

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

Sunday, March 19, 2023

Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA

Pete Maravich Assembly Center

Michigan Wolverines

Coach Kim Barnes Arico

Emily Kiser

Leigha Brown

Media Conference

LSU - 66, Michigan - 42

THE MODERATOR: We will ask Coach for an opening comment on the game. And then we will direct the first set of questions to the players only. Emily and Leigha first, and then we will dismiss them, and then we will open up the floor for questions for Coach. Coach the floor is yours.

COACH ARICO: LSU is a really good basketball team, and they had a great atmosphere here tonight. They play exceptionally well at home. And, you know, we had a chance to go against Angel Reese. We played against her last year when she was at Maryland, and she just had a heck of a game and has really improved. Is a heck of a ball player. And they were physical and really limited our scoring and didn't allow us to get into rhythm. I thought they did a great job. But proud of our team. You know, at the beginning of the year, we weren't picked to be in this position with a loss of our All-American. And these two guys to the left kind of led our team to a tremendous season, and you know, it was great to be in this position tonight.

THE MODERATOR: We will open up the floor for questions either for Emily or Leigha..

Q. Emily, would you talk about LSU's defensive pressure? It looked like it really kept y'all from getting into any rhythm.

EMILY KISER: Yeah. Denying the wings definitely knocked us out of some of our sets that we were trying to run. Definitely stopped that rhythm you were talking about. I think that pressure, 40 minutes it gets to you at times.



Never really gave us an open look. Yeah, for sure.

Q. Emily and Leigha, you both came back for your fifth-years. I was wondering if you want to share any reflections on your time at Michigan with the program.

LEIGHA BROWN: I mean, these are three years that you know, I'll never forget, so far the greatest three years of my life, whether that's the relationship I've built with these girls on the team, whether that's people who have already graduated or people who are still here. Wouldn't trade it for the world. We literally put in blood, sweat, and tears together. And unfortunately, tonight didn't go how we wanted it to. Just reflecting on the past three years and even this season, I wouldn't change a thing. And yeah, I wouldn't trade it for the world. Super happy to have all these girls by my side.

EMILY KISER: You think about five years at the age of 23 it's kind of a lot of your life. Super thankful for Coach and the University of Michigan that I've just gotten to live out, you know, this dream. Sorry. I think the thought that I even doubted coming back for a fifth year is crazy now. I'm sorry. I don't usually get like this, I think this is why they are a little surprised right now. I've had the time of my life this last year. So thankful. Without COVID -- and I mean, unfortunately, you never want something like that to happen. But, it gave me this fifth year for the university. And my journey I didn't get to play a lot at the beginning of my career. So to have this final year was huge.

Q. Leigha, for you, you and Coach Mulkey shared a moment. What could you possibly share about what she might have said to you?

LEIGHA BROWN: I just think Coach Mulkey, there's a lot of respect there. Obviously, she's a legend. She was just telling me great job, kind of congratulated me on the season that I've had and kind of what I've done for the program. And that's something even after a loss like that something like that coming from a coach of her stature, I think that means a lot. I think I'll hold that close to my heart for a long time.

Q. For Leigha, from your perspective as, you know,



running the point, what did you see defensively from them in terms of maybe closing off passing lanes, and quickly closing, or just what they threw at you?

LEIGHA BROWN: Yeah. I mean as many people talk about how long and how physical we are, I think we saw a lot of that tonight. You know, they were really letting us play. LSU did a great job of, kind of, taking advantage of that. Really taking a lot of things away that we wanted to do, whether that's pushing us off of passing lanes, riding us off of screens. Really making everything difficult that we wanted to do. Like Emily said earlier, when you are facing that for 40 minutes it kind of wears you down and it takes you out of rhythm in what you want to do. They did a great job of that tonight.

Q. Leigha, what was the message that Kim spoke to you about after the game with the embrace, if you don't mind sharing?

LEIGHA BROWN: Yeah. I think I answered that. Congratulated me. Said that I was, you know, a great player. Congratulated me on what I've done for this player. Like I said, it meant a lot to me.

Q. For both of you. Obviously, this is both of your last years with the program. But as leaders, I'm sure you've seen the growth of the young players. What can you say really about the future of the program and how people like Laila Phelia are going to lead it in the future?

EMILY KISER: Yeah, I think it's huge. You know, you can think about your time here, but I think even bigger it's, kind of, what you leave behind. So I think they are going to do a great job. Laila Phelia was actually a huge reason I even came back. She had called me and told me that she was going to work for me all summer so when I came back this year was going to be one to remember. Without her tonight, it probably would be even worse. I think to have her at the head of that next year, I think they are going to be in good hands for sure.

LEIGHA BROWN: Echoing off of that. I've taken Laila under my wing since she got here. Especially last year when I was out for a good chunk and she had to fill in being a freshman. And I think just the relationship that her and I have built. She's a hell of a basketball player, but I think she's an even better person. She's the first one in the locker room coming up to us and making sure we were okay. Telling us good job. I think as unfortunate and sad as tonight was I think seeing her really shine on the stage that we were playing on today in front of this crowd in the NCAA Tournament. She did a great job tonight and she really did keep us in it for the most part. I think just really

excited to see what she's going to be able bring next year, and I think it will be a great thing.

Q. Emily, what was the battle like inside with their front court, especially Angel Reese?

EMILY KISER: Yeah. It was super physical. We struggled a lot, or I struggled a lot just blocking out. I mean, she could jump out of a gym, she's long. So I didn't do a great job of that in the first half. Super physical player. She finds a way to get her shot off. So yeah. Probably definitely going to feel that tomorrow morning. Wish I did a better job. But yeah, she's a great player.

