

Big Ten Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Wednesday, March 6, 2024

Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

Target Center

Rutgers Scarlet Knights Coquese Washington Destiny Adams

Postgame Press Conference

Minnesota - 77, Rutgers - 69

THE MODERATOR: The Rutgers press conference will start with an opening statement from Coach Washington.

COQUESE WASHINGTON: It's cool to be here at the Big Ten tournament. I think we put on one of the best conference tournaments in the country, and it was a great environment for our team to play in front of.

I thought the Minnesota fan base showed up and made it a really good environment for us to play in. Really proud of how our team competed, showed a lot of resilience with as many injuries as we've suffered through over the course of the season and getting here tonight.

The same thing with Minnesota. I thought it was a great game with two teams who came in kind of limping into the tournament, but both teams played hard and gave a good show for the fans here and for the fans watching on Peacock.

Proud of how we played. Disappointed in the outcome, but really proud of this team for what we've gone through this year.

Q. A record-setting performance, over 30 points, 24 rebounds. I know it didn't come in a win, but did you feel just from the jump that this was going to be a really good game for you tonight?

DESTINY ADAMS: Yes. I think my whole team, I think we were all ready to play. We all came, and we wanted to leave everything we had out on the core, and I think we felt that from the start of the game.

Q. Destiny, what has this year been like for you coming over from UNC and now finishing your first



year at Rutgers?

DESTINY ADAMS: It's been a life-changing year. I think to finally have the chance to play how I used to play, to play for a great coach, to really get the love back for the game. If I could go back and do it again, I would do it all over again regardless.

So it's been a really great year, and I'm really glad I chose to come home.

Q. Late in the game you kind of had that takeover. At what point are you like, I've got to start putting up the shots, got to take the responsibility? You start heating up, and you rack up over 30 points. At what point is that heat check?

DESTINY ADAMS: I think like, if I'm on, if I'm scoring, I think that -- I knew I had to get the ball and put it through the hoop. I think that goes for anybody on our team, whoever's having an on night, they deserve to have the ball. I think that's just what it was for me.

Q. Sorry, follow-up. There was a couple shots that kind of just rolled off the rim. What's going through your head when that kind of happens? And to kind of come back and to continue shooting the ball like that.

DESTINY ADAMS: Everybody misses. You've got to keep going. You miss 100 percent of the shots you don't take, so at some point, you've just got to let it go.

Q. It felt like it was a really efficient performance in terms of shooting the basketball for the whole team tonight. What do you think went into that? It kind of happened against Minnesota last month too. What do you think went into another pretty good shooting performance tonight?

DESTINY ADAMS: I think we knew what we had to do. We've been working on shooting leading up to this game, and I'm really glad we went out there and shot well, just like we practiced.

Q. Despite the disappointment of the game, is there



anything you can take away from this that you can build on going into next season?

COQUESE WASHINGTON: I really like this team. I really like the young ladies that I'm coaching this year. They make it easy to come in the gym every day. They make it easy to come to work every day, to keep fighting because of who they are.

We are still in the mindset and the process of building this program up. We're still building our culture. We're still getting the pieces that we need to have. This year was a really, really tough year for a lot of reasons, but the perseverance that these young ladies showed throughout the season is the thing that we'll take out of it.

That's the lessons that they're going to learn is, you know what, I can persevere through adversity. I can persevere through hard stuff. I can show up every day even when I don't always feel my best.

So those are the things, the lessons that they'll learn, those are the things that make this game great and make coaching worthwhile.

Everybody wants to win every game all the time, but it's what you learn and what you grasp upon and what you embrace in the hard moments that make sports so -- such a wonderful thing to be a part of, and that's what we'll take from it.

Q. So many great performances in that game tonight. As an opposing coach, I know you tried a lot of things against Amaya. You dropped off a little bit. You fought through screens. You went over. You went under. Just kind of give me your impression of the game she played tonight.

COQUESE WASHINGTON: She couldn't miss, you know. She got hot, and we're contesting shots, and as you said, we're trying different ways to stop her, but she got in the zone. That mid-range jumper, she really couldn't miss.

She put the team on her back, especially in the second half. For a stretch there, it was just get the ball to Amaya and get out of her way, and let's see what she can do. I thought she gave their team a lot of confidence and made the big plays, especially late in the fourth quarter when her team needed them.

Q. You just mentioned the part that makes coaching worthwhile. What's it like seeing players like Erica Lafayette really pick it up at the end of the season. Kennedy Brandt starts to get those minutes, she comes in and immediately shoots the three ball.

What's it like as a coach seeing that development, especially late in the season on a stage like this?

COQUESE WASHINGTON: It's really rewarding to see all their hard work pay off because those are two players on our team that, when nobody's in the gym, they are. They're putting the work in for the opportunity to be ready. For the work that they've put in in the dark, everybody got to see.

So it's really rewarding to see them step up and meet the challenge when they're given the opportunity.

Q. In that first half, 15 turnovers. In the second half, I think only one. What was the biggest key to flipping that switch and keeping the ball in possession?

COQUESE WASHINGTON: I thought in the first half we were playing, we were trying to win the game with one play every time down the floor, and we were a little -- gambling a little bit too much, trying to make this pass, trying to make this play.

I think in the second half we just did a better job of just trying to stay patient and poised on offense, getting the ball to the folks that could make the plays and the right plays, and that kind of helped us get shot opportunities instead of turning the ball over.

Q. You and Melissa, two black coaches in this conference. In this tournament for young Black girls and Black young men to see two people of color on the sidelines, how important is that in a tournament, especially in a tournament like this?

COQUESE WASHINGTON: Yeah, I hope it's meaningful. It doesn't matter that we're in 2024, representation matters. Not only just as women of color, but as women. It's Women's History Month that we're celebrating now, and all the accomplishments of women of color in this conference, being able to step into the shoes of Coach Vivian Stringer, who's had tremendous success coaching at Iowa and coaching in this tournament.

So definitely want to be somebody who folks can look up to and have aspirations to do tremendous things in their own lives, whether it's in sport or outside the sport. So take that challenge and just try to be the best we can be all the time.

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