

# Big Ten Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 3, 2023

Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

Target Center

## Purdue Boilermakers

## Katie Gearlds

## Cassidy Hardin

### Postgame Press Conference

Iowa - 69, Purdue - 58

KATIE GEARLDS: Congratulations, Iowa, for obviously making it to the semifinals. Seventh place team in the country, best player in the country, but I could not be more proud of my group, of our group, and how hard we battled and fought.

I think we showed everyone that Purdue belongs.

**Q. Cassidy, it seemed like to start the fourth quarter you had a chance to cut the lead down to three -- five or three, and then missed a layup and they hit the three and it kind of took off from there. Is that how it felt to you guys too?**

CASSIDY HARDIN: Yeah, some shots just didn't go our way and they didn't fall. That happens. We've got to find a way to pick up our defense when shots don't fall, but that's the way it went today.

**Q. Was there anything they did defensively to keep you guys out of rhythm and keep you from stringing together the makes?**

CASSIDY HARDIN: I feel like it was -- we could have made the plays. I think that we're more than capable of knocking down those shots. I don't think it was anything special they did.

Like I said, it kind of wasn't our day from the outside, and yeah, we had some layups that didn't fall. It happens.

**Q. In terms of atmosphere, did that basically feel like a road game there at night?**

CASSIDY HARDIN: We all knew it was us against the world in there. They obviously travel super well. It got



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really loud for them sometimes, but I think we handled it amazingly, and I think we were able to silence them a lot of times.

Like Coach said, I'm really proud of my team as well and how we fought and how we were able to come together despite everything against us.

**Q. It seemed like defensively one bright spot was you guys locking down inside and you had a bunch of blocked shots, it seemed like. What were you looking to do? How were you finding that success, at least around the basket?**

CASSIDY HARDIN: Obviously one of our main focuses is Caitlin Clark, trying to disrupt her and flying around and just trying to get the ball out of her hands. Obviously she finds the open player sometimes, but I think we rotated super well. Yeah, we were able to get some blocked shots under the basket and kind of disrupt the other players when they were trying to score around the rim.

I think we did a really good job with being aggressive on defense and kind of rotating and playing team defense versus individual defense.

**Q. Was there a point during that game when it felt like things were clicking for you offensively and you kind of had a rhythm, a bit of a groove going?**

CASSIDY HARDIN: Yeah, I think we started the second half really well. We were all cheering out there for each other. We knew we had to bring our own energy, and we could definitely feel that sometimes with all of us high-fiving, all of us yelling, excited for whoever knocks down a shot. Like it doesn't have to be me. It doesn't have to be Lasha. Whoever it is, we're all super excited as long as we are scoring. We just want to be in the game and give ourselves a chance to win at the end.

**Q. At the start of that fourth quarter, did that kind of feel like a back breaker so to speak with the missed layup and then they hit a three-pointer on the other end and kind of took off from there? Is that kind of how you felt it unfolded at the end?**



KATIE GEARLDS: Yeah, I think that's a good way to look at it. I thought we got a pretty clean look, and they get out in transition.

I think really there it was the third quarter for us. I don't know if it was a tie game or we had a lead, but for whatever reason -- I thought we had done a really good job of trying to keep the ball out of Caitlin's hands in transition, making sure they were outletting it to someone else, because she's just so dynamic in transition and it makes them incredibly impossible to guard.

But there in the third quarter there was a stretch where we kind of lost our heads a little bit and they were able to kind of take over the lead. And then the missed layup just magnified that on the other end.

Give their kids credit, they knocked down some shots. Gabbie Marshall knocked down some open shots. They battled. They got a couple rim runs that really -- coaches, you don't like those, but I'm super, super proud of our group. We were tough today. We challenged them to be tough, and I thought our group was pretty tough.

**Q. With the third quarter and what happened there, is that just the result of it took so much to get there and to get the lead the way you did, that there's just like a momentary lapse and a team like Iowa is able to exploit it?**

KATIE GEARLDS: Yeah, I don't know if it's just -- you know, we lost our heads for a second. Lasha had -- that was Lasha's role, and we took her out for a minute. I'll take responsibility because I didn't communicate who was supposed to do that. Lasha knew it was her job, and then we sub in, and I didn't do a good enough job of making sure the next person in that transition. That's on me. I've got to do better for my team because they were locked into what we were telling them to do. They believed in what we were trying to tell them to do, and they fought their asses off. Excuse me. Sorry.

**Q. You held them to two field goals and six turnovers in the second quarter. What were you doing defensively to muddy them up like that?**

KATIE GEARLDS: We were tough. We mixed it up. The start of the game was awful for us. We do a good job and get the ball out of Caitlin Clark's hands, and Kate Martin gets a drive, a left-handed layup from the right wing, just stuff we felt like we could control. It's 19-10 at the end of the first quarter.

Talk to them at the end of the quarter, let's be tough, let's

chip away at this, and we battled. We threw some junk at them. We mixed it up. In the second half I felt like they got away from some ball screens because we were kind of blitzing and trying to get the ball out of Caitlin's hands and they got away from those because I think in the first half we were able to cause some turnovers with their active hands.

Rickie and Ava did a good job inside of just being active and getting some blocks down here, like you said earlier. You've got to be perfect to beat a top ten team in basically a road game. We were pretty solid, just not good enough.

**Q. Do you think the girls handled the environment of that pretty well?**

KATIE GEARLDS: Yeah. Obviously a road game for us, but we played in front of 11,500 at their place. We played in front of 17,000 at Indiana. We had 15,000 at our place. We played in front of 8,600 at Ohio State. Women's basketball in the Big Ten has been really, really special in terms of attendance and the support.

We didn't expect anything different today. We knew what we were walking into. Like 5 said, it was going to be us against the world, and our kids battled their butts off.

**Q. An obvious question, but in terms of NCAA Tournament résumé --**

KATIE GEARLDS: We belong. We belong. I think we showed it. We finished seventh in the league in a really, really tough league when we've got, what, five teams. Did we still have five teams in the top 16 last time and we finished seventh.

We were unfortunate not to get the two games. We didn't play the Campbell game out of having the back of respect for women's basketball for what all happened in Vegas. And then the tragedy at Michigan State, we lost that game. I think that hurt our NET a little bit because we won at their place.

So I feel like our NET could be a little bit higher if you get those two games played and you win them. Yeah, I think we showed we belong.

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