

Atlantic Coast Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Saturday, March 9, 2024

Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

Notre Dame Fighting Irish

Coach Niele Ivey

Sonia Citron

Anna DeWolfe

Postgame Press Conference

Notre Dame 82, Virginia Tech 53.

NIELE IVEY: Just so grateful for this moment. The first time since I've been head coach to go to the ACC championship game. It's just so phenomenal for myself, for the program. I'm so proud of my group. I'm so proud of this team.

Today was just an incredible display, to be honest. I thought we were clicking on all cylinders. I thought they started the game with such confidence and grit and toughness. They shared the ball. We made extreme -- we were passing the ball so well. We had 19 assists and eight turnovers.

It was just one of our best performances I felt like this season, just the way that we've been gelling together and the energy they brought today.

I'm so proud. Obviously, with Kylee, not knowing what happened, and we'll assess that with the performance team, so big prayers for her, but right now we're going to rally for her and take this into tomorrow and just really excited for this incredible opportunity for our program.

Q. You guys had a really beautiful moment with Watson when she came back on the court; obviously had crutches. How does that camaraderie off the court build to your success on the court this season?

NIELE IVEY: Well, I'll first start it's part of our culture. My number one core value for this program is love, and this group is so close. We have incredible chemistry. Kylee is just an incredible human. She's an incredible woman. She's so humble, and this team loves her.



Any one of our sisters, when they go down or something happens with adversity like has been struck for us right now in Kylee, it was just an opportunity for them to love on her, support her, lift her up.

I know they can speak because they are in the locker room with her and get a chance to share those moments, but this team loves her, we love each other, and I'm really proud of that.

SONIA CITRON: Yeah, I think Coach Ivey said it pretty good, but it speaks to the love that we have for each other, and when one of us goes down, it's like us going down almost. Like it really hurts our hearts.

It's just hard. That's our sister.

ANNA DeWOLFE: They said everything I was going to say, but just to add on to that, tomorrow when we play that's going to be part of our motivation, obviously winning a championship, but definitely bringing that home for Kylee.

Q. Niele, what's allowed this team to play its best basketball the last two, three weeks of the regular season? You just continue to get better every game.

NIELE IVEY: I think that just our motivation, our focus just shifted the last couple weeks. We had a couple tough losses, learned from those losses and got back to work. This team has been committed to our vision and our goal the entire season, but sometimes losses kind of bring light to things that we need to get better at, and that's what we did.

We've done a great job of just working to get better, finding a way to get on the same page. We really talked about gelling together and focused on that for the last couple weeks, and then just building momentum off of our wins.

I'm really proud of them for that because it's definitely been challenging and we've really fed off of each other. And we have been trying to gain momentum, and we have been gaining momentum from our wins and learning from the things that we needed to learn from this season and just



peaking at the right time.

Q. This was Notre Dame's best three-point shooting performance in basically four years. Is it kind of fun to see something come together like that at a time in March when you obviously need every shot you can get?

NIELE IVEY: Absolutely. It's perfect timing with these two. I looked down the stat sheet and I was like, wow, we're averaging about five to six threes and we had nine. Credit to these two. They stay in the gym and they put up so many shots and put so much work in, and I love seeing confident shooters get a chance to come out and show what they have.

ANNA DeWOLFE: We got up at 7:00 a.m. to shoot this morning.

NIELE IVEY: Yes. They're dedicated.

Q. Coach, in terms of the game tomorrow, what are your points of emphasis both in the fourth quarter today, but tomorrow with Nat, and would you try to get Becky involved in the rotation, as well? What would be your points of emphasis with Nat as she takes on a larger role tomorrow, and would you try to get Becky involved in the rotation?

NIELE IVEY: Especially with a lot of injuries we've had this season, I'm going to adjust and pivot to the situation and scenario, so we'll just see tomorrow, see who our opponent is, and I'll adjust from there.

Q. Sonia, the adjustments that you guys made to have a 19-2 run coming out in the third quarter, and also with your own recovery, do you feel like you're back to the November version of Sonia or maybe even better?

SONIA CITRON: Okay, first question I mean, I think we were just really locked in on defense and I think we were just pushing out after we got stops and being aggressive. I think that's what I saw from my team. We were just being aggressive, taking them off the dribble.

Then second question, definitely feel a lot better. I know I was a little -- it took me a little while to feel like myself after coming back from my injury, so I would definitely say that physically I feel there. I'm like I was back in November pre-injury.

Q. Coach, what enabled you guys to go on a 20-0 run, and what kind of energy did you like that you guys came out of halftime with that you guys were able to bust the game open like that?

NIELE IVEY: I feel like the last couple weeks our defense has been really, really great. I think we have been more active, being very disruptive. Our energy defensively has really ignited our entire performance.

Not relying on our offense, allowing our defense to create our offense, that mentality is what we're doing right now, and so I felt that way today.

I thought we were locked in on the scout. Amoore is just an incredible player. We knew she's the type of player that can score in bunches. We tried a lot of different things to try to defend her.

But I thought our offense was flowing really well with our pace. I thought we took great shots. We shot the ball well. We shared the ball. We did everything that we've been practicing for this scout.

I'm just really pleased with the way that our offense has really grown. We've had moments where it's been stagnant, and we've had to fix a lot of things. I've had to put some things in to help us. They're just getting better. We're really improving offensively, and I love that our defense is what is igniting us right now.

Q. What was kind of the message at halftime? What was the game plan coming out in the third quarter? Did you execute it to a T?

NIELE IVEY: We just looked at a couple plays that we needed to fix defensively off of our rotations, box-outs, and then I really talked about pace, pushing pace.

I felt like I wanted to run on Virginia Tech. We wanted to really push pace and play fast. So we talked about coming out and playing fast. That's what they did. We came out, went right to Sonia, she got a mid-range jumper, and after that it was just stop and run, and that helped us.

But I thought Sonia went on a run on her own that boosted us and gave us a lot of energy when she was on offense. But we were getting the stops on the defensive end that helped us, but my message was to play with energy and play fast.

Q. Obviously it's the second time you've beaten them in four games. Obviously this time they did not have Kitley. How much was the defensive game plan different this time versus the next-to-last game of the regular season now that you did not have to worry about Kitley?

NIELE IVEY: Yes, it was really different. Knowing that,



again, they're hit with adversity, as well, so knowing that somebody is going to step up for them and rally for her. We really focused on Amooore. I felt like she was the engine and that was our main focus.

We wanted to contain everyone, defend the three-point line, but really put a lot of pressure on Amooore, and then again, just try to deny her, trap her, get the ball out of her hands, put multiple bodies on her, and they did a great job.

Obviously she got loose because she's that type of player, but my focus was definitely different. Coming into the regular season game, what, 10 days ago, it was Kitley and Amooore trying to find ways to stop the duo, but today was really trying to take the engine away.

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