

Atlantic Coast Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 8, 2024

Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

Florida State Seminoles Coach Brooke Wyckoff O'Mariah Gordon Makayla Timpson

Postgame Press Conference

Florida State 78, Syracuse 65

BROOKE WYCKOFF: Obviously just super proud of this team for winning the second straight day in a row. We had a game plan, a very specific one, and each and every one of these players and focused on it and executed it so well and did the things that we needed to do.

We were us today and doing the things that we needed to do to win against a really, really good Syracuse basketball team. Just very, very proud of our rebounding effort today, especially in the way that we defended.

Q. I know she's not up here, but Ta'Niya Latson after the game yesterday made some pretty bold statements and she seemed to back it up today. Could you speak on her performance and her confidence after the win yesterday?

BROOKE WYCKOFF: Yeah, it's confidence that's backed up by a belief and an understanding of what this is, what this is all about. She wasn't able to play in the postseason last year, so she's taking this very, very seriously. She has high expectations for herself and for the team.

We understood, and this team understood, that when we lost in the regular season, there were a lot of things that we needed to have done differently. Syracuse, again, credit to them, great basketball team, but we wanted to fix that, and she did.

That was just confidence right there, and she did come out and back it up in only 20 minutes of play because of foul trouble, 25 points. Very, very proud of her, and the leadership that she showed, as well, on the bench when



she wasn't in was phenomenal.

Q. Do you have any comment on coach Felisha Legette-Jack winning Coach of the Year and what was your reaction to that?

BROOKE WYCKOFF: Much deserved. I voted for her for Coach of the Year. Very well deserved. She did a phenomenal job. I mean, Syracuse being picked I think it was ninth in the preseason and the job she did with this group, I mean, she's an amazing coach. I look up to her. She's had a great career, and she's got a great future.

She was my vote, and I just wish her just a huge congratulations.

Q. How can you assess how Sara Bejedi played tonight guarding Dyaisha Fair all night?

BROOKE WYCKOFF: Yeah, I thought she did a phenomenal job on a very, very tough player to guard, Dyaisha Fair. Only I think it was, what did she hit, two threes, two for five, and that was our game plan, just to keep her off the three-point line, let her take contested two-point shots.

Sara did a phenomenal job, and again, in foul trouble was able to stay in the game and keep a very -- she had 23 points. She's a phenomenal player. But a key to a lot of things they do. So I'm very, very proud of Sara and her poise.

Q. For O and KK, did you know Ta'Niya said you guys were going to win tonight last night? How did you guys react?

O'MARIAH GORDON: Yes, I knew. She came to me after she talked to the media yesterday. She said -- I told them we're going to win tomorrow so we've got to stand on business, and I said, we're going to stand on business.

Yes, she was very excited, and that kind of got us pumped up for today.

MAKAYLA TIMPSON: I would say for me, I had like and



interview with some guy and told me, like tonight, so ya'll going to get the win tomorrow? I was like, yeah, we're going to get the win because we know how we lost to them the first time we played them, like off of our bad shots, and we had a lead, but now we kept our energy and we ride it through the whole game and we was in control of the game.

That allowed us to win the game tonight. So proud of my teammates.

Q. Brooke, you mentioned you had a very specific game plan. What exactly were you trying to take away from Syracuse or what were the main keys?

BROOKE WYCKOFF: It was very personnel based. Like I said in Dyaisha Fair, we were trying to keep her off the three-point line. If she beat us off the dribble -- it's scary when she has the ball and you're staring at her and you know she's a good driver, you know she's a great shooter.

We just told our players we're going to stay up on her, crowd her, make her into a driver. If you get beat, that's okay, we'll bring help and make her take a contested two-pointer. That was the goal.

Then obviously on other players, some we could help off more of; some we could be in heavy gaps. And then the biggest thing was if they could do that before the shot goes up we would be in better rebounding position. That was the biggest thing, was just to be able to stay in front of the ball, be solid on their penetrators, and then not have to bring our post player, KK, SK White over so that we get out of rebounding position.

So I thought we did a phenomenal job of that keeping them off the boards. A very, very good offensive rebounding team, we were able to keep them off.

Then offensively we just had to attack and do what we do, which is play with immense pace, run. You can only do that if you're getting stops, so we were able to do that, and we got out, and we were able to attack the basket really well for three quarters.

