teammates. But to be able to have success at this point, they have to have success to help you get there. How important are they -- maybe, Angel, you can speak to LaDazhia's ability to help down low. And, Alexis, if you could talk about Kateri and the other girls that have to help you get there.

ANGEL REESE: LaDazhia, I don't think I would be able to do what I do without LaDazhia. She is an old head. That's what we call her. She has a lot of experience. Just seeing her game and just -- sometimes I watch her, her footwork, her hands. Everything that she does around the basket. She may not score 20 points, 20 rebounds. She's going to get her quiet 10. She's going to get her 8 rebounds. But without her, we can't do anything without her. And I think everybody on the team has a role. Nobody really goes outside of their role, they know everything that Coach expects us to do. And I think we emphasize that a lot in practice. Like you said, it's going to be important for everyone to play their role. We need all the supporting cast. We need our coaches. We need managers. We need everybody from top to bottom, so we can't do this alone.

ALEXIS MORRIS: I think Angel has covered there. But as far as a guard standpoint on things -- I like to say guards set the tone in tournament. Usually come down to a guard game. Not to discredit our post players, but you have seen it over the years. The ball will most of the time be in the guard's hands. I trust in my teammates. I trust in Jas, Flau'jae, Kateri, Poa. We're going to need all of our pieces, period. Nobody can come half-steppin, because you are only as strong as your weakest link. Yeah.

Q. Angel, who wrote "4" in your locker? Did you?

ANGEL REESE: Practice when she kept emphasizing on

it. I remember right after we lost. Right before we played Ole Miss, I think, the next game. And I wrote that down on there just to remind myself.

Q. One in Hawaii, when you look at what they had to do to get here, both in their tournament and specifically in the second half of their last game, is there something instructive that you need to keep in mind about them from watching that?

ANGEL REESE: Good team. I think that you just can't sleep on them. You can't sleep on anybody going into the Tournament. They took an 8-hour flight to get here. I know that they might be jet lagged or anything. I'm not taking that for granted. They can shoot the 3. They can shoot the 3 really well in their tournament. I saw that. They are not going to give up. We could be up 20. You saw in the Tennessee game we were up 17 at one point and we laid down. Just making sure we put our foot on the pedal from the first quarter to the fourth quarter and take care of business.