

Big Ten Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Sunday, March 5, 2023

Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

Target Center

Ohio State Buckeyes

Kevin McGuff

Cotie McMahon

Taylor Mikesell

Postgame Press Conference



**WOMEN'S BASKETBALL
TOURNAMENT**
MINNEAPOLIS 2023

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TIAA

Iowa - 105, Ohio State - 72

KEVIN MCGUFF: Congratulations to Iowa. They played an incredible game today and deserve to be the Big Ten champions. So I give them a lot of credit.

We just had a disastrous first half, and they made us pay. They were so efficient on offense. So once again, they played great and deserved to win. We've got to get back and kind of get our mojo back a little bit.

Q. Cotie and Taylor, what kind of motivation can you take from this now with two weeks from this weekend and likely playing in the NCAA Tournament?

COTIE MCMAHON: I think all we can do is move on to the next. We know what we've got to work on, so we've got two weeks of practice. Buckle down, take care of what we need to take care of, and be ready to come out and play our game.

TAYLOR MIKESELL: Kind of like what Cotie said. Kind of what you said, it's motivation knowing we played them even, if not beat them in the second half. Kind of learning from the first half of where we can grow and kind of prevent that from happening again.

Q. Taylor, I know you still have basketball to play, but can you reflect on playing on in your last Big Ten game.

TAYLOR MIKESELL: I would have liked to have won, but we have a lot more to play. So look forward to the NCAA Tournament.

Q. Cotie, in the fourth quarter I know that tensions

were a little high. Can you kind of walk through what happened there.

COTIE MCMAHON: How do I put this? I'd say -- you know, I wasn't getting some of the calls that I wanted, and I feel like I got to a point where I was extremely frustrated, and I kind of just let myself go. You know, it happens to the best of us.

Kind of motivated us a little bit to finish the game and kind of play hard. So, yeah.

Q. This is for either of the players: Coach talked about getting your mojo back, but yesterday you had the biggest rally in the history of this tournament, maybe in the history of Big Ten basketball. You came back strong, relatively speaking, in the second half today. There's got to be a confidence factor heading into the postseason.

TAYLOR MIKESELL: Yeah, definitely, but you kind of look at putting ourselves in that position in the first place, can't happen in March. It's win or go home at this point. You can't really play with those odds.

Q. Coach, what was your message to the team in the locker room after the game?

KEVIN MCGUFF: Just that in the first half, just our competitive spirit wasn't where it's been for almost all of the season. We missed some early shots and then just everything just went away. All the things that we've worked on, talked on, all the things we were trying to do today, we were doing none of those, and Iowa was just making us pay big time.

Every mistake we made, they made us pay, and that's to their credit. Sometimes it's as simple as we were getting shots, you've got to step up and make some shots you're capable of making. Like I said, credit Iowa. That's what they did the whole game.

Q. And not able to make a lot of adjustments because of the foul trouble happening throughout the game. How did that make things difficult for you today?

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KEVIN MCGUFF: We had a hard time getting a rhythm because of the foul trouble. That's part of the game. Like I said, ultimately didn't have any bearing on the final outcome, but just hard for us to get in a rhythm.

Q. And about Taylor Mikesell, as the game's going down the stretch, as you're down, she's still shooting, she's still hitting shots, she's still putting everything into it. Is that kind of Taylor in a nutshell?

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah, she's a competitor. Really that's mostly what I talked about at halftime. It's like I'm not putting anybody out there in the second half unless you're competing at a high level, whether you're making a shot, missing a shot, whether you're making mistakes or whatever, but just competing at the highest level. That's all the second half was going to be about for me.

Q. I'm not a coach, but I can imagine how you game plan against --

KEVIN MCGUFF: Good for you.

(Laughter).

Q. I can imagine how you game plan to have someone take tougher shots or get in their way or get in passing lanes, but for someone like Caitlin, the way she communicates with her teammates. There's times she kind of flick her hand when she wants them to make a certain cut or weird eye contact kind of stuff. Is there a way to game plan against her?

KEVIN MCGUFF: It's hard. Just watching her over the years, one area where she's really grown is she's reading the floor at an extremely high level. For example, they're setting ball screens, and she's reading our coverages and making perfect passes to the appropriate person. At that makes it really tough to defend.

For example, she's coming off a ball screen, and Monika's rolling, so we're helping to take away the roll, and she's throwing a bullet pass to the person we're helping off of. And I think that's where she's really, really grown.

I think early on it was about scoring, but she sees the floor and makes the right decisions as well as anybody I've seen, maybe ever, in college basketball.

Q. You talk about the one-two punch of Clark and Czinano. Most people would say you're going to concede something to Clark every time, but Czinano was amazingly efficient tonight. What are the challenges she presented to you guys tonight?

KEVIN MCGUFF: She's a really efficient scorer around the basket. She does a great job getting position. She's got good hands, and she finishes.

I think one of the stories of this tournament, as good as Clark and Czinano were, the other people who made shots because what it did for us is we were trying to front her so she couldn't get the ball, but we were also trying to be close enough to get to their other shooters who shot the ball so well up here, and that made it a really difficult defensive assignment for us.

Q. I know today was a tough game, but over the three-day stretch, what are maybe positives you can take from this weekend preparing for the NCAA Tournament, or is it focusing on using just today as motivation?

KEVIN MCGUFF: I think when you look at the big picture, we had a good run up here. We beat two really terrific teams and two huge wins. When you start to think now -- and I don't think a lot about this until we get done with the Big Ten Tournament, but when you start to look at seeding, I think this was a very productive tournament for us. We helped ourselves in that regard. As we all know, it's so important to try to get a top 4 seed.

Then we had stretches where we were outstanding. One of the things we'll do is we'll watch film, both good and bad, and then really try to formulate, practice -- plan, practice, to just really get us back to kind of doing the things that have made us really good and kind of shore up some of the things that we need to work on.

Q. They set the attendance record today. Kind of big picture nationally, TV ratings are up. There's a lot of Big Ten teams that draw really well now. Is it sort of trending in the right direction, you feel like? There's even more growth and interest in the women's basketball game?

KEVIN MCGUFF: This year in particular -- obviously COVID, in terms of attendance, kind of lingered nationally, even after the COVID year. Fans weren't really coming back like they were. But I think now the league, with the amount of great teams, players that we have right now, the interest is at an all-time high, and it's showing up in attendance, TV ratings.

I mean, we had some of the most amazing environments that I've ever seen this year. We drew really well. Indiana was off the charts, Iowa. We played at Michigan. They had a great crowd.

So I think Big Ten women's basketball is really going in an incredible direction. I think we have several teams that can make deep runs in the tournament.

One of the things that's really consistent about our league at the top is we've got teams that can really score the ball, and I think as a conference that kind of separates us. Vastly different when I first got here, most teams kind of walk it up, grind it out, and now the offenses have really evolved.

So, yeah, I think this is the best in terms of the brand of Big Ten women's basketball and the play that I've seen since I've been here.

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