

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 3, 2022

Nashville, Tennessee, USA

Bridgestone Arena

Arkansas Razorbacks
Mike Neighbors
Amber Ramirez
Sasha Goforth

Postgame Press Conference



SASHA GOFORTH: He was talking about how there was no way I shouldn't have been on the SEC All-Defensive Team, and he just told me keep doing what I'm doing. And he is proud of me.

MIKE NEIGHBORS: Very.

Q. Amber, what did you sigh from Makayla and her toughness especially on the boards?

AMBER RAMIREZ: I think Mak had a career night on boards. She had 14 rebounds, and that's great. I'm glad Mak is back on the court with us. It just gives us another scorer, another defender, another play maker and having her back is a great thing for us.

Q. Sasha, what were you able to do to limit Frank offensively?

SASHA GOFORTH: I just tried to be in her way. The coaches talked a lot about in preparation for this game being knee to knee with her. I think I've made the mistake in the past thinking I was there and close enough, but I wasn't, so I made sure today to not make that same mistake.

Q. Amber, what were you able to do as a team to stay patient even in overtime?

AMBER RAMIREZ: I think Makayla and Sam did a great job of controlling the pace. When to push it and when it slow it down. Sasha made a big shot in overtime and I think we did a great job defensively. Sasha did a great job defensively in limiting Hayley Frank.

Q. Hey, Coach, how do you think Missouri did defensively as far as holding Amber Ramirez scoreless in the first half and stuff like that?

MIKE NEIGHBORS: Robin and her staff are as good as it comes when it comes to preparing a team, and I think they all -- the two times we played them, Amber has been able to get free a lot. It was obviously a focus. They switched a lot of actions. They face-guarded her. They kept fresh legs on her, and that comes down to preparation and their

Arkansas 61, Missouri 52

MIKE NEIGHBORS: I think our game delivered what you expect out of an 8-9 game. A game where two teams have played each other twice already this year and eight times over the last four years. It was rugged. It was hard to score on both ends because we do know each other so well. The atmosphere that the SEC creates for the tournament is so enjoyable for our kids. I think we were nervous because of that, and we missed a few shots that I think tomorrow will fall for us.

Just the way this team has played all year long, you knew there was a run coming, and it was just a slight difference over a team that I've got a lot of respect for in Missouri, and I think it was a great battle between two teams that should be in the NCAA Tournament.

Q. Amber, what was the difference between the first half and the second half with how they were defending you, or was it something that just clicked offensively for you?

AMBER RAMIREZ: I think I missed a couple of easy shots in the first half, and in the second half I just let the game come to me. Didn't force a lot of shots, and my teammates kept giving me confidence to shoot the same shots that I got in the first half.

Q. Sasha, what did coach say to you after you had that block in overtime?

MIKE NEIGHBORS: You can tell them.



kids going out and executing. I thought their kids were very disciplined. When we would drive it at that side, that defensive player never left Amber. Their ball screen action, they did a really good job of getting into Amber's space. She is so good at -- we call it a hostage dribble. You know, getting you on the back of somebody and making them a hostage. She couldn't get to that point in the first half.

We changed a little bit of our screening angle the second half, and I think that was the difference. Missouri was so well prepared coming into the game. I think they've been -- having played us so many times, you learn, and we knew it was going to take option C, D, or E. It wasn't going to be A, B or C tonight.

Q. Coach, in a game where it just seemed like shots wouldn't fall, layups would not fall, your defense stepped up, we were talking about blocks. You guys had ten blocks today. How nice is it to know that if your offense isn't clicking, that defense was locked down, if this game didn't go into overtime, Missouri was sub-50?

MIKE NEIGHBORS: I think this is the first press conference I've ever talked about our defense winning a game, but I think it happened. Because the shots weren't falling, we had to -- we knew we had to do it on that end. If we hadn't been guarding on the other end, we would have been down 15 or 20 instead of five or six.

I think a lot of it has to do with how we react on the sidelines. We have a group of kids that is such a pleasing group. If we miss a layup and you see all of us over there go (Sigh), they feed off of that. I think we made it a point tonight that that wasn't going to be it. We were just next shot, next play, let's go get a stop on the other end. I wouldn't have told you that -- if you would have told me we were going to hold them to 29.9%, I would not have predicted an overtime. I would have thought that would be enough to win the game, but it wasn't tonight. I'm glad that we had it.

