

Big Ten Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 3, 2023

Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

Target Center

Ohio State Buckeyes

Kevin McGuff

Taylor Thierry

Cotie McMahon

Postgame Press Conference



**WOMEN'S BASKETBALL
TOURNAMENT**
MINNEAPOLIS 2023

PRESENTED BY
TIAA

Ohio State - 81, Michigan - 79

KEVIN MCGUFF: We can go right to questions.

Q. Taylor and Cotie, there in the last seconds of the game, what's going through your mind as it's that close and you're up two?

TAYLOR THIERRY: Honestly, just literally getting a stop without fouling. If we foul, they were going to go to the line and could have had an opportunity to tie the game.

So honestly, like I said, being aggressive but not overly aggressive to where they get a call.

COTIE McMAHON: Kind of going off what she said, really just focusing on getting a stop. Especially for me, I felt like after turning the ball over, like we had no other choice but to get a stop. So it felt like we had to buckle down and focus on one thing, and that was getting the stop. And rebounding of course, so yeah.

Q. Could you just talk about the win overall, being able to beat Michigan, kind of the emotions of it, and now looking ahead to Indiana, what do you kind of see differently going into this game than you have the last two?

COTIE McMAHON: Coming in, I don't really think going into this game anything will change. Obviously they beat us two times in a row. So I feel like us -- for us, it's kind of personal. So I feel like just coming out tomorrow, we're going to have to focus on the little things, guarding the ball way better than we did tonight, kind of just things like that.

TAYLOR THIERRY: Yeah, definitely going into this next

game we're going to have a lot more energy. We won this game, that's great, but we're moving on to the next because the most important game is the next one.

Q. You guys have seen Indiana twice this season. What's the most challenging part about facing the Hoosiers that you've run into?

TAYLOR THIERRY: Honestly, they have great guards that can shoot, and they also have a solid post. Mackenzie Holmes is really good. She's very physical and athletic. We just have to play our game and trust the process and trust each other and get stops and make it as hard as possible for them to score.

Q. The first two games against Michigan were pretty similar - your press was very successful, forced 27 turnovers both times. What do you think was the main difference between those first two games and today?

COTIE McMAHON: I'd say the difference was their energy. No team wants to lose three times in a row, let alone twice. So we knew coming into this game they'd be a whole different team, just coming in, definitely taking it play by play for them.

So I feel like their energy was completely different from the first time we played them, but yeah.

Q. Both of you seemingly could score at will at moment, especially in the first half. Cotie, you also had a couple of steals and transition buckets. What looks were you seeing, and how were you able to score so easily most of the game?

TAYLOR THIERRY: Honestly just making sure we're not forcing shots and letting the game come to us. Also being more aggressive. It really helped me at least being more offensively aggressive.

COTIE McMAHON: For me, really offense wasn't my main focus. It was defense. I feel like you take care of the defensive end and your offense will take care of itself, and it did.



Q. What kind of a lift did it provide to have Jacy Sheldon back in the lineup and playing with you guys?

TAYLOR THIERRY: My gosh, it was such a huge help honestly. Just somebody coming off the bench and giving other players breathers. She's an amazing player offensively. Defensively she adds that energy we really need, and she really keeps us focused and connected. She's great on the press too.

There's so many areas I could go on and on that of how she helps us as a team. We're honestly so happy that she's back.

COTIE McMAHON: What T.T. said.

Q. On that last play, baseline out of bounds for Michigan, did you guys know, have an expectation of where the ball was going? And how were you able to end up making them make a contested shot that I don't think they were looking for?

TAYLOR THIERRY: Either I thought they were going to get a three by Nolan, or I thought the ball is going to go in Leigha Brown's hand. But at the end of the day, just trying to be aggressive and making sure that any shot they take is as hard as possible.

COTIE McMAHON: I feel like we weren't focused on who was getting the ball, kind of just taking care of our defense. It doesn't matter who gets the ball, just play defense. So I felt like we did that really well.

Q. Coach, I know Rikki Harris went off the court after that fall. How is she doing?

KEVIN McGUFF: I think she's okay. I didn't get a chance to talk to the trainer yet, but she was walking around like she was okay. Hopefully she'll be good for tomorrow.

Q. What do you say about that last defensive stand, and how impressed were you with that?

KEVIN McGUFF: I thought, first of all, we gave up two baskets by not guarding the basket in our underneath out-of-bounds defense prior in the game. So I was concerned about that, I was screaming about that, making sure we didn't do the same thing and giving them a layup.

I thought we forced them to shoot over us, which was the goal, and everybody crashed the boards. I don't know, just felt like it took about 67 seconds, but other than that, it was fine.

Q. Can you also talk about Cotie's game? She always

like one-ups herself throughout the season, and today she has her best performance yet.

KEVIN McGUFF: Incredible player. It's been a long time since I've seen somebody that young play so hard. She competes on every possession. She competes on every possession in practice. Really fun to see.

She's also got a real joy for the game. You can see she loves to play. She loves to play with her teammates. Just a great kid to coach. Really excited about what the future holds for her.

Q. Taylor touched on this a little bit, but the Hoosiers haven't seen Jacy Sheldon yet this season. What does she have that provides for your team that Indiana hasn't seen?

KEVIN McGUFF: We play a little faster with her in the game. Just the overall pace is better.

When we press, we're significantly better with her in there. Also just adds another scoring guard. She can really score the ball.

Lastly, she makes everybody around her better.

Q. Obviously this game looked pretty different from the first two times you faced Michigan. What do you think the ultimate difference makers were, both in terms of how this game was so much closer and ultimately how you were able to pull out the win?

KEVIN McGUFF: It's interesting because both teams have dealt with some injuries. Michigan got all their players back. Now, were they at 100 percent? I don't know. We've obviously dealt with serious injuries. So we haven't had Jacy in neither one of the games.

So our teams have kind of been evolving and changing. The one thing that's been constant is both teams have played really, really hard and competed at a high level.

Now, today we didn't press quite as much. It just didn't seem as effective early on, and looking at the possibility of playing multiple games up here, we were kind of weighing that in our decision how much energy we wanted to expend on it.

Q. Is Sheldon on minutes restriction?

KEVIN McGUFF: Sort of. Like we're just kind of trying to ease her back in. We don't have a specific number, but we're trying to just like limit the long stretches that she plays, but it's not really a specific number. Because if it

was up to her, it would be 40.

Tomorrow you might see us fighting over there on the sidelines, so you might see her trying to put herself in.

Q. Kevin, in your last game, you guys come up short in an end-of-game situation against Maryland. Did you take lessons from that into closing this one out?

KEVIN McGUFF: I think we played confidently down the stretch, and we hit some big shots. I thought our execution was pretty good, minus the one turnover that Cotie referenced earlier.

I think just overall both ends we executed a little bit better than last time.

Q. How do you feel your team controlled the pace of play today? And at what parts of the game were you in control of that?

KEVIN McGUFF: We want to play fast, and I think for the most part we did that. I think we've got a number of easy baskets in transition, which we needed because Michigan's really good in the half-court. If you lock it up and just play against their half-court defense the whole game, it makes it really difficult to score.

Q. Starting the second half Michigan kind of knew that, and they slowed the game down really slow. What was your message to the team when you called the early timeout?

KEVIN McGUFF: Just one, we need to get some stops and rebounds so we can get out in transition, but just to really, really continue to push the pace. Like I said, that was to our advantage, and I think ultimately was the difference on offense for us is the number of easy baskets that we could get in transition.

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