Q. O'Mariah, you and Ta'Niya were in a similar spot last year: both hurt, missing out on ACC and NCAA tournament games. Now you're combining for 50 points and a huge win for your program. What do these moments mean for you two?

O'MARIAH GORDON: It definitely means the most I think for me, just being injured in the past and things like that. My biggest thing is to never take any moment for granted and that's something Coach Brooke says a lot to us but is

very personal to me, because I've been in positions where I haven't even been able to play or have the opportunity to, so each and every opportunity that I do get, I just don't take it for granted.

I know it's the same for Ta'Niya. Like Coach Brooke said, she is a phenomenal leader and very competitive.

Q. O'Mariah, 14 points in the first quarter today. What was working so well for you to start the game, and how much of a difference do you think that made for your team, especially with Ta'Niya in foul trouble early?

O'MARIAH GORDON: Basically our coaches told us to just attack, just attack, and that's exactly what I did. Before the game, Coach Brooke, she told me my pull-up jumper was dang near a lay-up. It was like a lay-up. I just kind of took that and ran with it, and it gave me confidence.

Being able to attack the basket and score, it takes a lot off KK, Ta'Niya, and opens things up for the rest of the team.

Q. Coach, obviously Syracuse had the big comeback against you guys last time. What was different in this game, preventing them from getting that momentum, especially in that second half?

BROOKE WYCKOFF: Yeah, I mean, we learned. We learned. We got up big at Syracuse. I think we were up 18 at one point, and we relaxed. I'm not just saying that. They know that. We relaxed defensively. We relaxed on the boards.

Going through that, as hard as that was, that was a really, really hard day. Our flight got -- our plane wasn't there. We stayed in Syracuse until midnight or 1:00 before we took off just sitting with that loss and how it had happened.

This opportunity to come back around, there was no way that this team was not going to give it their all for four quarters.

When we were up at halftime, I could hear them talking and just saying, it's not over. We learned, we're going to continue to do what we're doing, and just sticking to what we do. Sticking to the game plan, not relaxing, not relenting at any moment.

During the regular season when there's so many highs and lows, those are the times where just keeping your mind focused on the long game, understanding those lessons that we learned then, as hard as they are, those losses, it stinks, if we can just keep pushing, there will be another opportunity, and it came.

Q. You've got a very tight turnaround here playing NC State at 2:30 tomorrow. What will the next 16 hours look like for you, and how are you going to get refocused after such a big win?

BROOKE WYCKOFF: Yeah, I think we're used to it. We did it last night, just playing this late game. We get back, eat, get a little bit of a scout in, and then make sure these guys are getting their best.

The good news is we played NC State and that was also a memorable one at their place. We'll be ready to just focus in on the scout and a game plan pretty quickly. We've got a great staff that's already been preparing based on all the different scenarios.

The biggest thing is that these guys get rest and enjoy this for a minute and then turn our sights to NC State.

Q. O'Mariah or Makayla, when Ta'Niya picked up her third foul, nine minutes left in the second quarter, what was running through your head?

MAKAYLA TIMPSON: I would say kind of just staying poised. Like she was in foul trouble I think during the Wake Forest, as well, or some other game where we was able to win without her.

But just knowing that she's a great player and we need her out there on the court, but we're also able to finish games without her, as well, when we just be us and we stay poised and we just know the moment that we're in and just pay attention and focus.

Q. Same question but for the players. Any thoughts on getting that rematch with NC State?

O'MARIAH GORDON: Yeah, we're looking forward to it. We've gone into a couple overtime games, and when we lost, it kind of hurt us a lot. But we know when we play NC State it kind of fueled us. It didn't make us any less confident in ourselves and our abilities.

So I think going into tomorrow that we're just going to continue to push each other, want to get some good rest tonight, but we're going to just trust in the coaches to put us in the correct positions and we're going to go out and play our hardest game tomorrow.

Q. What has been the motivating factor for this tournament run?

MAKAYLA TIMPSON: I would say just the position that we've been in. We've been on the bottom side of the bracket and we know those teams we played, we lost

against them but we know how to play them. Even with Wake Forest or Virginia, we wanted to play Virginia because we were going to beat them. We needed our revenge back for them.

But playing Wake, we still remember a year ago how they beat us when we was up 20 points, so just keeping our composure and learning from that game, so we got the win with that one.

Syracuse, they beat us from our 20-point lead once again on their home floor and just learning throughout the season when we have a lead we need to keep the lead, and we've been able to be successful in the tournament so far with that.

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