

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Michigan vs LSU

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Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA

Pete Maravich Assembly Center

Michigan Wolverines

Emily Kiser

Laila Phelia

Maddie Nolan

Media Conference



put a change in your confidence?

MADDIE NOLAN: I think it is just knowing, I have been here before. Our team has been here before. And every day in practice, whether it's the coaches, whether it's my teammates. They are coming up to me, hyping me up. We always joke about "I'm a driver". So that's just, kind of, been a thing recently. But just knowing, you know, this is potentially like the last time. So just going out there with all the confidence that I can have, that my team can have, and continuing that.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open up to questions to the media.

Q. This is for all three players. Kim Mulkey was very impressed with the way y'all play together because of your experience. And I was wondering if that unspoken communication ya'll have is really apparent to y'all and do you really feel it out there?

LAILA PHELIA: Personally, I feel like our chemistry off the court also like helps with that. And just being able to coming into Michigan and understanding how close these girls are off the court, I feel that applies to on the court. I feel like our chemistry off the court really helps..

EMILY KISER: Yeah, I think we've seen it this year. We've had a couple of injuries throughout the year that we've, kind of, had to overcome, but it's been interesting when someone goes out how that changes that dynamic. And how much we can really -- We do play off each other's strengths quite a bit. And just knowing how to do that. That I think we have really mastered throughout the year, and I think we've got a good feel for it now, for sure.

MADDIE NOLAN: Yeah. We always talk about, kind of, on defense how fun it is to play with each other, just because we know when someone moves this way we're doing whatever they need, helping each other out. And that's pretty much unspoken for the most part. And it's fun and cool to know that whatever you do someone is going to have your back.

Q. Looking at your schedule, I think 7 of your 9 losses

THE MODERATOR: I wanted to ask, Emily and Laila, you first. Maddie, I'll have question for you in just a second. Last night after your ball game, after you all left, your coach came in. And one of the things she talked about was in last year's postseason, she said it looked like you could see some of the pressure start to build in. And you were feeling the pressure was maybe building up, and you all were feeling the pressure. I wanted to ask you how that approach has changed this year to being a little more relaxed and having game one under your belt.

EMILY KISER: Yeah. I think it's taken that experience. I think we were in situations last year that we've never really been in. We had so many expectations. Not that we don't this year as well, but our group really wanted to win that Big 10 Championship last year. And we kind of fell short of that. We put a lot of pressure to really make that tournament run. And forgot in hindsight it's really about having fun. Just playing your game having confidence. We have taken that experience from last year, we've been in this position. We know what we got to do.

LAILA PHELIA: Touching on Emily's point. I feel like we faced some pressure in the beginning of the season. Moving forward we were able to work on it and realize we don't need to get ourselves sped up like that.

THE MODERATOR: Maddie, you specifically, last night your coach talked about over the last three or so weeks, the development of your confidence has been outstanding. 4/6 from behind the, line if I have that correct, yesterday afternoon. You have hit 17 3-pointers in your last five games. That's your streak in terms of five-game stretch this season. So what is it about the last three weeks that has



come to ranked teams. I just want to get your take on your schedule, how tough it is, and how it gets you ready for this point?

MADDIE NOLAN: Yeah. We've talked about it all year. We think the Big 10 is probably the toughest women's basketball conference this year. We had multiple teams in the Top 15 throughout the year. Having to play against the competition. Having to go against some of the best players in the country night in and night out have prepared us really well for March.

LAILA PHELIA: Touching on what Maddie said, just being able to defend some of those, like, the best players in the Big 10 I feel like that definitely has definitely prepared us going into the NCAA Tournament.

EMILY KISER: Yeah. I think to play that level of competition all year long, in the moment you feel like you are beating up on each other all year long. To have that little break, between the Big 10 Tournament conference play, like, to have that rest, I feel like all those experiences, situations we have been in has really prepared us.

Q. Emily and Laila, I think you guys have 7 players at 6'2" or taller. Really impose your will against UNLV yesterday. Do you think that's a huge advantage going against LSU that's more speed and agility base and how do you see that being a factor tomorrow?

EMILY KISER: Yeah. We always talk about using our length. Coaches is always yelling at us to get our arms up. Just makes such a huge difference. Their speed and athleticism is definitely going to be a challenge for us tomorrow. It's something we kind of faced a little bit more maybe in the nonconference play at the beginning of the year. Yeah, using our length is going to be huge to combat that advantage they have there.

LAILA PHELIA: Yes. Especially even on the defensive end going up against their guards, I feel like we are really going to have to use our length and being able to box out and rebound, do the fundamental, small things in order to come out with a win.

Q. Emily, y'all have had plenty of experience playing really dominant players in your conference, Mackenzie Holmes and Caitlin Clark . I would think Angel Reese probably falls into that category. It's great to have the balanced scoring. But when the other team has a player who can just go off, and put them on their back. What challenge does that present? And how have y'all been able to learn from that?

EMILY KISER: Yeah. I think I definitely take defense to

heart. And I'm definitely going to play my best one-on-one defense. I think it's really a team effort. Obviously, we don't want to talk too much about anything. But it really is a team effort, though and crowding people, and something that we've kind of challenged with. The post play in the Big 10 has been huge and prepared us for this moment. We actually played Angel Reese a couple times in my career. Obviously, with her at Maryland. Taking those experiences and moving forward with those.

