

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Regional Semifinal: Indiana vs NC State

Saturday, March 27, 2021

San Antonio, Texas, USA

Alamodome - Mercado

Indiana Hoosiers

Ali Patberg

Sweet 16 Postgame Media Conference

Indiana 73, NC State 70

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Indiana student-athlete Ali Patberg. We'll start with questions.

Q. Tonight your team was able to answer pretty much every big run. You were up by 14, they cut it down. What is it about your team that's allowed that to withstand that run?

ALI PATBERG: We knew coming in obviously they're the No. 1 seed, they're a great team. They're really well-coached. We knew they were going to make runs. We just had to stay tough. We had a great, great game plan coming in. We just had to stick with that. When they made their run, we were going to execute and still be us. That's what we did.

There's just a different toughness in our locker room. We're here to win. When it came down to it, they made their runs, but we answered.

Q. Obviously you went to the free-throw line at the end. You would have liked to have made both of them. You had to make two big stops, the one at the end and one when you were up two. Defense has been the thing throughout this tournament for you. What were you telling each other in that moment to shut them down?

ALI PATBERG: Yeah, again, we were so well-coached. We were prepared for every out of bounds play that they were going to run. Again, we just knew we had to get a stop.

Coming into the game I told the team before, it's going to be one possession at a time, one stop at a time, one basket at a time. We did that. We didn't get ahead of



ourselves. We didn't panic when they made a run at the beginning of the game. Again, we knew they are a great team. We just had to answer.

Down at the end we were prepared. We came into this game, into this tournament, knowing that the work we've put in, all the time we've put in, it was going to pay off. We were ready.

Q. NC State was making the run, you've been here before, what were the conversations like in the huddle to make them stay calm and be ready for the next play?

ALI PATBERG: We just kept saying we're going to get a stop, we're going to get a stop. Again, our coaches had us ready for whatever they were going to come out and run. We knew we were going to get a stop. Again, there's just a different type of mentality in our locker room. There's a toughness, a grittiness. That's what we brought out there today.

Q. You told me as a kid you didn't go to the women's games because they weren't very good. You went to the men's games. What does it mean to have brought this team to the Elite 8 for the first time in program history? I'm expecting Indiana girls want to watch you play now more than watch the men play.

ALI PATBERG: Yeah, this is a dream to play for Indiana. Again, I grew up right down the road. I'm a Hoosier. This means the world to me. My team, my program, our program, it's a blessing, it's a dream come true. To be here on this stage with my teammates and my coaches, I can't even explain how much of a blessing it is, how thankful I am, how grateful I am to be a part of this team and this school.

Like I said, growing up I was in Assembly Hall so much. It's just a dream for me.

Q. Talk a little bit about the defensive mindset. You were able to force 17 turnovers. Why do you feel you were so successful and how much did that open up the offense for you today?

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ALI PATBERG: Yeah, ever since we started working for the season, it was get better every day, get a little better every day. That's what Coach always says. Again, I keep going back to it, but our coaches had us so prepared, so prepared. Again, I think we have the best coaching staff in the country. That showed tonight.

If we just did what our game plan was, we knew we were going to win. We went out and executed it.

Q. It seemed like outside of that first quarter that you really were able to dictate the terms of the game, how the game was played. Did you expect to do that coming in? What kind of allowed you to do that both physically and mentally?

ALI PATBERG: Again, we knew they're a great team. They were the No. 1 seed for a reason. But we were going to be tougher. We were going to be more gritty. We were going to play harder. That's what we did.

I don't think they expected that. We put them on their heels. We just kept going. We put our foot down and kept it down until the end. Again, they made a run at the end, but we stayed with our game plan and executed down the stretch, got stops when we needed to.

Q. After you hit the last free throw, the last 13 seconds, what was going through your mind?

ALI PATBERG: Well, I missed three in the game, so I don't like that. But when I missed the first one, I'm like, I'm going to hit the next one. I had no doubt. It went in. We got another stop.

Q. How important was it for you all to make them uncomfortable in the second half, especially when they were exerting much energy trying to come back?

ALI PATBERG: Yeah, we wanted to pressure them. We wanted to go over ball screens, wanted to make them uncomfortable. We wanted to double in the post here and there. We wanted to just keep them off-guard the whole game. That's what we did.

Again, I've said it probably six or seven times, but our coaches had us ready. I mean, we had a great game plan. We always do. Again, we just had to execute it.

Q. I think you started 8-of-27 from the field, then made 20 of your next 27. A lot of layups, clean around the rim. What worked so well offensively to get you so many good looks? What worked there offensively?

ALI PATBERG: Yeah, we have so many weapons offensively, we just kept attacking. I think early, even me, settled early for threes and jump shots. In the second half we put pressure on them. We went downhill, got to the basket, made them guard, move the ball from side to side. There are so many players in that locker room that are so skilled.

They've worked for all of that. We all have.

Q. You've talked about this a lot, but to go back to your journey, to get hurt right before you started your freshman season at Notre Dame. It's been a long haul. Put into your perspective your emotions when you think about what you've gone through to be in this place to lead Indiana to a place it's never been before?

ALI PATBERG: My journey has been very different. But, you know, it's been perfect. I had a lot of hard battles early on. Like you said, I got injured, I transferred. But I came to Indiana where they believed in me. At times I didn't question myself, but I lost a lot of confidence in my ability to play the game of basketball.

I took my first visit to IU. I just could tell that the coaching staff and the program were different. They're unique. They were going to put in the same work that I wanted to put in.

I had a plan -- I didn't have a plan, because I transferred and all that, but again, it's been a different journey for me. I wouldn't have it any other way. To be where I'm at with this team, like I said earlier, it's a dream come true to play for IU.

It came full circle for me. Again, I'm thankful and grateful that I have the opportunity to wear this jersey and be out there with my teammates and play for amazing coaches.

Q. You talked a lot about after the win against Belmont, the transition of celebrating what you've accomplished and turning your attention to the next game. Quicker turnaround this time. How do you shift your focus from this and try to get the win to get to your first ever Final Four?

ALI PATBERG: Yeah, I said this last time after our last win, but we came to win it all. We weren't here to get to a Sweet 16, then to an Elite 8. We want to keep going. It was fun celebrating out there. I think I said last time, it's a 24-hour rule, but it's got to be a lot shorter this time.

We're going to get back to the hotel, get to work on our next opponent. Like I said, we've not reached our goal yet.

Q. You talked a little bit about what it meant to you personally. What does it mean to this team and to the program to be on the pedestal and be in the national spotlight for this? What do you hope it accomplishes?

ALI PATBERG: Well, I think we've put -- our coaches, us individually, I know for a fact that there's nobody that works harder than us, our program. There's nobody. I can say that with a lot of confidence. It just makes me happy and thankful that all this work that we have put in as a program, Brenna Wise, she was here last year, the foundation she brought for us and our program, it's all coming to fruition for us.

I'm so happy for Coach Moren because she deserves this. She's worked super hard, believed in so many of us. I'm just so happy for IU and this program.

Q. After the last game you guys kind of showered Coach Moren with water in the locker room. Was this a similar celebration?

ALI PATBERG: They came in with a lot of water this time on us. I got pretty wet. I know a lot of us did. It was so fun. A memory we'll remember forever.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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