THE MODERATOR: Emily and Leigha, thank you very much for your time. Congrats on your season and your outstanding careers, and best of luck in future endeavors. We appreciate it. Pleasure meeting you all. We will address questions for Coach Arico.

Q. I wanted to ask you about your first-shot defense tonight. They didn't shoot a high percentage but they really killed you on the boards and the offensive boards.

COACH ARICO: Yeah. We had three keys to the game and one was our defense and holding them under 40%. And looking at these stats we were able to do that. We did a really good job until the fourth quarter. It was the offensive rebounding that really killed us. And you know Emily is a little undersize and probably not nearly as strong as Angel, but she tried to get physical and then when she got physical, she got called for an intentional foul which was something that she's never gotten before in her career. I'm interested to go back and look at that. She told me she thought she had all ball. So I'm interested to see. But yeah, it was definitely their offensive rebounding and their second-chance opportunities that really hurt us.

Q. On the other side of that, was in the first half I think you scored 15 points. They were really, seemed like they were taking away entry passes and guarding the perimeter tightly. What were they doing so effective that made it that you could only score 15 in the first?

COACH ARICO: Yeah. They were overplaying. I mean, overplaying, overplaying. And then when we got the ball inside they really doubled down. And were just taking away passing lanes for any open shots. Maddie didn't even get a real clear look most of the game. I thought their defensive pressure and intensity was great to start the game. I thought we got some early inside touches where we were able to score, but then they made an adjustment and took those away. We got some back cuts too where we were able to score, but it wasn't on a consistent basis. I thought

their defensive pressure was great.

Q. Coach, you made a little run at the start of the second half. Did you change anything there? And did you feel like once you got it under 10 that maybe you could put some things together?

COACH ARICO: Yeah. I thought we were feeling pretty good. I thought our kids gained a little bit of confidence, because we had a hard time scoring in the first half. We were able to execute on two different sets coming out of the break and scored 5 quick points where they had to call a timeout. And once we had that 10 we felt pretty good, but then there was an exchange of probably 4 or 5 possessions where neither team was able to score. So then we went on a little bit of a scoring drought again. Yeah, when we had it at 10, I think we were feeling pretty good. And then things didn't really go our way.

Q. After that run, just how big was that sequence where Reese gets the lay-up and then off the free-throw they get the offensive rebound and then making three that 5-point trip down the court.

COACH ARICO: Yeah, because it was a 5-point swing by us and a 5-point swing from them. Yeah. We got the momentum and then the momentum went right back to them, off of an offensive rebound again.

Q. I was wondering if you had anything you wanted to share about this year's senior class. The two fifth years that you had who came back and then the other players that make up the class.

COACH ARICO: Yeah, I think you heard from Emily in her emotional answer. But you know I said it at our circle the other day when it was my turn to speak at one of the circles. But Leigha Brown who transferred here, you know, was recruited by everyone in the country and said, no, I want to come to Michigan. When she did that, she had to jump through a million hoops and do a bunch of different things and she said, you know what, I don't care. She took something crazy like 18 credits and had to pay for a couple on her own to make sure that she had an enough credits to transfer because that's how badly she wanted to come to Michigan. And, you know, her three years with our program has been tremendous. Emily Kiser, I talk about her story all the time. A kid that played 93 total minutes, backed up an All-American, but worked every single day. Like she said, she hesitated, you know, after her fourth year, and now she's looking back, and saying why did I even have any hesitation by coming back my fifth year, and All-Big 10 selection. Just a tremendous leader. Tremendous representative of our university and our program. So, you know, just fortunate that I get to coach just such great

people. And, you know, you want to talk about Maddie and Michelle, kind of the same thing. You know, and Maddie's story, you guys know it better than anybody. You know, our doc the first week there said she might not ever play basketball again. Here we are, she has gone to a Sweet Sixteen, Elite Eight, NCAA Tournament every year possible. I think they have been a special group. And I'm fortunate to coach some really great kids at this great university.

Q. With the length and skill you have in the program already and have coming in, you know, that you are recruiting, do you feel you are close to matching an LSU athletically, sort of, in the near future?

COACH ARICO: Yeah. I mean, I think their athleticism is tremendous. Obviously, Angel Reese is, you know, one of the best rebounders. And we had one of the best rebounders in Naz Hillmon for four years. And Angel Reese might even be better -- I hope Naz isn't listening -- than Naz was. She's just really special, I think. Angel Reese's don't come around the block every day. Neither do Naz Hillmon. She's just a real difference-maker. But I'm excited about the players we have returning. You know, and I'm excited about the players that we have coming in. And I'm also excited about -- I think, you know, I spoke about this in the last couple of days, you know, in the age of the transfer portal, you know, we are a program that we feel like you develop through your four years and where, you know, coming to Michigan is not for everyone. We're super selective. And I just think that's the players in our program progress through their time here and improve and buy into that philosophy. So I know there's a bunch of kids, like Emily said, Laila called her and said come back and I promise you I'm going to be in the gym every single day, and I'll be a better player next year than I was this year. And you hadn't a chance to see that from Laila Phelia, but she's a player that's in the gym every morning at 6:30. So I think, you know, our players want to, you know, be coached, want to be great and want to get better. I can't answer your question exactly. But I'm pretty happy with the players that we have for sure.

Q. We saw Leigha Brown check out of the game a little earlier than the rest of the senior class. Was she injured towards the end of the game?

COACH ARICO: Leigha hasn't been 100% this weekend. And you know, she's a heck of a player. And I just, you know, at that point I thought that you know, we were down by a little bit and I was going to give somebody else an opportunity to come in. But Leigha's just been so tremendous for us. She's such a competitor that even if she has a tweaked ankle she's going to go out there and give you every single thing that she has, which she did this

whole tournament.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you very much for your time. It's been a pleasure working with you. Congratulations on your season. We appreciate everything.

