# Big Ten Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 4, 2022

*Indianapolis, Indiana, USA*

*Gainbridge Fieldhouse*

## Ohio State Buckeyes

## Kevin McGuff

## Tanaya Beacham

## Taylor Mikesell

Postgame Press Conference

Ohio State - 74, Michigan State - 58

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement from coach and then take questions for the student-athletes.

KEVIN MCGUFF: I'm good.

THE MODERATOR: Okay. Questions for the student-athletes.

**Q. Taylor, different uniform, same building. Rikki Harris came out really strong, got you guys off to a good start, and then you and Jacy and Braxtin that's hard to deal with on a regular basis, and when you're all playing fairly well what kind of challenges do you think Michigan State faced that they hadn't really faced?**

TAYLOR MIKESELL: Yeah. I think we got off to a great start. I think that started from our defense. Rikki did a great job setting the tone for us. Being an Indy kid she took that personal and I think that gave us a spark. As a whole team I think we kind of fed off of that.

**Q. They made a run there in the second half. I think it was the under whatever the media timeout there in the fourth quarter where it was down to a six-point game. What went on in the huddle there that allowed you guys to close on a 10-4 run like did you?**

TANAYA BEACHAM: We were basically just telling each other that like they can go on a run but there's so much more game left we just needed to keep our composure and just keep going out there doing our things and getting stops and stuff.

**Q. Suzy complimented your play. She said that you're a player that puts in the work and she really appreciates that. On the other end what do you appreciate having played against Suzy for these last four years and seeing what atmosphere she brings?**

TAYLOR MIKESELL: I actually got to play for Coach Suzy in the Pan-American games between my freshmen and sophomore summer. So I kind of got to play under her a little bit, just see her coaching style. So I just appreciate how much love she puts into her players and how much effort she puts into what she does. She's one of the best at really buying into her players. I think you can see how much she cares about her players.

**Q. The rebounds going into this, you go from being out-rebounded by 22 last time (no microphone). What was the difference in this game?**

TANAYA BEACHAM: Boxing out, most definitely, was a great emphasis and part of winning the game. Boxing out and actually guarding the ball (no microphone) those were the keys. We just played them so we knew how crazy they were on rebounds and in this game we had to rebound.

**Q. This game and then the last game against Michigan State you guys had a number of games in a row. What does it say about this team that you guys have been able to pull away late in the game?**

TANAYA BEACHAM: We've just been focused on discipline and keeping ourselves together, not worrying about any outside sources and just keeping ourselves focused on the task at hand.

**Q. When you are up six there late, you pull away. You personally, what is kind of your mindset as well as it seems like you kind of thrive when you might be asked to carry a significant load late, obviously (no microphone)?**

TAYLOR MIKESELL: Like she said, we were still in control of the game at that point. I think we got together, looked at each other in the huddle, and said, We have this game in

our hands. It's ours to lose. So at that point you just stay composed, I guess, and that time knowing that they were going to be the ones that needed to play with a sense of urgency we just had to just stay focused.

**Q. Coming into this game you guys are the No. 1 team. There's a lot of pressure. And all season (no microphone). What do you take away from this game that you guys can kind of come together to take to the next game?**

TAYLOR MIKESELL: I think just, we've been fighting different forms of adversity all year. I think that just shows how much we have been fighting together. I think in hard times like towards the end of the game it's not going to be easy. None of these games will be easy from here on out. So I think just sticking together shows a lot about how we are as a team together.

**Q. Coming into this year what were your expectations, after the transfer coming to Ohio State, what were your expectations for the season and how would you assess just how, whether or not you have achieved those goals and just how do you assess that?**

TAYLOR MIKESELL: I think the biggest goal was obviously to come here and win a championship, and I think we did the first part of that. I still think that there's a lot of things that we have that we're capable of achieving, so I think just, like I said, still, the answer is still pending.

**Q. How would you describe Taylor's impact not only in the court but in the locker room as well?**

TANAYA BEACHAM: I think she came in as (no microphone) I think she gives (no microphone) and I think they listen to her and it's a good help for all of us because we can talk to each other and listen to each other without it being a conflict.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, ladies. We'll take questions for coach.

**Q. Suzy mentioned that Michigan State, that they scored on your press at Michigan State, big time. Now, today, you shut them down completely. Do you want to talk a little bit about what was your preparation for Clouden, because you shut her down pretty much in the first half and let's talk about that press and what you got out of that.**

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah, regarding the press, we obviously we had just played them, so we were able to really kind of assess what their press break would be and make some adjustments coming out of what we did last Sunday and I thought it was really effective today and we had points off turnovers and even when we didn't turn them over we did a better job getting matched up at the end so they couldn't score. So even when we weren't, I thought we wore on them and took them out of the rhythm, even when there wasn't a turnover. And then with Clouden you're never going to totally stop her, she's too good for that, she's one of the best players in the country, she's one of the better ones that we've ever had in our league, quite frankly, in my timeframe.

But we did a good job today kind of keeping her in front and really getting in the gaps to take away her driving lanes.

