

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Regional Semifinal: Michigan vs Baylor

Saturday, March 27, 2021

San Antonio, Texas, USA

Alamodome - River Walk

Michigan Wolverines

Naz Hillmon

Sweet 16 Postgame Media Conference



team like this one. How proud she was of us, how thankful all of us came to the university. She spoke about that a little while ago.

As much as she's upset about the loss, just so thankful for this year, each and every single person in that locker room.

Baylor 78, Michigan 75 OT

THE MODERATOR: We're now joined by Naz Hillmon. We'll take questions.

Q. What's going through your head right now? You started off with an historic 10-0 start, first Sweet 16 in program history, to lose in overtime against Baylor, what is going through your head right now?

NAZ HILLMON: That's a great question. It's like right now, thinking about everything you could have done different in that game to get the win. You think about the seniors who won't be here next year. You think about all the ups and downs of the season, how far we've come, how far we could have gone if the outcome of this game was a little bit different.

To think of all of those isn't, I don't know, just to run things through your mind. But it brings a bunch of positive, positive memories we've had throughout the year. And, you know, you just think about the special moments that you've had with this team, since it won't look the same next year.

Q. What did Kim tell the team in the locker room? What was her message to you?

NAZ HILLMON: Yeah, so she really tries to do the 24-hour rule, so she doesn't say too much. She talked about our seniors, how much they've meant to this team and this program. You talked to her a second ago. She talked about how it was tough for both of our seniors to come back with COVID, the fifth-year, everything in between. She also talked about how special this group of girls were this year.

Something along the lines of, you know, not ever having a

Q. You played all of two minutes the entire game, with three and four fouls for most of the second half. Physically how were you able to do that? How were you able to keep going?

NAZ HILLMON: Yeah, I think physically we prepared for this all year. Practices are tough. Sometimes they're long. So going into that overtime, we were just kind of saying to each other, This is the second hour of practice. We've done this before. We grind it out every day in practice. When they get long and hard in pre-season or in the middle of the season, mentally we just kept saying, Empty the tank. I mean, obviously for now there is no tomorrow. If you don't give 110%, there won't be a chance of tomorrow. That was our goal. We wanted to get to the next step. If we pulled this one out we could rest tomorrow or the rest of the night.

You don't come this far and say, I'm tired. It's a mental state of mind. We really believed that. My teammates were behind me bringing a ton of energy. In that moment you just want to win. Tired isn't a think you're thinking about. You're thinking about defense, you're thinking about your next offensive move, you're thinking about getting a rebound.

I mean, we've been preparing for this all year long.

Q. Kim was saying that no one really respected this team going into the tournament, certainly didn't think you'd beat Florida Gulf Coast, not an SEC team, not Baylor. What does this game, this tournament tell people about Michigan?

NAZ HILLMON: Yeah, it tells people we are a tough team, we come to compete. We have believed that all year long. I mean, there's been a lot of outside voices. We talked about how sometimes they can get inside. We never



allowed it to do that to us. Even if we felt like we did, we were able to regroup, talk about believing in the people in the circle. I think that's the way that we played throughout the year. Playing inspired, playing for the people who weren't on the court, playing for the people who are on the court.

For other people, whether they believe it now or not, we're a tough program. We're going to play our hearts out every single night, bring energy. We're working towards championships. That's why I came to Michigan. I mean, I wanted to go somewhere where I could help build a program and win some championships. This has been a special team, having a lot of firsts. Now it's time to make seconds.

We've got a long ways to go as the season just ended. We have to redo this all again next year. But we're a program that's coming to compete and it's not going to be an easy program just to step over.

Q. You had 18 turnovers today, had some big ones in overtime. How do you think turnovers as a whole affected the outcome of today?

NAZ HILLMON: Yeah, I definitely think they played a part. Some of our turnovers led to their easy transition. Definitely something we wanted to limit, not in this game, we've been trying to limit our turnovers throughout the year. If you go back and look, we've been heavy on the turnovers throughout the year. In most times it's not helping us be successful.

There were a lot of things going into that game that didn't help the outcome. But definitely turnovers not helping us because, like I said, Baylor got some open, easy transition. That's something they really want to do to get easy buckets.

Q. Leigha Brown really came alive in the second half for you, trying to spark some offense. She missed some key shots late in overtime. Overall what did she bring to the game today for you guys?

NAZ HILLMON: Yeah, I mean, obviously all you guys see the offense that she brings to the floor. Like Coach spoke on a little bit earlier, when I'm drawing a lot of attention, her eyes light up. She's ready to go, not afraid of the moment, she's not afraid of the spotlight. She takes over any chance that she has the opportunity to.

But she also brings a toughness. There's no quit in her. There's no quit in everybody on our team. But there's really no quit in her. She wants to be a winner. She wants to do anything that she can to make us a successful team,

and that's why she came here.

I mean, she's a tough matchup for anybody. I've seen it all year long. I mean, three-level scorer, defender, trying to get in there for rebounds. She brought a lot to our team. I'm sure everyone would just look at her box score, the type of numbers she put up.

But her toughness and her aggression and her fight is another thing she brought to the floor tonight.

Q. Coach mentioned you guys were playing (inaudible). I'm curious if that was on your mind, whether she'll be proud of how you played here?

NAZ HILLMON: Yes, that is something on our mind before each of the games we played, we broke it down and was playing for her. That's not unfamiliar territory for us because we've had some times where our teammates weren't here. Coach talked about Leigha not being here earlier in the year. A couple of other people went down.

That's just for us, it was playing inspired basketball because we know those people would want to be on the court with us, would want to be giving us energy. Even if they physically couldn't play, at least being on the bench. She was in the back of our minds. We know she's super proud of us, wishes she could be here. But we all stepped up for her. That's been a key thing this year, next woman up. Being able to play and being ready to play whenever your number is called.

THE MODERATOR: Naz, thank you for your time.

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