

2021 DI Women's Volleyball Championship - 1st & 2nd Round

Friday, December 3, 2021
West Lafayette, Indiana, USA
Holloway Gymnasium

Dayton Flyers
Coach Tim Horsmon
Lexie Almodovar
Elizabeth House
Maura Collins

Press Conference

Purdue 25-27, 19-25, 25-15, 25-6, 15-5

Dayton

COACH HORSMON: It was a great atmosphere tonight. And we're obviously disappointed with the loss. And we have a lot of great seniors in our locker room right now that -- it's kind of a bittersweet way to end our season and their careers. They had four to five, and Jamie Peterson, six pretty awesome years at Dayton.

We obviously put ourselves in pretty good position after two sets tonight. And I think we just kind of fizzled out a little bit and lost some energy. And I think the things that got us there, we kind of lost that identity that we needed to carry on.

But Purdue is a really, really good team. And they have the ability to go a long way this year. Really well-coached and to see them continue to work through things, they were tough in those last three sets.

Q. Coach, that was a tough loss, but you seem to have a smile on your face. Can I ask what's keeping you smiling in this moment?

COACH HORSMON: We're the University of Dayton, and little old Atlantic 10 Conference. And we have, I think, a great legacy now within our program. And we recruit great kids and great young women and players.

But we played the No. 6 team in the country who has been



as hot as any team in the country this last few weeks. And it's just fun to watch our players battle and see how hard they worked.

And I got one of them sitting next to me right now in a senior in Maura who's making play after play, even when things are tough. And you've got to love that. I was proud of them.

We weren't great at the beginning of the year. We just had that conversation in our locker room. To see where we started and where we ended and how we competed against one of the best teams in the country is pretty phenomenal, when you look back at the last three months.

Q. Maura, Coach said it, you were incredible making athletic play after play, knowing that you're a senior and this is your last moment what do you say to your team tonight after a tough loss?

MAURA COLLINS: I said this to them in the locker room, but this is the first time in a long time that two back-to-back seasons we've gone in the second round of the NCAA Tournament, went five with the No. 6 team in the country. I think that speaks to the kind of the legacy us upperclassmen are leaving, but also the capabilities and expectation that our freshmen and sophomores, going forward, now have and can set for those incoming freshmen next year.

I think that lays a really good foundation for the teams to come. So that's kind of what I told them, and I encouraged them to reflect on tonight and what went wrong in those third, fourth, fifth sets and learn from it. And as leaders, you're going to have to prepare for those moments and coming matches and I think they'll be better prepared to lead through those and come out with different results.

Q. Lexie, you are the second player in your program's history to have double-doubles in NCAA Tournament games. You did it last year and you continue -- 21 kills last night, 15 digs -- and you come out tonight and you have, I believe, 10 kills tonight. As a 5'8" hitter, what does that do for your confidence?

LEXIE ALMODOVAR: For me, I think confidence is just

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the biggest thing. We always talk about like being fearless in our gym. And I think that's something that's been with me in my first two years here at Dayton, the nothing-to-lose mentality and just the swing big no matter what, and trust that my team will have my back. So, just their confidence in me allows me to do that.

COACH HORSMON: By the way, Lexie's, in her two years of being here, you're right. But in the great state of Indiana, I think coming out of high school she was one of the top one or two kill leaders in the whole state of Indiana at 5'8" too. And 5'8" at the top of that bun over there, that squirrel on top of her head.

Q. Lexie, to that, obviously you're from Noblesville 45 minutes from here. How special was it to have an NCAA Tournament match here two nights in a row where I'm sure you had friends, family that were able to come and watch you play?

LEXIE ALMODOVAR: It was awesome. My grandpa also played basketball here, so just having him be able to watch -- and just all my friends and family that were able to be here and support me, that was really cool.

Q. Tim, as was mentioned yesterday, you hadn't lost in two and a half months. Kind of tell me about the scheduling early, where you scheduled tough knowing we're going to get in the NCAA Tournament, we're going to have to win a match like this. And your girls looked like they were prepared to come in and play the No. 6 team in their place.

