

Atlantic Coast Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 7, 2024

Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

Louisville Cardinals

Coach Jeff Walz

Olivia Cochran

Postgame Press Conference



Louisville 58, Boston College 55

JEFF WALZ: That was a hard-fought basketball game by both teams. We've got to commend Boston College. Joanna does a remarkable job with her ballclub, gets them to play so hard, and we were very fortunate to come out with the win.

We were very sloppy at the offensive end, very stagnant at times, didn't look to attack when the opportunities were there, and then when we did, we just didn't make the right play. Something hopefully from film we can continue to work on and get better.

Just really impressed with the way Olivia Cochran finished out the game there. I know she missed some free throws, but she came up with a huge steal for us, we get the basketball. Just the way she competed was really impressive.

Overall we've got to play a lot better tomorrow if we want any chance of moving on in this tournament.

Q. Moving on to face Notre Dame who you saw last Sunday, what takeaways are you taking from your previous matchup and also today's matchup and how is that going to translate into your plays tomorrow?

JEFF WALZ: Well, I haven't even really thought about tomorrow's game. I'm going to go to the bar first and have some Tito's and tonic and a few other things. And then hopefully it will make this game look a lot better when I watch it on film, blurry possibly. Then I'll start worrying about Notre Dame for tomorrow night.

Because we have had two really good games with them. Unfortunately at their place, we played a really good first

half and then we were extremely poor in the second half. We know it's going to be a heck of a ballgame tomorrow.

Q. Olivia, your coach just noted your great play. Can you talk about towards the end of the fourth quarter when you just took over? You just knew that you were not going to lose. Can you talk about how you were feeling?

OLIVIA COCHRAN: My experience knowing that we was up and we couldn't get a stop, I was just like, I just had to step up.

Previous play I let 32 just drive to the basket and didn't pick her up. And Coach got on me and was like, you've got to guard somebody, I need somebody to guard. And I was like, I'll guard. My teammates and the coaching staff, they trusted me to do that, so I just took it with confidence, and I just took over, I guess. So yeah.

Q. Olivia, obviously Dontavia is kind of the matchup and a lot of their offense runs through them. What was the focus on taking her out of the game and matching up with her?

OLIVIA COCHRAN: Just being in help, knowing that she just wants to drive the ball, and just knowing her role on her team, boxing her out, because she can offensive rebound, and she's a good driver. Just staying in help and talking to my teammates who's cutting, and just watching and keeping -- I'm the eyes behind their heads, so I was just watching everything. And I have to lead and talk. That was the game plan for real.

Q. Coach, can you speak to blending in your grad transfers with this team for this game?

JEFF WALZ: Unfortunately Kas can't play tomorrow. Are you talking about her and are you talking about ones that are currently playing? I thought you were talking about Kas and Josie. I'd be thrilled. They're my grad students.

No, it's been a big adjustment for Syd and Kiki and Nina and Hennie, when you're looking at the level of play every single possession. And that's where we're continuing to try



to push and get them to understand the urgency you have to play with. Not only physically is it exhausting, it's mentally.

Everybody talks about when a freshman comes in, sometimes a freshman hits the freshman wall. The same thing can be said for these kids, because it is a different level every single night. I've said it before in the pressroom. When we went back and looked at Syd's four years at UMass. She had a great career, fantastic coach, did wonderful. We head down there, she played three top-25 teams in her four years combined. And Kiki at JMU who's been a great, great ballclub, played five in four years. Now they're playing four in two weeks.

So the mental side of it -- not just the physical side, but the mental side of the preparation, the knowing the game plan, it's a lot. We've got to figure out a way to get through this tournament, see if we can't come out and compete tomorrow, advance after tomorrow. And then we've got to take some time off and try to get them refreshed mentally and physically before we start up the NCAA Tournament.

Q. Coach, in a game like this, how important is experience? Elite 8 last year, Final Four the prior season. How big is your team's experience in ballgames like this?

JEFF WALZ: Well, I think when you look at it, Olivia obviously came up with huge plays there in the last two and a half minutes of the game. Olivia, Nyla, Ris, are really the only three we have on our team who have that experience. So we have a lot of new faces out here. We have eight new faces.

I think we're 24-8 or 23-8. I'm pleased. I think we have had a heck of a year, and we're not finished yet.

But it's just trying to get our ballclub to understand the urgency of every single possession.

Q. You mentioned just the struggles or the inconsistencies that you were having on offense. How much of that was BC's defense also playing up and altering some of the things that you were trying to do?

JEFF WALZ: Yeah, you've got to give credit to BC for sure. They were very active, really did a nice job of keeping the ball -- trying to keep the ball on one side of the floor.

Then our guards have got to attack. Our guards have got to look to attack and create -- and it's not always creating shots for themselves, it's trying to create shots for each other.

I thought Kiki made a great drive in the game and had a kick over to Jayda for a wide-open three in front of our bench. It was a great shot, it just didn't go in. Then Syd drove in and had a great pass to Nyla for a bucket. We've got to be able to get more of that. We've got to be able to get by someone and make another defender guard us. Because when you can't get by somebody off the bounce, it's really difficult to get into an offense.

That's the one thing that BC hurt us with. When they got by us, then we had to help, and then they did a great job of making the extra pass, knocked down some big shots.

We're just going to continue to work, try and put our players in positions to be successful. That's our jobs as coaches is try to make sure we know what their strengths are and highlight their strengths and do the best we can to make sure we don't let anybody see our weaknesses.

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