Sasha, as I mentioned, I think has proven herself, and our team, I get it. There's not one player on that Defensive Team that should not have been on it. I'm not one of those coaches. There's not one player you could take off of it. They're all good. We just needed more this year on the team because we had a five classes of kids. I wish that class -- we could have done something. I know we can't, but I just wanted Sasha to know that it's better to not get an award that you deserve than the vice versa, and we all know that she's one of the best defensive players in the conference, and I just wanted to make sure she knew that.

Q. You have been able to beat Missouri three times this season, and won the last seven match-ups against them. What is it about the way you guys match up with Missouri that's allowed you to have so much success?

MIKE NEIGHBORS: I really can't tell you that. It amazes me because they've all been good games. They've every one been competitive. There's never been a time that I ever felt comfortable. I think it's just a bad match-up for them and a good match-up for us. That happens from time to time. Three times in one year, that dispels a really old coaching cliché about it's hard to beat a team three times in a year, which it is, but it's not impossible if you've got a good plan and your kids execute a variety of different ways.

Missouri's match-up -- you know, Hayley Frank is such a good player, and with the addition of LaDazhia Williams and then you put shooters like Hansen and Troup around and a fast player like Dembele, it is a real struggle to try to guard those guys, but I didn't know it was seven in a row, but I am shocked because the games have been so good.

Q. Coach, with this one now behind you, how do you prepare for South Carolina tomorrow?

MIKE NEIGHBORS: You celebrate this one for as long as you possibly can. It's not the move on when we get to the hotel. Enjoy this until well past midnight. I'll talk to you at breakfast.

It's been a while since we played them. We played them pretty early in the season. All we've had a chance to do is know what we all know, what everybody else in the league knows, that they're the best team in the country. You have to hope that you catch them maybe a little bit off. We want to take advantage. I think it's our advantage in the first half tomorrow having played today. Sometimes being that team that's been sitting, sometimes -- I'm not saying all the time -- sometimes it's your advantage in the first half. So we have to be ready to take advantage of that.

Our athletic training staff will be the most important people in the hotel tonight. We went all in. We didn't play a very deep bench tonight. I felt like this game was so important when it comes to the postseason with NCAA implications that we find a way to win the 8-9 game in this league this year, which I think the SEC is deserving of a record number of teams in the tournament, so I thought we needed to play however many we needed to play to win. We'll play a lot more kids tomorrow a lot earlier, I can promise you.

Q. What does it say about Makayla that she had her



first career double-double?

MIKE NEIGHBORS: Is it her first? And she drew nine fouls, so that's almost a triple-double.

Here's what I think you look down at, that plus-12. When she was in the game, we were plus-12. Then you look to the other side of the stat sheet, and you see 3-for-17. I would have thought that was mathematically impossible to go 3-for-17, but still have a line-up that was plus-12. That shows you how valuable her defense and rebounding is.

I'm proud Mak got her a double-double. I didn't know it was her first. It won't be her last, that's for sure.

Q. What was your halftime conversation like, and was there something you specifically said to Amber to help her get in her groove?

MIKE NEIGHBORS: No, it was a little adjustment Coach Todd made in the offense. Just getting her in a couple of different spots trying to get the match-ups. They were switching everything in the first half to where it ended up being Dembele guarding her, so we ran a couple of actions that didn't involve ball screens, and then we did point out to our guards as we were driving it, Amber was open behind the drive several times. That was really what got her going. She made one of those. We just pointed that out.

It was really calm in there. We didn't talk for very long. As the year goes along, we spend a lot more time as coaches outside so that the kids can talk to themselves because they usually find a way to fix it, and they had it fixed by the time we got in there.

Q. You joked on the broadcast about a defensive battle not being a common win for your team. What was different about this game?

MIKE NEIGHBORS: I think that we've been through it in the past. These games we kind of get frustrated, and we get down, and we wouldn't have a way to end up on the winning side of that because our frustrations would get the better of us, but just their positive talk to each other, like keep hanging in there defensively, keep getting stops, the shots are going to fall, keep driving it in there and encouraging each other. You all can see Mak visibly when she would miss a layup there late in the game, her shoulders and her -- and people told her to stop doing that, and I just think that's the difference.

Our team is -- even though we're still really, really young in years old, experiences and adversities and situations we're getting more under our belt.

Thank you all.

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