

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

Sunday, March 19, 2023

Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA

Pete Maravich Assembly Center

LSU Tigers

Coach Kim Mulkey

Angel Reese

LaDazhia Williams

Media Conference

LSU - 66, Michigan - 42

THE MODERATOR: We will start the press conference off with questions directed directly to either Angel or LaDazhia and then comments or questions for Head Coach Kim Mulkey.

Q. Angel, what exactly was the situation? Was it just your lip, you got elbowed? And how, obviously, did that affect you throughout the game?

ANGEL REESE: I got hit the first play of the game. It wasn't intentional or anything. Just going up for a rebound and I got hit in the mouth. I tried to run over to the bench as quick as possible to get whatever repaired as much as I could. Got a mouthpiece and got tissue and tried to keep pushing through, so that's what happened.

Q. Angel and for LaDazhia, was there a bounce-back vibe tonight for y'all? Did y'all feel like knowing what you had at stake tonight that there was some electricity on the team coming into this game?

ANGEL REESE: For me I was hungry. I didn't want to let my seniors go out on a loss. This means more than me. It's bigger than me. They had their last game in the Pmac of their career. Just being able to go out there and play as hard as I could and just being out there and leave it all on the floor for them was just the most important thing for me tonight.

LADAZHIA WILLIAMS: I wouldn't say it was really a bounce-back game. We just executed our preparation and did what we had to do on the defensive end.



Q. Angel, just now back-to-back games in the NCAA Tournament where y'all have defended at a high level. What has changed since even the SEC Tournament as y'all continue to move forward?

ANGEL REESE: Just focus. Staying together as one. I mean, we've seen so many different lineups and things. And different defenses. They played us in a zone early on. We had preparation for that early on in practice yesterday and some today in pregame shooting. Just being able to pay attention to detail. It's win or go home right now. If you are not playing attention and executing plays and doing what we're supposed to do then we can go home. We want to stay here.

Q. Angel, you talked about your seniors. But what can you say about Flau'jae as a true freshman, what she brought to this game in the biggest game of her career?

ANGEL REESE: I'm proud of Flau'jae. It might not always show up on the stat sheet, but she played great defense. She comes out and she pays attention to detail. She does a lot of film, and it shows. She played 33 minutes. How many fouls did she have? One foul. When Flau'jae doesn't foul, her maturity has grown so much from the beginning until now. I'm super happy for Flau'jae, and we can't win without her.

Q. Angel, can you just talk a little bit about what you were telling the team at halftime to make sure that you could close out with the win?

ANGEL REESE: We have been here before. We were up 17 against Tennessee and look what happened. We couldn't get comfortable. We came out third quarter pretty slow. I think they were on a 5-0 run. Being able to come into the timeout and telling us stay poised, stay together. We have to address this right now so this doesn't happen again, like it happened in SEC. I think we responded really well.

Q. Both of y'all could answer. LaDazhia, could you start. Just the job Kateri did. She got the start. And I



haven't seen her that engaged for that long all season.

LADAZHIA WILLIAMS: Yeah. Kateri is a big guard for us. She really helped us out on the defensive end shutting down their main player and using her body and her strength to really execute on the defensive end.

ANGEL REESE: Kateri knows Michigan. But you also can't think -- Jas comes off the bench and she doesn't get down. Sometimes when players come out and don't start you don't know what you can get from them. For her to come out and shoot the way she shot tonight. We can't win without her either, so Kateri and Jas tonight were really important for us tonight.

Q. This is for Angel and LaDazhia. You guys dominated the glass, beat them by 20. On the glass. Was that just something you felt you had a great matchup against their bigs, or was it just you, kind of, ratcheted up the aggressiveness?

LADAZHIA WILLIAMS: We knew one of the keys to winning the game was rebounding. We really emphasized that in practice and really tried to stay and maintain great positioning on the boards to get the boards and then do what we do with our length.

ANGEL REESE: We knew they had more size than us. I mean that's kind of why we started with Kateri tonight. Being able to have everybody guard and rebound at all five positions was really important tonight.

Q. This is for the players. At the end of the first half, Michigan only had 15 points. I think it was their lowest point total all season. What did you do defensively to limit them so much in the first half?

LADAZHIA WILLIAMS: Really team U basketball. Being a help off the drive. Knowing who the shooters are. Just really executing our scout and what we have been preparing for all week.

ANGEL REESE: Yeah, I think this is one of our best defensive games in a long time. Especially on our home court. I think we had a lot of energy, so shout out to the fans, the students came back out and everybody else tonight. They said it was only 10,000 people. But it felt like way more. It was fun.

