

Big Ten Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 4, 2023
Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA
Target Center

Ohio State Buckeyes

Kevin McGuff

Taylor Thierry

Jacy Sheldon

Postgame Press Conference

Ohio State - 79, Indiana - 75

KEVIN MCGUFF: We can go right to questions.

Q. Jacy and Taylor, can you just go through what was going through your mind as the final buzzer went and you had the biggest comeback in Big Ten history.

JACY SHELDON: That was awesome. That was a great team win for us. Our effort in the second half was awesome. We played together, and it showed. We're happy about the win, but we're not done. We've got to turn our attention and focus on tomorrow.

Q. Taylor, just talk about what you guys said to yourselves when you're down 23 to start the second half. Obviously the three-pointers weren't following and they started, but defensively you had quite the effort as well.

TAYLOR THIERRY: As a team we're just telling ourselves the shots are going to go down. Obviously they didn't go in the first half, but we just had to trust ourselves and trust our shooters and knew they were going to come down, and they did. We made some huge shots, which kind of helped us settle in.

We were also focused on getting stops and making sure that we're pressuring the ball and not letting Holmes get easy posts. That's where Cotie came in and really stepped up and made it tough for her to score. Also making sure we're shutting down their shooters and making sure they're not getting open looks.

So defensively was just as important as offensively for us.



Q. Jacy, you're playing now two games in a row. How are you feeling after playing the two games? And how did it feel overall just to be back on the court?

JACY SHELDON: I'm feeling great. It feels great to be back. We have a really tight-knit group, so it's fun being out there and being back. Yeah, feel great.

Q. Also beating Indiana after the first two games of the season, I know yesterday Cotie was saying it was personal playing this game today. What does it mean to beat Indiana and kind of get over that hump after four straight defeats against them?

KEVIN MCGUFF: Everything's personal for Cotie. (Laughter).

JACY SHELDON: Absolutely, yeah. They're a really good team. We have a lot of respect for them. We've seen them a ton in the Big Ten. It was a great win, but we have a ton of respect. Really good team.

Q. I'm just curious, after that first half, what was kind of the message to, I guess, that you guys heard, that you guys rallied around? It was one of the worst kind of offensive performances you guys have had in the first half, and what did you guys kind of rally around and kind of unite around heading into that second half?

JACY SHELDON: Like T.T. mentioned, our shots weren't really falling in the first half, our outside and inside shots. We kind of reiterated they're going to fall the second half. Obviously being down a little bit, we've been there before. So just having that fight the second half and making sure everybody knew we still had a chance.

Q. I guess late in that second half -- what made sure you guys didn't get rattled as the momentum kind of went your way? How did you guys stay grounded as kind of like the comeback came to fruition?

JACY SHELDON: Just staying together, using each other, building energy off of each other, and making sure everybody had the same mindset. We just rely on each



other in situations like that, and it worked.

Q. It's kind of a broad question, but when you hear "the largest comeback in Big Ten tournament history," what goes through your mind? What was going through your mind when that buzzer hit zero?

JACY SHELDON: We had a really bad first half. That's the first thing that comes to mind. But it just shows the grit in this group to fight back from that deficit is really -- you know, gives everybody a lot of confidence.

Obviously we don't want to put ourselves in that position again, but having that energy the whole time and knowing we can come back was really special.

Q. There's been a couple times after the losses the last couple months where Coach has said the energy wasn't there. When you see the energy that you guys have today, I mean, we're down the stretch here in March. How important is it to play your best ball and play with your most energy?

TAYLOR THIERRY: Yeah, obviously it showed. When we had intensity on our press, we got a lot of stops. Obviously with Jacy back, it helps us have a lot of energy and pressure in the press. So it shows that we can get stops, and that kind of helped us come back.

Q. You guys are one win from a Big Ten title, tournament title. What's the next 24 hours going to be like for you guys, and how ready are you for tomorrow?

JACY SHELDON: We're excited. Maryland and Iowa are really good teams. Now we've just got to focus on recovery, hydrate a lot, watch a lot of film, and be ready to go for tomorrow.

Q. First off, Coach, have you seen anything kind of like this before?

KEVIN MCGUFF: No. It was pretty wild. I think one of the biggest things is it's hard to go down 24 and win a game against anybody, but especially a great team like Indiana. Not only are they a great team, they're well coached, they're very organized, and they have mature, older players who don't get rattled.

So to be able to come back against such a great team was really something special.

Q. Then also, what was the specific message you told them at halftime? And was them coming out and all shooting any part of that message?

KEVIN MCGUFF: First thought in my head is it's my son's confirmation tomorrow, and should I talk to Beth about getting the plane ready so we can get back and I can make that? But then I thought, I don't want to do it.

No, we talked about continuing to get good shots. I thought the shots that we got were fine in the first half. We just weren't making them. And then the last thing I said, I said, hey, guys, there's nothing to save this for. We're not playing until the NCAA Tournament, which is weeks away. So everything we got, we've got to show some fight because, if we want to truly play our best basketball down the stretch of the season, we've got to fight.