**Q. Pretty similar game just how it played out to last week. Do you think being in kind of the environment and as you had said how you guys kind of clawed to get that Big Ten title really just helped you guys down the stretch to not be flustered or anything and just execute?**

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah, we had to do it last Sunday and we did it again in terms of our execution and generating quality shots, getting big stops, kind of fighting around the basket to get some tough rebounds. We did some similar things.

They're good, they're a very good team, they're athletic, they're deep, they're physical. I knew this would be a battle and so it's a really big win for us.

**Q. To beat the best teams in this conference you obviously got to score at a high rate, but you talked a lot about rebounding, the defense improving lately, how much do you rely on that as you move forward to make a run in tournament?**

KEVIN MCGUFF: We're going to have to. We've gotten better, but still the teams in this league and especially at the top put so much pressure on your defense to get stops because they're so gifted and so well coached offensively.

So we'll have to continue to, it's always an awkward preparation, no time in between the games, quite frankly, but make sure we get prepared and I do think we have improved with our overall defense and hopefully where you don't have a lot of time to scout and all that, put in different game plans, that can hopefully carry the day for us.

**Q. (No microphone) What does this say about MSU that they have rookies that can step up and make big plays?**

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah, I really like the team. I think they

have got a very talented team. Suzy does a great job coaching, they play really hard, physical. They have good organization and obviously Clouden is one of the best players in the country and probably one of the better ones I've ever had to coach against. But the young kids are good too and I think that that gives them a very bright future.

**Q. Looks like in the first half the team kind of rallied behind Harris. She really took off. How was that changing when Mikesell (no microphone)?**

KEVIN MCGUFF: Rikki did a great job. She was really terrific today and we need -- Jacy and Taylor garner so much attention, if we're going to be the team we're capable of being we need to have another one step up and Rikki today and Tanaya, both of them had outstanding games and I don't think we win if they don't all step up and play well.

**Q. What was the shift that you saw in the game when Michigan State starts to go on that run in the third. What did you see there?**

KEVIN MCGUFF: They got (no microphone) offense did, I think if anything we got really good shots around the basket and we didn't finish and we really put ourselves vulnerable to them catching up and they did. To their credit they took advantage of it. But I liked the shots we were getting, we just couldn't put the ball in the basket there.

**Q. And then they bring it to within six points with a little over four remaining, you call timeout, what was kind of the messaging that led to that at that point?**

KEVIN MCGUFF: Just stay together, don't panic, make sure we continue to execute at a high level. And I think from that point on we got really, we were getting pretty good shots, we got great shots, they made the right people get the shots and that's how it went.

**Q. As you prepare for Indiana or Maryland, having experience with both of them, what are kind of the keys to those respective matchups?**

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah, I think either team, I mean they're different, Maryland scores at such a high rate, your transition defense, taking care of the ball so they can't score in live ball turnovers will be huge against them and then both teams rebounding will be key for us.

Indiana, they're so good in the half court defensively and they're physical and they wear on you, so to be able to execute in a manner that puts us in a position to get really good shots will be very important against them.

**Q. (Inaudible) How much of an impact did that take on you and then did you realize, okay, I got to get some more scoring out here and Mikesell is setting out there?**

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah, you know, where we're at in 2022 it's just you never know who is going to be there or not sometimes. But I would say this, I think we have the right team for Ohio State this year with the right kids. And that's not to question anybody that's not here, but I can say I really like this group I think the chemistry was as good as we've ever had it since I've been at Ohio State and so these are the right kids. And you can tell, if you watched us throughout the year, the fact that we, the significant amount of improvement we've made and you can just tell these kids love each other and love playing together. So I really like this group and sometimes kids leave and you always wish them the best and specifically (no microphone) had a good year up at Utah, so it was probably good for her, so all good.

**Q. What led you to Mikesell?**

KEVIN MCGUFF: She's from Ohio, so -- I mean, you could ask her, but I told her she finally got it right. (Laughing) I say that kiddingly. She's a great kid. I think with her specifically as she kind went through college and she did great at her first two years at Maryland, I thought she fit really well there. But then last year it wasn't a great fit for her. And I think she wanted to make sure she finished her career at a place and a system where she felt comfortable and could really thrive before she tried to move on to the next level.

**Q. What expectations did you have for Taylor coming into this year and how has she lived up to those?**

KEVIN MCGUFF: I had high expectations for her. I thought how we played that she could have a huge impact for us and she has and she's done a great job and she's as hard a worker as you'll ever find. And she's in the gym working on her game every single day, she's the last one to leave and she's a great kid.

She's been really impactful, obviously, you see her on the court, but I think culturally with her work ethic, all of a sudden you see her getting in the gym early and now all of a sudden more people are doing that. It's just the type of kid that we want to have in our program as we continue to build a really special culture.

**Q. You mentioned she's one of those leaders, what have you seen some of the leaders of the team be able**

**to close after Michigan State goes on that run, to kind of cut it close, just to be able to close out the game, what did you see in that?**

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah, we lean on our seniors and our upperclassmen quite a bit, especially in those moments when you need execution and togetherness and we need to focus on both ends of the floor and they brought that today when we really needed them.

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