Q. What you have seen of her, does she seem a significantly different player now than when she was at Maryland?

EMILY KISER: I wouldn't say -- I think her game has improved a lot. She -- I'm trying to figure out how to phrase this. There's different similarities I've noticed in film. Obviously, I haven't watched a ton of them. It's been a scramble to watch a ton of film the last couple of days. But, no, she's still a really skilled player. Physical. Her length is insane when you watch her. And taking it like, coast to coast, with the dribble, I mean, that's something a little bit new. Definitely a difficult player and something we're trying to lock in.

Q. For Laila, when you watch Alexis Morris on film how would you describe her as a player, and do you expect that to be your matchup.

LAILA PHELIA: I do feel like I will probably be matched up with her. I feel like she's a very confident player, and she's very quick. So I feel like just -- of course, like Emily said, we haven't been able to watch a ton yet. But getting a feel of the game and watching her game yesterday, understanding she's very confident. She can do pretty much anything. She can drive, shoot the pull up, and shoot the 3. ,and she's a pest on defense. Just being able to just stay locked in and continuing to watch more film to be prepared.

Q. First one is subplot to this you probably heard is the coaching matchup, Kim versus Kim. And it's the third time in five tournaments. I was wondering if over the years you have been able to get any impressions of how your coach thinks about Kim Mulkey and what your impressions are Kim Mulkey are as well. If any of have any thoughts about those two coaches matching up for the third time. Second question would be: I guess, some of you saw the second game here yesterday and the environment. In what ways is that environment an element to overcome, or in what ways, if any, is that an environment that you really look forward to?

LAILA PHELIA: I feel like they are both great coaches, and



... when all is said, we're done.®

I feel like they both respect each other's game and coaching style and stuff like that. So that's my personal opinion -- or our opinion. And I also think that just being able to play in that environment will be a great opportunity. And I feel like our team understands that we do have to be able to stay locked in and stay together and block out the crowd. We were able to have that opportunity to play like in Iowa. They have a big crowd like that. I feel like we're definitely prepared for that.

EMILY KISER: What she touched on there at the end, the Big 10 Conference is here, outside of the actual competition, we're facing crowds every single day. Which is great for women's basketball. It's super fun to play in. It's definitely challenging often. IU was a huge one this year. Iowa, Nebraska, all those places that I think of have, kind of, prepared us for this. I think we've definitely gotten so much better as a team, especially even from last year's team. Just blocking out the noise, staying together, tight huddles throughout the game that I think really help.

MADDIE NOLAN: Going off your first question, just a lot of respect. Two coaches who have been in the game for a while, have had a lot of success, postseason as well. Like Emily and Laila have said, we've seen crowds of that size similarly here in the Big 10 Conference. So I think having that experience going into tomorrow will be huge for us.

Q. This is for all three of you. Keeping other teams off the O boards has really been a focus all season for this team and improving on rebounding. You three are some of the better rebounders on this team. I think LSU had 17 O boards yesterday. How are you going to hope to lock in and keep them off the O boards tomorrow?

MADDIE NOLAN: Like we talked about a little bit earlier, team defense, team rebounding. All five people need to get in there and crash. I think they are top 5 in the country in O boards. That's going to be a big focus of ours tomorrow. And it's a lot of effort. Like Laila talked about too, fundamental: Just blocking out, pushing them back, and everybody else coming in to help.

EMILY KISER: Just trying to put a body on them as much as they can. I'm obviously not outjumping Angel Reese. We can laugh at that, I guess. Even pushing her back, she still might get a couple. Really trying not to foul off those and just stay relentless for 40 minutes.

LAILA PHELIA: Yeah, just touching on that, too. Understanding that the post players do have a big job to do tomorrow, and that's getting their post players and Reese out of the paint, so I feel like it's big on the guards to really get in there and help them out.

Q. Kim said a few minutes ago that y'all like to play in transition, like to run, and you can be dangerous in that aspect of the game. How important is that going to be tomorrow night for y'all?

EMILY KISER: Really, any team if you don't want them to set up their defense, it's going to be so much easier. They are long, they are big, they are athletic. So I think if we can get that edge on them and really run in transition is going to be huge. Put a little pressure on them. Any fouls we can get on them, I think is huge. I don't know if you want to talk more, you are the one pushing it.

LAILA PHELIA: Yeah. I definitely feel like transition is going to play a pretty big role in tomorrow, especially, like personally, not wanting to get blocked by Angel Reese down there. Maybe if I try to hurry up and get it down there, it might help us out a little bit.

Q. For Laila and Maddie. Obviously, you two guys had the type of performance that you had yesterday. But also throw in Leigha and what she was able to bring to the -- what seems to be a stable of guards that you guys have. What is it about, I guess the three-headed monster in a way, that makes you so hard to defend. Seems like all three of your games are just a little bit different.

MADDIE NOLAN: I think looking at, like you said, a three-headed monster does make it hard for teams to have to guard all three people. And you touched on how all our games are a little bit different. Laila is really good at attacking, hitting that pull up. Leigha can pass like nobody else I have ever seen before, so it's really cool to be able to play with her, especially as a 3-point shooter. Sometimes she is looking the complete opposite direction and hit you out of nowhere. Trying to contain all three is a difficult task.

LAILA PHELIA: I feel like we know each other's game pretty well. To being able to play with two other players that we know each other like that, I feel like that's definitely going to be a problem for them to have to guard.

EMILY KISER: I feel like those three have a silent communication that's -- I try and watch it in practice. I don't know what they are doing sometimes, but they make it work. And it's hard to play against.

THE MODERATOR: Ladies, thank you for your time.