

Big Ten Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 6, 2026

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Gainbridge Fieldhouse

Iowa Hawkeyes

Coach Jan Jensen

Taylor StremLOW

Journey Houston

Postgame Press Conference



Iowa 64, Illinois 58

JAN JENSEN: Well, I'm just really pleased with how we opened up. I think it's always the rub; Illinois is playing three games in three days but they also had some of that experience.

Sometimes when it's your first time, we don't get a shootaround here today due to the timing. But I just really was pleased with how we came out out of the chutes. We really knew the scout, and I think our defense set the tone.

So I'm just really grateful to get that first win.

Q. Journey, there was a play in that fourth quarter, I believe, where you stole the ball away from Cearah Parchment. Can you tell us about that play?

JOURNEY HOUSTON: I really just have the stay-ready mindset all the time. We've had to handle a lot of adversity lately with Hannah being out, so I took my role serious today and I was just ready for all moments.

Q. When Illinois starts to get closer in those last final moments, how do you guys stay in the right mindset?

TAYLOR STREMLow: I think like Coach Jan said, it's a great experience for us. Regardless of who's on the floor, we're trying to stay together, stay on the same page, make sure we're looking over at Coach, getting the plays, and I think that group that was out there gave it their all and they're going to use what they learned today for the following games and the rest of the postseason games, so great experience for us.

Q. Taylor, I wanted to ask you about that play late in

the second quarter where Chit-Chat kind of dropped it between her legs and you threw a one-handed pass. Were you expecting her to do that? How good did that pass feel?

TAYLOR STREMLow: Yeah, Chat has done that about twice now so I should have picked it up on it a little sooner. I could have made that shot off of it, but it ended up being fine. Got to drop it off to her. Those plays are fun. Got to make sure you complete them, that makes it more fun.

But yeah, fun play, chat is a good player, she made a great play, good lay-up, so yeah, loved it.

Q. The pace from the stands for offense seemed much slower than we're used to watching. Was that the plan coming out or after a lead was established?

TAYLOR STREMLow: I think pushing the pace is something we wanted to do. I think our transition was pretty good. Coming off the -- just from the start of the game, so slowing it down as the game progressed, trying to manage the clock was probably what made it appear a little slower.

Definitely a strategic thing but also want to make sure we continue to push the ball in transition.

Q. Can you speak about the X factors that you locked down Illinois's explosive offense for the first three quarters?

JOURNEY HOUSTON: We really took the scout serious. We kind of struggled with it a bit last game, so I feel like everybody did a good job studying it and being well prepared for this game.

Q. You see a sea of black and gold out there. Can either of you describe the feeling of seeing your community get behind you like that?

TAYLOR STREMLow: Yeah, I wouldn't expect anything less from the Hawkeye fans. We never take it for granted they travel wherever we go. There's no place like Iowa and the fans will show up and cheer us on regardless of where



in the country or out of the country even that we take our squad.

So go Hawks.

Q. Obviously eight days ago you guys played Illinois and that was a really close back-and-forth game. What did you see differently that went well for you guys?

JAN JENSEN: Well, I thought back then, we didn't -- we weren't quite as sharp defensively. We didn't remember who were drivers and who were shooters. This league is really a good -- it's just so good.

The 10 seed is Illinois, right? They were all so crazy hot that night. I think they hit nine threes in a row. That usually not as high of an aspect for them, so they were really good that night. We made some defensive tweaks in how he wanted to handle their 4 and 5. We changed that up a little bit.

I also did some switching on occasion with Chit-Chat and with Kylee. So we just tweaked a little, but I think we remembered who we needed to stunt, who we needed to try not let's see the light of day.

I just think Journey was right; I think our scout was better, but I do think our staff did a good job going back and watching the film and what we could correct and tweak a little bit. We were able to tone down their inside kids a little better.