Q. You have been talking about size for the past two days going up against Michigan. What does it do for the group having shown that you guys can have success against a bigger group now moving into the rest of the tournament?

ANGEL REESE: I think we have seen it early on playing against South Carolina. They had a lot of size. I think we're kind of used to it. Just being able to be in practice and paying close attention to our scouting reports. Coach Bob does a great job making sure that we know our scouting report. Right now it's just about executing and paying attention to every detail.

Q. Angel, we've talked a lot about your maturity this year. But right out of the gate it was tested getting popped in the mouth. Just responding and kind of playing through it. Now that it's over, how proud are you of that and how conscious of it during the game were you to remember to stay in the game?

ANGEL REESE: Probably freshman year I probably would have cried, maybe, sat down for a little while. I knew Coach if I was to act like I was hurt or something, she was going to get on me. I knew my team needed me. I don't ever want to disappoint my team. So I did whatever it takes, a bloody lip and bloody mouth, I'll figure it out later tonight. I just don't want to let my team down.

Q. Just talked to Poole in the locker room and asked her about the chemistry between you two. It really showed tonight and it was like next level.

ANGEL REESE: That's my girl. I love KP. We go way back. I see a lot of things in KP that she might not see in herself. I push her harder than anybody else in practice. When she found out she was starting, I was like, this is your time. You have to show and come out here with a lot of energy and do what you do. Play KP. KP's from New York. She ain't scared of nobody. KP not scared of nobody. I'm from Baltimore. KP, New York and Baltimore, they go head to head. I love KP. And she's a key to our team.

Q. Angel, at one point in the game in the fourth quarter you had more rebounds alone than all of Michigan. I was talking to Alexis in the locker room and she's like, I'm not surprised. What did it take to be that dominant on the glass tonight for you personally?

ANGEL REESE: I was not very efficient at all tonight. A lot of those rebounds came from a lot of my misses. And then, I thank my teammates for missing a lot of shots -- missing some shots so I could get the rebound. Just paying close attention to where the ball is. I have a really good eye for the ball. Rebounding is key. That's what's written on our board. We have to rebound and defend to win. As far as we go, we have to rebound and defend.

Q. Just you, kind of mentioned it going four in your locker. Going back to Greenville now. Not necessarily about the Tennessee game, but just the idea of going

back to a place that you are familiar with, have some experience with, how excited are you to be moving on to not only the Sweet Sixteen but there?

LADAZHIA WILLIAMS: We're just taking it one day at a time, but we're very excited. We're ready to start preparing for the next game. And we're just ready for whatever is ahead of us.

ANGEL REESE: I mean, we had a bad taste in our mouth from going to Greenville the first time. Going back is just playing together, going together and getting a lot of rest and recovery to focus on Utah now. We have all the tools. So making sure that we're paying attention to detail now. I know all our fans are going to travel with us. And I just want to thank them for an amazing year. 17-0 at home. It's surreal in the Pmac. And I mean, I'm lost for words.

THE MODERATOR: Per Her Hoop stats, Angel Reese is the first player in NCAA Tournament history to score 25 points and grabbed 24 rebounds. Angel, congratulations on that. And Angel and LaDazhia thank you very much for your time. Congratulations and best of luck in the next round. All right, we'll now address questions for Head Coach Kim Mulkey.

Q. Kim, two questions. Was considering the moment and considering the competition, was that as locked in defensively as you have seen this year's team? And how big was Jasmine coming off the bench with those 3's at the start of the second quarter?

COACH MULKEY: We were definitely locked in. I don't know if I would categorize it as "the best". It was good. It was darn good. Because we really didn't shoot it good. Until we got until about the third -- actually it was the fourth quarter we started relaxing and hitting some of those 3's. Jasmine handled herself like a trooper. She knew exactly why Kateri started, and it had nothing to do with anything but size. We knew they were bigger on the perimeter. And I wanted size in there. I don't hesitate to put her in. They played a lot of zone, and I told her to go in there and you get an open look, fire it. And she came out on fire. It was so big. It was so big. I don't know if it was Scott or who, you got to have production from everybody, right? I think we got production from everybody. I thought Flau'jae missed shots, but she kept battling on the boards. 4 at half, ended up with 6. She hit a couple 3's there late. How about LaDazhia? I thought Sa'Myah did fine when she was in there. Where's the guy that asked me about throwing waves? They didn't come at us in waves, did they? They played about 6 players and we played about 6 players because it's the end of the season. It's survive and advance. We were locked-in defensively.