So I don't care what the score is, I don't care what the score ends up, but we're going to take the shots that we've been getting, and we're going to fight.

Q. You've struggled with Indiana the last four matchups, and they've been able to shred your press. Today you guys were able to have a lot more success doing it against them today. What did you do differently to make their press so much harder for them to overcome?

KEVIN MCGUFF: I just thought our energy, our pressure at the point of it was way better. Just our overall pressure and our energy was just at a different level than it's been against them.

Like I said, they're not an easy team to press because they're well coached and they're very organized in how they approach things. Obviously Jacy makes a difference out there as well. But I just think our overall energy and aggressiveness was at a much higher level than it's been.

Q. Did you have a particular focus on Mackenzie Holmes? Because Mackenzie Holmes' game was limited in touches.

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah, we did make an adjustment. We put Cotie on her, which we've never done. She absolutely murdered us the first game and the second game. We had no answer.

As I said, the definition of insanity is to keep doing the same things and expect different results. We knew we had to make some type of adjustment there, either double her, so we put Cotie on and fronted just to try to keep it out of her hands.

Once she gets it, it's over because she's so quick and she's got such good touch and she finishes so well.



Q. I noticed also Taylor Mikesell was playing less minutes tonight. Is she okay? Is that just kind of managing minutes?

KEVIN McGUFF: Yeah, she's okay. We were just kind of, yeah, managing minutes as the season gets long and this weekend now gets longer, just to try to give her a little more rest.

Q. Then tomorrow, will playing a third game in three days for Jacy, does that kind of limit her involvement tomorrow?

KEVIN McGUFF: Unless there's something that I don't know or the trainer tells me otherwise, it would probably be similar to today.

Q. Coach, you're not one to make excuses, but when you look at how things have been injury-wise the last month, to see everything out there today and to see what your team did in that second half, is that the Ohio State team you know?

KEVIN McGUFF: Yeah, I think that's the team we're capable of being. So hopefully this gives us some confidence and kind of reminds us what we're capable of. It certainly helps with Jacy back, but I think the rest of the kids have done a great job in her absence.

And there's been injuries all over the league and all over the country. It's unfortunate because I think there's a lot of people with some key injuries all over the country, and that's going to play a big part in how this thing plays out nationally across the board.

Even Indiana dealt with Grace Berger being out for a while, and they weathered the storm. It's been unfortunate that's happened to everybody, but certainly we're getting a little more healthy with Jacy being able to be back playing, and that's a big impact for us.

Q. 24 points, you said that's a lot to come back from, and as you mentioned, the Number 1 seed in the tournament, an Indiana team you've struggled with. Will you take a little extra time to celebrate this one and let it sink in that you guys made history today?

KEVIN McGUFF: We kind of stick to our routine. We enjoy it in the moment, and we'll get back to the hotel and start working on Iowa or Maryland. We know we have a huge challenge tomorrow. They're both great teams and both beat us in the regular season.

Maybe Monday we'll celebrate this one, but right now it will be back to the routine of getting ready for the next one.

Q. I'm curious about, I guess, it seemed like through that first half, while you guys did struggle, it seemed Taylor for you guys was a little bit -- she kept momentum for you guys, kept you guys in. How important of a role did she play, and how, I guess heading into that comeback in the second half, what role did she play, and how big of a boost was she for you?

KEVIN McGUFF: You really got to see her versatility. She can score in a variety of ways. For a stretch there, we played much smaller without Rebecka or Eboni, which basically Taylor was the five. She's driving the ball and calling people to help and getting rid of it.

When Becks and Eboni are making shots, we're probably at our best. But when we're a little off, sometimes we put Taylor at the five, and she's also hard to guard. And that makes us smaller for the press and more athletic.

Q. Obviously you guys want to get through tomorrow as Big Ten Tournament champions, but when you talk about the large scope of a win like this, the win yesterday against Michigan, how important is momentum heading into, I guess, tomorrow, heading into the NCAA Tournament. Do you guys feel like you're building up to something special, building up to something that could be a big-time run for you guys?

KEVIN McGUFF: I think we're going to put ourselves in position hopefully to do that. One of the things is to win two games in the Big Ten Tournament is just rough because the league is so good. So I think with what we faced in the conference schedule and in what we're seeing here in the Big Ten Tournament, we're going to be ready, I think, to face any style or any type of team because the teams here are so good, so well coached, and so organized.

Q. This is one of the several double-digit comebacks for you guys this season. What is it about this team and your chemistry that allowed you guys to be so capable even when you're facing a 10 or a 20-point deficit?

KEVIN McGUFF: They really like each other and they play for each other. That's a real motivating factor that they don't want to let each other down. It's been a great team to coach because of that. If you do this long enough, you're going to have years with great chemistry and you're going to have year of not so good. This is one of my favorite teams I've ever had a chance to coach because of how much they enjoy being around each other.

Q. With Jacy, what does it mean to have her presence back on the court, but to have her in those late-game situations where she has so much experience from her years of playing?

KEVIN MCGUFF: That was great because I didn't have a lot of timeouts, and to have her on the floor where we can execute without a timeout in crucial situations was really, really important.

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