Q. 20 assists tonight; you're second in the country in assist rate. As a coach, how much is that something that you can instill in your players or do they need to have that within their being to share the ball?

JAN JENSEN: That's just something -- I've been at Iowa now since 2000, and that's kind of been engrained, and I think the philosophy we've always had. We just really always celebrate the pass.

I think we try to make almost a bigger deal out of the pass on some occasions than the score itself. You try to drill it. You're trying to let them know what option one and option two is.

But they're pretty selfless team for the most part. I'd say Chit-Chat Wright to a fault. She is always -- I think she could shoot it about 25 times more a game I feel, but she really wants to probe and look to hit someone. But it's a little bit by design, but I think it's a little bit about the young women I'm blessed to coach and try to recruit to that. You try to come here and you want to be a part of it.

You're not sure who's going to be the one, but I think if you recruit to be a part of it, it's a pretty fun system to play in.

Q. Can you speak about the impact of Ava on the game tonight and just how much she's grown?

JAN JENSEN: Yeah, I'm just really proud of Ava. It was about a year ago where she had a really nice Big Ten Tournament and started to show glimpses of what I thought she could be in the recruiting process. There's really a nice article in the Des Moines Register, one of our sports beat writers Chad Leisitkow, and Ava was really honest in that interview and talked about how frustrating it was. She wasn't trust the process.

But boy it's a beautiful thing if you coach when all of a sudden the lights kind of go on, even if they're not quite sure that they want to go through steps 1 and 2 and 3, they just want to get to 4.

I thought her impact tonight, what was she, 6 for 7, and her fouls tonight were kind of weird. Even though she had fouls they were these moving screens and that is such a subjective call. I believe it was -- I thought the refs were great, but it's like, oh, the leg is too wide. Her knee was out.

I can send in about 12 other clips during the course of the year. So I'm happy that it's that type of foul tonight, because that I can say, okay, do not move, make your legs as narrow as possible. But I just thought it was a really well-played game. I thought she changed the game when she was in there.

Q. Can you speak to the game plan for defense going forward with Hannah coming back injured today, Ava six blocks today?

JAN JENSEN: Yeah, number one, I just want to shout out Hannah Stuelke. I told our local media on Wednesday I think was my last presser, Hannah has not come to practice barely since the Illinois game when she got hurt. Then two days ago she got that virus stuff that everybody has going around, and our training -- I shout out to Andrea Chilcote and our med team.

The elbow injury, a lot of wrestlers get it, so she went over to the wrestling complex and really talked to the trainers about all the different ways to tape the elbow, and Hannah, the swelling was so much, so on Wednesday she wasn't even in the gym.

So then we left on Thursday and she was also not feeling well. It just didn't look good. She couldn't even have shot it. We found a good mechanism of taping this morning,

and she looked really good at shootaround.

She told me she had a lot of people praying for her, and I agree; I was, too.

Q. Coach, I'm curious to see what you saw from your team, 36 points in the paint this evening. What did you see in the early phases of the matchup that allowed you guys to get so much inside presence this evening and exploit some of that from the Illini defense?

JAN JENSEN: Yeah, I think from the first game we had a pretty good inside presence so I knew unless they changed things drastically we should be looking in there. It's kind of an interesting matchup because their 4 and 5, how good is Parchment, right, a freshman, and Berry Wallace is as good as they come.

But they're a 4 and 5 that can shoot threes and do guard actions, and so we have to defend that. They can also post-up.

But we spend a lot more of our time doing the post-up, so if we can get an advantage in there, you kind of have to defend and not give up too many threes because you're getting twos, but I thought our angles were pretty good. I thought the first 35 minutes, I think this game was really great.

Then the end of it, I just wanted to make sure my locker room held because it was a really good game the last five minutes. That just happens if they leave their people in and you're going with some of yours to get some rest. I just told them, hopefully that experience is going to come in handy if we get to keep playing deep in April. But I did like the matchup on that high-low.

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