Q. Coach, throughout the year you said we've won a lot of games, we've won a lot of games, but we haven't accomplished anything else. Is that the first Sweet Sixteen in nine years for the school and taking that next step, is that really accomplishing something?

COACH MULKEY: It's not a championship, but it is definitely an accomplishment. We have won one more game than we won last year. And you better believe that that's big for us in rebuilding this program. I thought the students were back tonight. They are done with spring break. I thought they were just awesome. I thought the crowd was electric. Yeah. That's a big deal for this program at this time. I've got coaches in there with tears in their eyes that have never won and been to a Sweet Sixteen. I have coaches in there that have been to multiple final fours and championships. You don't ever take things for granted. And you let them enjoy it. You let them soak it all in. Got kids in that locker room that have never been to a Sweet Sixteen. And I'm wet. I'm soaking wet. So if I get pneumonia, y'all fill in for me.

Q. Coach, Michigan went on that 5-0 run to start the second half. You called a timeout. How do you feel like your team responded after that?

COACH MULKEY: That was a nice timeout. I was mild and gentle and just needed to -- no. It's teaching. That happened to us in the SEC Tournament against Tennessee. We had a 17-point lead and we're trying to grow and we're trying to teach them. How did they just score 5 points? Foul line, stop the clock, 3-pointer, 2-feet off. So you're just stopping and you're teaching them. That's what we did. Stop them and challenged them and teach them and make them remember, remember.

Q. Just your thoughts on the job that Kateri did tonight.

COACH MULKEY: You know, Kateri was at Ohio State, Angel was at Maryland. Those guys are familiar with that league. I thought Kateri did great defensively. I thought every time Brown tried to do something, Kateri was right there trying to tie her up. Just physical with her. I thought when screens were set, "Kateri. If you can't get over it, get under it." She was big time. The big 3 she hit, that was big. That was confident. Kateri will pass the ball before she shoots it a lot of times. She can shoot it, shoot it. Let it fly. She was good. She was good defensively. Here comes my guy. They didn't throw waves at us.

[Laughter]

Q. Same question I asked the players. What can you say about Flau'jae and her performance as a true

freshman in this kind of game?

COACH MULKEY: Flau'jae gets down on herself when she misses shots. And I stay on her about -- if that guy in the paint is open, she's going to make a hero out of you, get her the ball when you're messing up. And then loosen up and she will get the ball back to you when things are good. Sometimes she doesn't know how to take me. So I just told her when she came off that floor, "You're going to be one heck of a player by the time your career is over. Look how much you have improved thus far." She's better. She's better at understanding all phases of the game. She got us big rebounds when she missed shots. She didn't stop shooting the ball. She got us more paint touches than she probably did 3, 4 months ago. I pulled her to the side one time -- we were running and she tried it from foul line to foul line on that left wing and Alexis has the ball here and here's a post here, if she would have been in a dead sprint and cut to the basket, Alexis would have gave her a lay-up. That's what you're continuing to teach freshman.

Q. Was it a relief to see Jasmine hit those 3's and then, you know, other players start stepping up and making 3's?

COACH MULKEY: Yes. The relief was the timing of hitting the 3's. We had taken some, Alexis was, you know, she was kind of hesitant after she missed a few. And Flau'jae was not happy about herself for missing a few. If they were going to stay in this zone, let me give Jasmine a look. And she came out just smoking. And she wanted to go back in. I'm ready, coach. I'm ready. I know you are, Jas, I know you are. But the flow of the game dictates when you go in the game. Man, she's our hero. She came in and did her job.

Q. Coach, I just talked to Jas and asked her, where did that confidence come from? And she said the belief you gave in her. Did you say anything or do anything or just her ability to see what was on the floor and coming off the bench?

COACH MULKEY: I think Jas is a type of person that I probably don't give her enough hugs. She needs more hugs. Each kid is different. Some need a kick in the rear. Some need hugs. Jasmine wants to please me. In all that she does, she wants to please me. And I feel that from her. I can sense it in her. And she needs to understand I never stop believing in you. When I make decisions on not starting or taking you in or out of a ball game, it has nothing to do with how much I love you. It is strictly a basketball decision. And I think she's grown and sees that and sees her value. Sees her value. Jasmine I think will tell you if she doesn't say this, you need to ask her, this is the best year of her college year. It's the most productive year of

her college career. Started at Georgia Tech, went to west Virginia, you just ask her. And those are things I reiterate to her. Doesn't matter how many you miss, think about your entire year. This is probably the best year she has ever had in basketball.

