

2022 WNBA Commissioner's Cup

Tuesday, July 26, 2022

Las Vegas Aces

Becky Hammon

Pregame



Q. Can you describe the dynamic in your first year coaching the Aces, the dynamic you've seen between the Sky and the Aces in terms of this word that gets thrown around a lot, rivalry, and your experience as a player in the WNBA and some rivalries that you experienced and how the dynamic between these two teams stacks up.

BECKY HAMMON: I don't think there's any rivalry. We haven't won anything. You've got to win something before there can be a rivalry. They have a championship. I'm sure we get tossed around because our two teams have been sitting atop the league this year, but I don't know if there's a rivalry yet. There has to be some blood in order for there to be a rivalry. Somebody has got to get hit.

Q. What does it mean for you, tonight's game?

BECKY HAMMON: I mean, it's just fun for the girls and myself. I mean, it's just another way to put some money in their pocket, kind of see where we're at at this point of the season. I think Chicago is the standard. They have a lot of buy-in and play the right way. They move the ball, so many willing passers. They cut really hard, they run really hard because they get the ball when they do so.

Your heads have to be on a swivel because they're sending a lot of different cutters, and you have to be locked in for 40 minutes.

Q. In the last matchup where the Sky were able to mount that comeback in Las Vegas, it did seem like the starters were running a little bit low on gas towards the end of the game, but now the bench has been more fortified, Riquna Williams is back. Teresa has really done well this season, as well, and Iliana. How important is it going to be to rely on the bench a little bit more, facing a deeper team like the Sky?

BECKY HAMMON: Well, we definitely have to have stretches where the bench comes in, and is solid. Riquna is obviously a big part of that. Kiah Stokes really solid

minutes, Illy has come in. We're just trying to put people in the right situations, empower them when they do go out there, and hopefully make a little run at somebody.

We have a lot of good offensive pieces, but in the last week, two weeks, ever since All-Star break, I told them I don't care about offense, I want defense. Defense for 40 minutes. After that, I don't really care about your jump shot.

Q. Just curious, given that this is new from the time that you were a player in the league, do you like having an in-season tournament? Do you like the way it's set up? Do you think there's even more room for experimentation and innovation around this in-season tournament?

BECKY HAMMON: I like it. If you're overseas you've done it a lot. Spain has the Queen's Cup, Russia has an inner season tournament. Everybody has been doing this. Everybody has goes overseas, so everybody knows the deal. But I'm all for putting a little bit more cash in the girls' pockets, so I'm down for it.

Q. How do you think a high-stakes championship game like this can prepare your team for the Playoffs?

BECKY HAMMON: Well, for me it's kind of my first real battle with them, so I'm kind of excited to see how we come out. This is a group that's had many battles together. I'm kind of the newbie on the block, so I want to see how they perform, their energy, how mentally locked in we are. It's a really great test to kind of see what I've really got.

Hopefully we come out and we execute, like I said, our defensive game plan first and foremost, and then after that we'll figure it out.

Q. I was wondering, you talked a little bit about that defensive mentality that you've been trying to put in since the All-Star break. How do you feel like the defense has played since the break, and what do you need to see from that side of the ball tonight and going forward? Is it more of what you've seen the last seven games or do you even want more than that?



BECKY HAMMON: Minus that first quarter of the Atlanta game, I think we've been pretty solid defensively. We obviously play with a lot of possessions per game, so it's really hard for my team to hold somebody in the 60s and 70s because you're playing with so many possessions. We kind of have to gauge a little bit differently on our success on the defensive end, so field goal percentage, three-point field goal percentage, points in the paint. We have to look at it a little bit differently.

But for us going into tonight, we know this team is tops in the league in getting downhill into the paint, kind much creates their drive and kick, little dump-off, so we really want to be focused coming in here, keeping the ball in front, as basic and elementary as it sounds, stay between your man and the basket, and how do we do that best.

I've liked what I've seen in spurts, and so we've just got to continue to build off that, and again, solid for 40 minutes.

Q. I know you guys wanted to host this game, but would you say that was more from a wanting the home-court advantage perspective or to avoid having another game on this road trip on this?

BECKY HAMMON: I don't know, I haven't really liked us at home. So I'm kind of glad we're on the road.

Q. I know you guys are partnered with ACLU of Nevada for the charity side of it. I wanted to know how that partnership came together and why ACLU of Nevada for the team.

BECKY HAMMON: I have no idea what you're talking about. That's probably a question for our GM or something. I'm sure it's a quality organization, but nobody told me anything about what you just asked me.

Q. You're one of the three teams that selected a local chapter of the ACLU --

BECKY HAMMON: Thank you. That gives some context.

Q. Actually I talked to their executive director this morning and said your team president came to them several months ago and they were absolutely delighted to get a call that was positive, because usually when the ACLU gets a call it's about something more controversial. I was going to ask, have you gotten any feedback from your players about the sponsorship and how important it is to them?

BECKY HAMMON: I mean, I think equality, civil rights is something that the WNBA has been on the forefront the

whole time. So I'm not surprised that we would lean back and try to give back to those areas.

If you look at what Nikki (Fargas) and Mark Davis are putting together, I think you see a little bit of a trend of trying to give people opportunity, and so putting money back into the local community in a way that's meaningful to everybody and also meaningful to our team means a lot to the girls.

Anytime we can give back, that's kind of been our theme for the season. You can't out-give life and you can't out-give the game. Meaning no matter how much you give, you will always get more back. It's the weirdest thing. It's kind of a law of -- I don't know, there's something to it. You can't explain it because you think the more I give, the less I'm going to have, and giving is not like that. Giving actually you get more in return.

So whether you're giving back to your community, giving back to your family members, friends, however you're giving in your life, you will always get more back, and basketball is the same way. No matter how much you give the game, it's always going to give you more back.

It's a little bit of play on our natural senses to be selfish. I've got two little boys, I've got to teach them how to share because being selfish comes very naturally to them. Nobody has to teach us how to be selfish. You have to learn how to share.

Sharing and the girls giving back is something that I don't want them ever to take for granted but I also want them to take some pride in the way that they impact their communities.

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