

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 7, 2024

Greenville, South Carolina, USA

Bon Secours Wellness Arena

Arkansas Razorbacks

Coach Mike Neighbors

Makayla Daniels

Jenna Lawrence

Postgame Press Conference

Auburn 67, Arkansas 48

THE MODERATOR: We're now joined by Arkansas.

We'll start with an opening statement from Coach.

MIKE NEIGHBORS: Congratulations, Coach Harris, her staff, Auburn, for a great year. Capped off today with a win in the SEC tournament. They've been really peaking down the stretch, playing so well the last couple weeks of the season.

I was proud of our effort. We really hung in there till that fourth quarter till we really ran out of gas. But they really made it hard for us to function, whether it was to get to the rim or get an open look at the three. We credit their defense, credit their effort.

Our team is really looking forward to getting home, getting some rest, see what's left in the post-season.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Makayla, can you talk a little bit about your last five years at Arkansas, who you were as a player when you got here, then now.

MAKAYLA DANIELS: I think I'm a completely different person than who I was when I got on campus, in a good way. I think I've grown a lot over the past five years, being more vocal, being more aggressive and assertive.

If I would have went anywhere else, I wouldn't have had



this growth. I'm thankful to my coaches and teammates for allowing me to grow here.

Q. Jenna, what has it meant to play alongside Makayla?

JENNA LAWRENCE: It's meant a lot. She's like a mentor to me. She's helped me throughout this whole process of adapting from high school to college. She's always made me feel comfortable being out there. Being a freshman is hard, you're really nervous. You have to adapt a whole lot more than with high school.

Her being out there, calming me down, if I mess up, it's okay, next play, next play. Really helps me and I'm thankful for her.

THE MODERATOR: We'll let the student-athletes head back. We'll take questions for Coach.

Q. When you first started Makayla, did you think she was going to start every single game of her career?

MIKE NEIGHBORS: No. I mean, no. You don't expect a freshman to come in and do that. When we signed her -- let me clarify it -- the day we signed her, that wasn't the plan. We had some depth and some veterans. But then she got on campus, and you knew pretty quick it was going to be tough to keep her off the floor.

It took summer two of her freshman year and about three practices for me to not be the only one that was convinced of it. Our players wanted her to be their point guard.

The fact that she's done what she's done for us, I've said it at our place an awful lot about her legacy, where she'll leave, how her memory will be taking us to five straight post-seasons. This will be our sixth overall but fifth with her. That's not been done at Arkansas.

To answer your question directly, no, not the day I signed her. But after about two weeks, yeah.

Q. What has she meant to the program?



MIKE NEIGHBORS: She made us relevant again. When she signed with us, I think we were the 12th or 13th seed in this thing. When she committed to us, we were picked at the bottom. We played on Wednesday. She hasn't done that since she's been here. She's won some games in this thing.

I'm thankful that she came. There's a lot of kids that told us no that year. A lot of kids said, Nah, we're going to try something different.

I obviously will think about the things off the floor that y'all aren't interested in hearing those things. She's the kid that y'all think she is. There's a lot of people that watch her and go, Is she really that good a kid? Is Coach just saying it because he has a microphone in front of him?

I talked about her mother and father need to write a book on getting a kid freshman-ready. And Mak has been through it. You think about she came to a place where we weren't winning, went through COVID, all the other things we've been through. And she's been a rock-solid kid for us, a kid that we'll tell stories about, we'll use her to tell stories to future Razorbacks. She's been everything you could hope for.

Q. How has the relationship with you and her progressed?

MIKE NEIGHBORS: It's been different every single year, whether it was find a growth area for her. She's not the most talkative kid. We let her do that for two years, then get her out of that, put her on a council on campus to where she has to use her voice. She's always got such neat thoughts.

But we kept trying to stretch her and grow. When she let us know she could come back, we were constantly looking for new things for her to be involved in in the city.

The emails I get from parents who talk about her staying well after our autograph signings are over. I got one about after a tough loss at home, we had a tough at-the-buzzer loss. A family saw her out eating at a restaurant. They said they were trying to be respectful of Mak, the family was. The parents were, No, stay over here, she's eating with her family.

They said that Mak noticed it. She picked up on the fact that this little girl wanted to come over but was being told no. So you know what Mak did? She goes over there, pulls up a chair and talks.

That's the stuff that make you really proud. But there's so many stories like that, what she's meant to all of our

teammates. Her Senior Night, when her mom and dad called out, we were all in tears. We played the first two minutes of that Vanderbilt game with people with tears running down your face.

That shows you how much she's admired, how many people she's inspired. We're just really thankful that she was a Razorback and now she'll always be a Razorback.

Q. You've played this Auburn team twice now. There's been some speculation as to whether or not they deserve a spot in the NCAA tournament.

MIKE NEIGHBORS: From who?

Q. Prognosticators.

MIKE NEIGHBORS: Okay.

Q. In your opinion, do you think they deserve a spot?

MIKE NEIGHBORS: Unequivocally, absolutely, 100%. They've got the wins, they've got the résumé. Yeah, I think they're in. I think they've historically done everything that a tournament team should do. They're playing well at the right time. They're healthy. They're peaking.

They split with LSU, right? She won down there, then the other game -- I've always said it's going to be their advantage in the first half tomorrow because they've played, they kind of had the nerve, used to the balls, the rims. Then maybe it's LSU's advantage in the second half.

I would be shocked. I'd be shocked.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thanks for your time.

MIKE NEIGHBORS: Yep, you got it.

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