

Big Ten Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 5, 2026

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Gainbridge Fieldhouse

Maryland Terrapins

Coach Brenda Frese

Oluchi Okananwa

Postgame Press Conference



Oregon - 73, Maryland - 68

THE MODERATOR: From Maryland we have Coach Brenda Frese and student-athlete Oluchi Okananwa. Coach, if you could make an opening statement.

BRENDA FRESE: I thought two great teams that played their hearts out. You're going to see that in March. They just made a few more plays than we did late game that sent us home.

I thought we came out early, we weathered the storm. We were really aggressive to start the first quarter and did a decent job, especially against their big two in the first half, holding them to two points.

Second half was a tale of two halves, and they got hot. And we had an uncharacteristic shooting night, when, again, you go 1 for 14 from the 3-point line.

I thought Oluchi did as much as she could being able to carry this team. I thought our freshmen gained some really valuable experience. All these lessons that will help us being able to get out of here, out of the Big Ten and be able to play someone new.

Just proud of the fact that we competed as hard as we could for 40 minutes.

Q. Oluchi, can you talk me through the emotions of losing a conference tournament game. It's a bit of an odd situation because you know you have the NCAA Tournament coming up in your case, but there's a certain finality to it at the end of conference play. What does it feel like for you now, and how are you going to try to move on in the next few weeks?

OLUCHI OKANANWA: Disappointing. This definitely was

not the outcome that any of us wanted. I think Coach really -- she said it. We just have to learn from our mistakes. We have to learn from this loss.

At the end of the day it happened. There's no way for us to reverse the clock. It's either we use it or we sink in.

Q. Oluchi, it's been a great year for you this year, transferring in obviously from Duke. Can you just kind of talk about if there were any differences you noticed from having played two years of ACC basketball to now playing a full year of Big Ten basketball and how that might have pushed you to improve your game in certain areas?

OLUCHI OKANANWA: The Big Ten is one of the best conferences in the country hands down, no question about it. I've had no choice but to grow offensively, defensively, just holistically as a basketball player because every night we're going against some of the best girls in the country.

So it's been really valuable for me.

Q. Late in the game obviously it felt like you were trying to carry the team and get a few layups to tie the game. Can you just break down what was going through your head in that scenario trying to tie the game?

OLUCHI OKANANWA: Just be aggressive, be my normal self. A lot of good things happen for me when I drive, whether it's me getting to the line or finishing with a bucket. That was my mentality, just be aggressive.

Q. You've had this experience before in postseason play and conference play with ACC. How do you kind of take last year's winning experience, this year's loss together and carry that into the NCAA and also prep your younger classmen who haven't had this yet?

OLUCHI OKANANWA: I don't know. I don't think much about last season. I'm just so in the present with this team and where we are right now. Like I said, what's happened has happened, and I really do feel like we are going to use this as fuel for the NCAA.



Q. You've talked a lot about how to -- like over the course of the season, just the development of experience and the team always kind of being right there but not being able to finish. I know we talked earlier about being able to play 40 full minutes of basketball as a key component there. If you're able just for a second to think big picture about where this team started at the beginning of the year and where they are now; can you talk about that process and the growth of this journey to that point?

BRENDA FRESE: Absolutely. When you look out on the floor, oftentimes we're playing two or three freshmen that are out there. Isi for the first time as a junior, her first experience. A lot of lessons.

We've gone through a lot of adversity this season. We've continued to grow as a team and continue to get better every single time.

It's kind of been very rewarding as coaches to be able to see their chemistry and their camaraderie come together because I think a lot of people counted this team out.

Q. Late in the game you had three timeouts; you decided not to use them. Obviously that kind of backfired with them hitting the three at the end. Didn't really have much to do there. Just break down that decision and why you decided not to call a timeout there.

BRENDA FRESE: We talked about it. Obviously they had the ball. We couldn't call a timeout because we were on the defensive end. I thought the one that I was considering calling, Oluchi was in transition so I wasn't -- I knew what she looks like. That was about the point when I was going to call one.

Her in the open court, I'm going to take any day, and I would have thought she would have been able to be able to finish that. It was really kind of how it played out and unfolded.

Q. Last time whenever Oregon came to College Park, kind of a similar fourth quarter. What did you see Oregon doing so well in the late game stages last time and then tonight?

BRENDA FRESE: Sadly it felt kind of like deja vu. Their big two took over in the second half, obviously, as you saw. Then almost eerie, very similar of helping off the wrong players, some basic rules defensively we have. That's pressure, right?

In times of pressure, whether you revert back or you stay true to who you are. I think you just saw Oregon's experience kind of play out a little bit stronger than what we were able to do.

Q. We're going to find out soon who the host sites are going to be for the first round. If you had to make a pitch to the committee despite the loss of why you think your resume is good enough to host, why would that be?

BRENDA FRESE: Again, it shouldn't be judged off of one game. I think our conference prepares you night in and night out. We've seen that, being in the best conference in the country. I think you should be rewarded for your body of work.

When you look at we've had six Quad 1 wins, five that have been on the road. This was a Quad 1 game, even though Oregon was an 11 seed in the tournament. So they're still a top 25 NET team. Just the competition we've been able to face night in and night out.

Q. On that last possession, there was a four or five second differential, and you opted to let it play out instead of fouling. What were you looking at there and hoping to get out of that?

BRENDA FRESE: After we called the timeout? You know, it was a possession. They were hitting free throws. I didn't feel good about -- I trusted our defense we were going to be able to get a stop, especially having that many timeouts available. I trusted that we were going to be able to get a stop defensively because they hit a lot of free throws tonight.

Q. I wanted to check in on Addi a little bit. We didn't see her as much the second half. Was that a game time call there and a little more on her?

BRENDA FRESE: I thought Kyndal in the second half just commanded things a little bit more. Again, we're playing with two freshmen point guards. I thought where Kyndal came in and kind of settled us on the offensive end and ran some really great things. Defensively I just thought she was the better matchup tonight.

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