Q. Kim, I know there's a lot of really good things happening on campus right now athletically. Baseball is number one, football team had the season that it had. When you think about Angel Reese, how do you qualify her importance on Louisiana State University's campus, to the women's basketball program here, to the athletic department? How do you qualify her significance?

COACH MULKEY: Well, I'm answering it from a partial viewpoint. I see her every day. I don't have one clue what goes on on social media unless somebody brings it to my attention. I just know that she has to be mentioned -- today in a short period of time, she's only been here, and she has an opportunity to stay here for two more years. She has made an impact on our program, women's basketball, and I would think just like the brand LSU -- every sport has one particular player or two particular -- depending on the sport. That everybody knows about. And I think Angel, she has lived up to her hype on this floor. She still hasn't won a championship. She craves that. She wants that. But she has helped us jump start and wake up this program and wake up this community, and bring young kids to ball games and older people who are just like, "Thank you, Coach. We've just been kind of fading away, wanting something exciting to happen." And she's done that. Flau'jae has done that. Alexis Morris has done that. And they have taken advantage of NIL, guys. I was in shock the other day when I saw some of those numbers. I was like, "Oh! You're kidding me." But it's here to stay.

Q. Kim, how much do you think your team grew up maybe a little tonight and unlocked the next best version of themselves?

COACH MULKEY: I think we grew up a lot. I think we grew up in two areas: And that's rebounding and defense. I'm going to say it again: When I sat here and told you getting ready to play Michigan, do you remember what I told you? I thought their seed was too low and I told you how tough they were. I thought we were tough tonight. We were tough at all positions. And it started on the defensive end, and it started on the boards. I just thought we were tough. And if you follow the Big 10 a lot, they are tough. All those teams are just tough-minded people. And coaches and players -- and I just thought we accepted the challenge of not just maybe being quicker, but just being tough. Tough on the defensive end, and I thought we were.

Q. Angel Reese never fails to impress week after week. How big is not just hers but LaDazhia Williams' composure in these postseason games and leaning on that as you move on?

COACH MULKEY: LaDazhia Williams is that senior that doesn't want her season to end. She wanted to get to a Sweet Sixteen. She's just so calm. You know, you never see LaDazhia get rattled. I never see her lose her composure. She just battled in there. She is not one -- and I talk to her and Sa'Myah both about this. Sa'Myah is a freshman. But Day is an older senior. "Y'all need to quit getting pushed around there. You need to get position. If you are not going to win a battle because someone is bigger and thicker and stronger, you can position yourself in a way where you can get a rebound and a put-back." Not only did she do that tonight, she got the ball tonight and finished. She was not afraid to get the ball down there and make moves. Her footwork is excellent. You can tell she's an older player.

Q. I'm asking this in the context of the intentional foul. As tough as Michigan wants to be and is, do you think the ferociousness that Angel played with had some kind of unsettling effect on them that built up over the course of the game?

COACH MULKEY: Are you talking about when they got the intentional? I don't know that Angel. I can't answer that. I'm not in those kids' minds. I can tell you this: I don't think it was just Angel tonight. Kateri Poole had to guard Brown. Kateri Poole had to guard Brown. That kid is a baller. She took it harder probably than anybody in their locker room, at least it looked like that in their handshake line. That kid is a heck of a ball player. Probably playing out of position. When I played her at Baylor two years ago, she was off guard. We couldn't stop her. And I had a 6'1" perimeter player on her. And now she's playing point guard which made me really nervous. And I just thought that Kateri was just solid. Just anything Brown was going to get, she was going to have to work for. But I don't know that it was just Angel. It could have been frustration. I don't remember what the score was at that time. But now, here's a coaching move that you have to make a decision on. See, I thought it was going to be Angel shoots two free throws then I get to choose somebody else to shoot the technical fouls and we get the ball back. It's not that way anymore. They told me anybody could shoot those free throws. Anybody could shoot it. What do I do? Do I go with the percentages on who on that stat sheet -- you analytics guys will love this. Who on our stat sheet is our best free throw shooter? Alexis Morris. Alexis hadn't hit too many shots. I don't even know if she had been to the foul line yet. Angel had been to the foul line. I had to make a decision right there. And chose Alexis for a lot of reasons. One,

she's the best free-throw shooter we have statistically. And two, I needed her to have something good happen. And Angel's good with it. But now, see, if I'm Angel at the next practice, I'm giving her a hard time. Because I've done that twice this year. And Alexis is 2/4 on Angel's 4 free throws. So I'll kind of talk a little trash with them and, you know, get their attention. But those are split-second decisions.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you for your time. And again, congratulations.