

Atlantic Coast Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 8, 2024

Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

Notre Dame Fighting Irish

Coach Niele Ivey

Maddy Westbeld

Sonia Citron

Postgame Press Conference

Notre Dame 77, Louisville 68

NIELE IVEY: So excited for this win. This league is so tough, just being able to come out here, play with grit. Had an incredible first half, extended that lead, and then withstood Louisville's incredible second half. Just amazing. I'm so proud of our performance, and I'm really proud of the way that we're growing together.

March is crazy, as we know, March Madness, and we are just really gelling at the right time and just really playing off of each other's energy. I'm so proud of this team. I will say with these two sitting up here, my senior Maddy and Sonia, they did a great job of leading us, and were phenomenal, either on the boards, setting great screens, or just making big plays always as they do all season long.

Hannah was fantastic today. We had great minutes from KK and Nat off the bench when we got into foul trouble. Just a complete team effort, and I'm just excited that we get a chance to come back here tomorrow and play.

Q. Niele, how much did poise play a part down the stretch? You know Louisville is going to make that run. You just have to stay poised and not get flustered.

NIELE IVEY: Absolutely. I think we've been in these moments a lot this season and we've learned and grown from those moments. We've made mistakes before, and I feel like what we've learned this season came into play today.

One of my time-outs that's all I put on the board, is poise. They were going to make their run, like you mentioned.



We knew that. They're a very physical, very aggressive team, and I thought in the fourth quarter we finally got some stops, put some stops together, and then offensively we gained our composure and had really great poise down the stretch.

I thought big free throws. Sonia stepped up, Maddy stepped up, KK stepped up, Hannah. They iced the game, and it could have been obviously a much more stressful game, so I'm just happy that they stepped up and made big plays. But poise was a big part of fourth quarter.

Q. You were very, very calm and poised out there. Your thoughts?

SONIA CITRON: Yeah, I think like Coach Ivey said, we did a really good job of just staying composed and being poised. Last year with the mistakes that we make, we would have just let it snowball and turn into not what we want, but I think we did a good job of -- we did make mistakes, but after it's okay. Just come back together. We're good.

Like Coach Ivey said, Louisville went on their run. We're still up. It's our game. And we did a good job of just staying calm and collected.

MADDY WESTBELD: Yeah, Jayda was playing great starting the fourth. They were starting to really get hot, so that was what it was going to take for us. We were playing kind of desperate getting into it, so I think poise was just the most important thing for us to stay together, realize we're up 15, we're good, and just play calm.

Q. Just talk a little bit about Jayda Curry's game today and particularly that fourth quarter where at one point she had 14 of Louisville's 16 points. What was bothering you about her game, and how did you hold her down in the end?

NIELE IVEY: We played her last year when she was at Cal, so we knew what type of scorer she is. I thought she just did a great job of just playing desperate. They were down and she just took the team on her back and she took great shots, some tough shots. Switched the matchup and

put Sonia on her just to get more size.

She just did a great job of scoring at all three levels, but at the end I felt like our rotation came over and helped. Just hats off to her. She had a fantastic second half, and she's a really great player.

Q. Coach, I would love to have your perspective of Coach Jeff Walz, coaching against him.

NIELE IVEY: I mean, it's a rivalry. It's always exciting. He's a really great coach. He's been there for a long time. I just love competition, and it's always great for women's basketball having this type of matchup.

Q. Coach, can you talk about the challenge of the quick turnaround and what you feel like this team needs to focus on after an exhausting foul-filled game?

NIELE IVEY: Yes, definitely the challenge is getting fresh and recovery. I have an incredible performance team, and we're prepared and ready to do what's necessary for the team.

My players are smart. They have great habits. We've established a great routine here. We're going to get back after we watch a little bit of the game and do a lot of recovery and watch film and take care of our bodies. But that's something we've been preparing for all season.

We're just grateful that we have this opportunity to play in a back to back game.

Q. Niele and Maddy, obviously a lot of people are going to point to how close it got at the end, but I'm curious how big of a start it was for you guys and what that meant to you because obviously you were able to hold on at the end because of what you did at the beginning. What did you think about that start and how big it was?

NIELE IVEY: I loved the start. It's exactly how we envisioned it. We wanted to start off pushing pace. Defensively, we've been playing really good defense. It's ignited us, and I felt like our defensive energy was fantastic, and I felt like offensively we got great looks. Everyone shot great shots, played the right way, and they just came on a great run and we did a really good job of holding off.

But I loved the start. It's what we've always talked about, just having a really aggressive start, and we've been starting really well the last couple weeks, so I was really pleased with our start.

MADDY WESTBELD: I think it's all the little habits for us, going into the game, walking into the gym. I think just stepping in with confidence is something that we've been working on here recently, and I think that we did a really good job, and it carried into the rest of the game and we knew we could play with poise because of how we started the game. I thought it was really good. I'm proud of us for that.

Q. We don't know who your next opponent is going to be, but with thoughts on either Virginia Tech or Miami, are you guys going to watch that game together, and how are you going to prepare for that?

NIELE IVEY: Yes, we'll probably watch the first half, I think, and then they're going to get back for recovery. We're just excited to have survived and advanced, so it does not matter who we play. We're just excited to figure out what our competition is going to look like, and they're both great teams, so we're looking forward to seeing one of them tomorrow.

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