

Big Ten Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 9, 2024

Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

Target Center

Nebraska Cornhuskers

Amy Williams

Callin Hake

Alexis Markowski

Jaz Shelley

Postgame Press Conference

Nebraska - 78, Maryland - 68

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with the Nebraska press conference with an opening statement from Coach Williams.

Go ahead, Coach.

AMY WILLIAMS: Just so incredibly proud of this group. Really excited to continue to advance with them and to be playing in the championship game tomorrow.

I know it's been well documented it's been since 2014 since Nebraska's been back into the championship game of the Big Ten tournament. We're excited, and I couldn't be more pleased that this is the group that's taking us there.

What an incredible performance from our entire team. We thought this whole tournament we've had people step up and make huge plays for us, but Jaz was really special today. It was just fun to sit and watch that.

Q. Jaz, this is for you. Averaging 22 points, 7 assists in this tournament so far, but you've also played 116 minutes in three games. You only sat 4 minutes. I know you're probably running on pure adrenaline right now, but having to play a fourth day in a row, what's your mindset and just the recovery process? You really haven't sat much.

JAZ SHELLEY: Yeah, we have pretty elite staff. I felt really good before this game, and there's no reason why I can't feel like that tomorrow. We have all the resources



possible, getting ice baths after this.

We trained for this before the season even started. I'm ready for it.

ALEXIS MARKOWSKI: Also, I've never seen Jaz Shelley get tired.

CALLIN HAKE: That is true.

Q. Alexis, I wanted to ask, Maryland was pretty aggressively fronting the post and you were constantly kind of having that back side defender. I felt like that got you guys some open looks. Did you anticipate that going in, that type of post defense they were playing, and how much do you think it opened up the shooters?

ALEXIS MARKOWSKI: We knew that they were going to most likely switch 1 through 5. With a guard it requires a lot of help from the back side, and I felt like we were making the right reads today.

Just super proud of this team, our coaches. We worked so hard to get here. I'm just really excited for tomorrow.

Q. Jaz, obviously a really strong first half, then it seemed they really started to key in on you in the third quarter. What happened there, and how did you break out in the fourth?

JAZ SHELLEY: Yeah, I think they were pressuring me a lot, and I started to get my assist game up. I had a lot of attention towards me, and it made other people open. I wasn't on my heat check anymore, kind of slowed that down and tried to work through the offense a little bit better.

Q. Jaz, you made those three consecutive threes in the final minute of the first quarter. Obviously, a lot of game left there. What are you thinking in that moment?

JAZ SHELLEY: I think we really needed to go in strong in that second half. I kind of went unconscious for a little bit.



I was kind of feeling it. Fortunate to have the courage to shoot those kinds of shots. So it was pretty cool to be able to do that.

Q. Lex and Callin, what was it like seeing Jaz go on that run in the first quarter and just the first half overall?

ALEXIS MARKOWSKI: Unreal. Honestly I was speechless. It was after her third three, and I was just like, you're kidding me.

Jaz is just such a special player, and she's just been one of my favorite players I've ever played with. She's just unreal and does everything for this team.

CALLIN HAKE: I think it just is a testament to Jaz's work ethic. She's the first in the gym and the last to leave. The sky is the limit for her, and it's fun to just watch her succeed in this fifth year.

Q. Lex, Maryland had got it closer to start the fourth quarter, then you outscored them 18-9 in the fourth quarter. What are you most proud about how you guys played and approached that fourth quarter?

ALEXIS MARKOWSKI: This whole tournament, I feel like we've had different players step up. With me being in foul trouble today, I felt like Anni Stewart contributed huge today. Kendall Coley hit big shots.

That's why this team is so fun to watch because you never know who is going to step up in the big moments. I just felt like everyone really contributed today.

Q. For any of you guys, I know you guys put up a ton of threes and are still somewhat middle of the pack in the Big Ten in making them. When shots aren't falling in the third quarter and then they are falling in the first half obviously, how do you make sure that you don't get too over-reliant on the three but also that's your game, that's what you guys do?

JAZ SHELLEY: I think at the start of the season we weren't doing very good at that, and we were jacking up threes even though we weren't making them. It's been a point of emphasis now that we have a pretty good feel; if we're making threes, let's keep going to it because we know who the hot hand is. If not, we need paint touches and we need to get inside-outside touches.

So I think we have a better feel on that right now.

Q. Callin, you've played really well in this tournament, taken a ton of charges. What has kind of allowed you

to improve defensively just over the course of your two years?

CALLIN HAKE: Yeah, absolutely. I think just my work ethic is a big testament but I also understand that I'm a spark player and I'm an energy giver to this team. My favorite thing to do is take a charge. I think that infuses our team, and I'm willing to lay my body on the line for this team, so yeah.

Q. Amy, we've talked a lot about Jaz's first quarter and big shots throughout, but down the stretch, she snuck in and got that offensive rebound real late and then hit that runner on the left-hand side. What do those smaller moments mean for those team?

AMY WILLIAMS: I've been saying this for a while, but Jaz Shelley, she is a very capable scorer, but she just does so much more for our team. She's probably our best perimeter defender. We utilize her to guard the other team's best players.

A lot of teams will take their best offensive threat and make sure that they're not going to get into foul trouble or put them on players that they know they can maybe rest on one side of the ball, but we don't allow Jaz to do that. We're asking her to do so much for our team.

I think she's matured so much, just learning how to impact games, whether she's scoring, whether she's assisting, whether she's rebounding, whether she's defending. How can I help our team win basketball games? And that versatility is just what makes her special.

Q. I know you talked about how proud you are for your team, but how proud are you for yourself? You came here in 2016, you guys won seven games. Now look you guys are now playing for a Big Ten tournament title. What does it mean for yourself to know the growth and the process is paying off?

AMY WILLIAMS: To be honest, I can't even really think about that. My brain just immediately goes right back to the special young women that have just poured their heart and soul into making this happen.

I have the most amazing coaching staff in the country, and they work really, really hard for this team and this program and to pour into every one of our young women.

So it's very rewarding for us to watch them putting that Nebraska advancing in the tournament and to be living their dreams.

Q. Coach, you guys talked with them about it, the



shooting performance, I think, was obviously the difference. Do you feel like the first half was a sustained success like method, or did you want to pound it inside more or just kind of keep it going with Jaz and the three-point shooting?

AMY WILLIAMS: To be honest with you, our emphasis is always on balanced scoring attack. How can we have balance? Can we get paint touches? We have an outstanding, one of the best players in the country anchoring us inside in the paint. So to sit there and not capitalize on that and not emphasize how can we get paint touches, how can we get Lex touches inside, how can we go in?

She commands so much attention down there, that it creates some opportunities for the rest of our team. Inside-outside opportunities, we know we're better perimeter shooting when the ball has gotten a paint touch first. So that's something that we look to do.

Now, we can get on heaters and come down, and without a paint touch have good looks for our team still. But I feel like for us we're going to continue to emphasize that balanced scoring attack.

Q. I wanted to ask about the perimeter defense. You guys pretty much took away the arc from them, especially Brinae Alexander who had just hit like five yesterday. How did you guys approach that and try to limit them from scoring on the outside?

AMY WILLIAMS: Yeah, and she still got loose there for a couple of threes in the late, late in the game. So we had to kind of switch some things up to try to kind of chase her around a little bit and lock that up once she felt that and saw two threes go in there late in the game.

Our team is pretty good about being able to mentally lock into defensive personnel and game plan and what we need to do. So I thought they did a great job just knowing that she's been on fire in this tournament. She's been on fire lately, and that we needed to have our left hand in her right pocket for most of the game.

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