

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

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Pete Maravich Assembly Center

LSU Tigers

Coach Kim Mulkey

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: Coach, welcome. Congratulations on a 3-seed and being a host. To that, we will open it up to the floor.

Q. Coach, importance of the supporting cast. You know, you have a total team, but LaDazhia's importance to your success and her ability to help Angel down low. Just, could you speak to that, while not maybe getting the attention she maybe gets?

COACH MULKEY: LaDazhia tables something that I think all the good teams that will advance in the tournament have: Experience. She's an older player. Doesn't require a lot of attention. She's not high maintenance. She doesn't have one of those big personalities like some of the others do, but she gets the job done. She's very smart. Does things on the floor that the average person doesn't realize she just did to help us win ball games. And I wish I had more LaDazhias because there's no substitute for experience and being an older player.

Q. How do you think the team has responded to the last month or so of adversity, as much as you can, as a 28-2 team? Some losses, maybe some disrespect from other people.

COACH MULKEY: I'm going to try to answer it, but I don't think we've gotten any disrespect. But then again I don't read social media. I don't pay much attention to people's opinions. We're 28-2. We have been in the top ten all year. We finished second behind the National Champions. Maybe the only adversity would be losing the 17-point lead to Tennessee. No coach likes that. No competitor likes that. But after a few days of cooling off, you keep perspective. Tennessee was supposed to finish second in this league and did not. So I look at it like, we overachieved. We weren't picked to finish second.



Q. I know coaches don't like to compare teams. But how much better prepared is your team program and outside of the talent that you have for this year's NCAA Tournament as last year?

COACH MULKEY: We're much more prepared than last year because you have nine new pieces. See, that's what people keep forgetting. Alexis Morris was with us last year. Angel may have a little taste of it when she was at Maryland. Day, maybe, can't really tell you if she has or has not. Of course, Flau'jae has not. Jasmine. You know, there's not many of them that have had the experience that you really need to say I know what to expect. They have had the experience of playing on our court in front of our fans, but I think it's going to be an awakening for several of them that have to play key roles for us.

Q. You talk about Flau'jae a lot and her impact on the game as a freshman. You mentioned as a freshman a lot. One of the things the girls talked about was her ability to do both at a high level. I guess, where does that maturity come from and that drive come from that you see.

COACH MULKEY: I don't know how she does what she does. I don't think any of you really understand what that kid does every day. I don't understand it. I guess she requires very little sleep. She's up at the crack of dawn working her other craft. Then she has to go to school. Then she has to go to study hall. Then she has to come to practice. She makes it work. If you have a good work ethic and something is important to you, you figure it out. And she's been able to figure it out. And I have not seen that it affects her in any way on the court. Sometimes I see her -- I don't want to say tired, but sometimes I see her maybe preoccupied. But that's not any more that you see with a normal freshman this time of year. In high school, their state championships are over by now. So they are done. So you add another month of conditioning and weightlifting and all this stuff to their life, that's the adjustment sometimes that you see with freshmen.

Q. Coach Mulkey, I just talked to Angel in the locker room, and she seems to have this even deeper hunger to make a push in the postseason. What have you seen



from her so far?

COACH MULKEY: I have seen that. And I attribute that --I may be wrong, I haven't asked her. But I attribute that to the Tennessee game, the last game. I think that when you are considered an All-American, one of the best players in the country, sometimes you take it a little bit harder and go "what did I not do good? I could have done this better." After showing them the film and her being a part of that last play against Tennessee and she didn't do what she was supposed to do. I think it gnaws at her. And she's had very good practices. Not that she doesn't, but I have been able to say to the staff that she's on another level again right now.

Q. Kim, you have had a chance to look at Hawaii. And what are some of your impressions of them? Are they one of those classic teams on a hot streak when they hit the tournament?

COACH MULKEY: Jim, Hawaii -- I said this the other day. It's really strange in life about timing. Never have I watched as many conference tournaments in my coaching until this year. And I was watching them, channel surfing, and going, why am I doing this? Well the reason, I don't have kids. I'm not at their ball games. I don't have grandkids with me. And so that's why I watch. And ironically when I was channel surfing Saturday, there's Cal Santa Barbara and Hawaii playing and I stopped and watched it because of Bonnie Henrickson. She and I go back to the Big 12 together. And that is strange that we now get to play Hawaii. So I got to watch their comeback against Cal Santa Barbara and got to watch it right there live. So to describe them to you, they are more experienced than they were last year. They got in the tournament last year, went to my old place. Baylor beat them pretty handedly. They were young then. But they got in the tournament last year. And I think they won the league and the tournament last year. So they bring back those players that have that experience that you're talking about, and they bring in a transfer at the point who dribbles the heck out of a basketball until she finds somebody open and gives them an open shot. That's maturity. They shoot the 3-ball. They are going to shoot it a lot. In order to get the 3-ball look, they dribble penetrate. So we've played teams like that. We understand. Their transition is not super fast, but it's a controlled transition that you better get back, and you better fan out and find shooters. Their coach, been there 11 years. So she has her system in place. I even watched it so close that the last play to win it, they slipped a screen, and I remember the young lady who slipped the screen and got an and 1 in her interview after the game. And the reporter asked her a question, "were you surprised". And she said "no, I'm a winner. I'm a winner" is what she told that reporter. So if you've got players on your team that have that mentality, they are

bringing it. We better be ready.