COACH HORSMON: We always schedule that way. I think we really try to go heavy early. And we're typically -- we've been anywhere from the teens to the 40s RPI-wise. We tend to be in that pocket.

But this year we didn't win any of those matches. We didn't particularly play well in any of those matches against Kentucky, Wisconsin, Michigan, in those moments.

So again our start was pretty rough. I mean, there were a lot of long conversations and a lot of long practices because we weren't very good. And we got better. And I think we started to find some confidence in what we were doing.

And we didn't talk about that run of matches and that win streak. But it really didn't matter. For us, it's about the next match and getting to this point and seeing what we could do once we got into the NCAA Tournament.

Q. Elizabeth, can you talk about their hitters are used to putting balls on the floor. For two sets they weren't

doing that, outside of No. 20. In getting them frustrated, did you feel like we have to get in their heads, make them feel like they're not going to put the ball on the floor against us.

ELIZABETH HOUSE: I feel like mostly what we talked about, yes, it's true, they're used to hitting, putting the ball on the floor, but it's more about like our side and what we're doing together. So we weren't necessarily focused on their frustration, because sometimes that can bring us down. So we were focused more on what we need to do and player tendencies and things like that.

Q. Coach, I know it's pretty fresh right now but what good things do you take away from this match to translate into next year and what things do you have to let go of?

COACH HORSMON: It is fresh. It was a tough match. Again, I think the biggest frustration is we just didn't play well in the last three sets.

And a lot of that was dictated by a really good Purdue team. And being in that situation is, it's exciting to be up 2-0. We knew it was going to be a grind. That was what we kept talking about. We knew Purdue wasn't going to roll over and give it to us.

And we just didn't perform in that. So I think that's kind of the tough part of walking out of this, that we just didn't play great volleyball for those three sets and compete at the level that we think we could have.

But again, continuing from what I shared earlier, it was a really rough start. So to be even in this moment and have this opportunity was pretty awesome. And great leadership. I mean, we have a great group of young women that I love being around and coaching.

And Maura probably said it best, it's just a great foundation. We have a lot of great young players in our program. And they got to watch this group and see what it's all about and how to play in this level. To have this experience, to play that team and that kind of atmosphere, is what they should strive to want to get to every year.

So that's what we're going to build upon. But we've been doing that for 20 years. I mean, we've been in these moments. And for us it's just how do we break through and win that second match and try to get to the Sweet 16.

Q. You've played the top 7 seed and 6 in the last two years. Taken them to five sets. What kind of momentum does this give your program? And Lexie, you've had great foundations of teams these past few

years, but going forward, what kind of example does this set for future teams knowing that you can reach this point, that you can get the momentum going on these big teams?

LEXIE ALMODOVAR: I think Maura said it best, just, like, now that we have that expectation, all that us young classes have known is making it there and being there. So just pushing forward and figuring out how to finish in those moments. But I think now we know that in our gym this is the goal and this is the expectation.

I think just working in the spring and the summer to be ready next fall to just really push through that barrier and to be able to win.

COACH HORSMON: I'll add probably one piece. We walked out of the match last year against Washington and we had a belief we were a really good team. Whatever that carried over was not a good thing at the beginning of our season.

That confidence and swagger is great if you're ready to put the work in and follow that up with great volleyball. And we believe we were going to be really good. I'm not sure we did the things that we needed to continue that.

So I really don't think -- I think we know we can do it now, but it really starts over, because personalities change, personnel changes. We're going to lose some great players. And we have a new group of people and players that have to come in and establish themselves to be good enough to come back to do this.

So the program knows how to get there and do this. And I think that's really important. I have great coaches in my locker room. We have a great, great university.

We have an unbelievable administration that supports volleyball. So we're really excited about that. But we have players that need to come out and work their rear ends off to try to -- I don't want to fill these shoes because you can never fill these shoes -- but to come out and do it themselves and see if we can't get back here and maybe break through.

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