Q. Alexis's story is one of the great ones. To be where she's at right now in her career and to be available to play this season, how important is that for your team?

COACH MULKEY: What a story. For those of you who haven't seen it. LSU goal did a remarkable detailed story with her, her mother, her grandmother. It's long but it's well worth watching and listening to. Last year she played the off guard because we had Khayla Pointer. This year she has the ball in her hands. Alexis Morris is one of the quickest in the game, just lightning quick. Can shoot the 3-ball as good as any perimeter player. She's not going to be what you call big in stature, 5'8", 5'10" on the perimeter. She might be 5'6", 5'7". Plays like you want a perimeter player to play. She comes off screens. You want her shooting the shot to win the game. You want her to shoot the free throw to win the game. And she's that senior that we need more of, because they have a sense of urgency and they just don't ever want their college career to end.

Q. Coach, there's a lot of special athletes on this campus. And getting a chance to talk to them how they support one another. Haleigh Bryant yesterday who just had this amazing gymnastics meet said she fangirls over you and Angel Reese. And Reese says the same thing. She fangirls over Haleigh. Just what's it like to be on the campus and see things like that and to know that you make an impact like that?

COACH MULKEY: Sometimes I think you have a secret recorder in my head and in my car, because you ask questions. The gentlemen that works with you. Remember he asked the question that day about field goal percentage defense. And I'm thinking. That impresses me that you are all as into it as you are, because you don't just show up and ask a question. We had an early morning practice yesterday because we're on Spring Break. And I was reminiscing a little bit. I don't do that much. But I was. Waiting for my grandkids to get here. And I was thinking, I have been doing this a long time. And I don't know that I am responsible for other programs demanding greatness from themselves or whatever, but I have been blessed to have people think that. And I got to thinking, look at our softball team. Look what volleyball did this year in her first year. Look what Brian Kelly did in his first year. I hope that someone could say, "I'm trying to keep up with her." "When I see that woman and I see her practices, I want to do what she does." Because I think that's a sign of hard work, respect. And when you can have an entire athletic department win, man, it's fun. I got the opportunity to do that in 2012 at Baylor University. Go look at every program in Baylor in 2012. They called it the year of the bear. And I want to see that for everybody. I was at softball. I was at

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

baseball. I went to gymnastics. I did that all in one day after we practiced. I'm going to sneak in and sneak out, but I enjoy that. We represent each other. We represent this institution. And certainly when football and men's basketball win, we reap the money. They are our cash cow. But nonetheless I just was reminiscing about, man, this could get special here in the next three to four to five years. I really believe that. Haleigh Bryant, I go to that first meet last year because she texted me. I get to watch her have a perfect 10. I texted her after she had three in one meet. And I said I've seen some 10's in my life. Bo Derek was a 10. She didn't know who Bo Derek was. But I said I never seen three 10's. She said, thank you Coach Mulkey. You just do that periodically. Baseball. I'm going to test you here. Who had the retina surgery? He asked me to go to The Purple and Gold Game and be the coach. I love doing that. And I'm talking trash to who tore his knee up last year. Hopping around and jumping in a huddle. So he goes and he's coaching the other team, and I'm hollering at him, "Hey, don't do too much of that jumping around. Your knees don't last." They loved it. But see, I keep up with them. How does she know that? I know it because I keep up with sports. And when he hit the ball the other day, I congratulated him. I can't do it for everybody. But you want everybody to do good. You're selfish and territorial about certain things within your program, let's make that clear. But if you can help somebody else with their program, I'm all for it.

Q. Coach, Angel said that from start to finish, you guys have to put your foot on the pedal. Is that what your mindset is also going into this game? What are you going to tell your players to start early in this game?

COACH MULKEY: We have to win first. Hawaii is talented. Hawaii presents problems for us on the defensive end of the floor because they shoot so many 3's. We have bigs out there that are going to have to guard 3-point shooters. They have to guard us too. So what she's referring to is we have had significant leads this year and we don't separate ourselves and continue to have that big lead. We allow our mistakes that we make other teams to cut into the lead. Sometimes they cut into the lead because they are just better than we are. But if you break down a film and you show them, we only lost by two to Tennessee. Look what you didn't do. Like what you didn't do. Like what you didn't do. Now, South Carolina was a different beast. You got it handed to you there. Everybody's going to get themselves handed by South Carolina. I've said it from day one, if they don't win it all and be undefeated, I will be shocked. They are that good and they have that much depth. But you got competitors. And competitors want to play against the best. That's not a knock that somebody can't beat them. I just would be shocked if they did. That's a compliment to

Dawn in South Carolina. So she's talking about separation. We have to learn to keep separating ourselves and understand that you have to play as hard in the third and fourth quarter as you did in the first and second quarter.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you very much.

