

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Rice vs LSU

Thursday, March 21, 2024

Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA

Pete Maravich Assembly Center

**Rice Owls**

**Coach Lindsay Edmonds**

**Malia Fisher**

**Destiny Jackson**

Media Conference



**Q. I'm assuming this will be your first NCAA Tournament game?**

MALIA FISHER: This is my first.

DESTINY JACKSON: This is my first, also.

**Q. Just your expectations, what are you expecting? Sell-out crowd, how do you get yourself mentally ready to step on this stage?**

MALIA FISHER: Well, LSU being LSU, they're going to have a great crowd. We kind of expected that. We know the gym is going to be loud. We know that there's going to be fans not on our side. So it's playing together and getting our mindset in the framework of this is our team. We came here to win a game, and we just have to play together.

**Q. Destiny, you're the all-time leader in games played at Rice. Talk about what that means to have developed with the program the way you have, you change conferences and then go on a magical run to get here. What has it been like for you personally?**

DESTINY JACKSON: It's been a journey. I've played in many arenas all over the place. This is the biggest stage I've been on, but I'm ready for it. I've had experience over the years playing under two different coaching staffs, coaching styles, but I think it should be really fun.

**Q. You guys being able to make that run through the American Athletic Conference tournament, setting you guys up for this. How does it do that and where are you at from a confidence level standpoint? Where are you at from a chemistry and how do you feel like you're gelling as you guys are getting ready to start the NCAA Tournament?**

MALIA FISHER: Yeah, I think our confidence is pretty high. We didn't finish out February how we wanted to, but it's a new season. Once postseason starts, anything can happen in March. Us going 4-0, winning that championship, I think sets us up pretty well, and we're really confident in each other and our system and our game plan for going into this NCAA Tournament.

DESTINY JACKSON: It's really just a mindset thing. We knew we had it in us but we were just beating ourselves up pretty much, and then in March we turned it on, and it clicked, and here we are.

**Q. You guys' scout on LSU, what can you share with us? Where do you guys start to try to slow them down?**

DESTINY JACKSON: Really just in transition, trying to slow them down and really have to box them out because they're really good on the glass pretty much is the main thing.

MALIA FISHER: Second that. I think we just have to come aggressive. They're a good team, and we have to play smart and play our ball and within our system, and it's going to be a good game.

**Q. Malia, I saw a quote from you that on paper you were a 10 seed but you didn't feel like you were a 10 seed. What changed from the end of February, early March where you had a five-game losing streak to finish on a four-game win streak to get to this point? What did you do differently that turned things around like that?**

MALIA FISHER: Like I said before, there's non-conference, there's conference and then there's postseason. Each one in itself is its own game. You can't look at the past. You can't look too far ahead, and I think once conference ended, we had to put whatever happened



with that behind us, and we knew if we wanted to come in and win, we had to come in knowing and believing that we had every ability to do what we needed to do to get that done.

**Q. Destiny, you mentioned going through a coaching change. I know Lindsay was the fastest to get to 50 at Rice. What was it like playing under this new system for you?**

DESTINY JACKSON: I really enjoyed playing under Coach Lindsay. She let me run the point guard and everything, and just had confidence not just in me but everyone else.

**Q. Can you take us through Selection Sunday when you knew you had the automatic bid so you knew you were going, the anticipation of when you would see your name and when you did see your name what it's been like getting to come to Baton Rouge?**

MALIA FISHER: Over the past couple days you're looking at all the predictions, who you're going to play. We saw UCLA, we saw UConn. So the actual day off we thought we were going to be a 15 seed, so we're looking at the 15s. It was completely unexpected. We saw LSU, and it's like, oh, that could happen. Lo and behold, there goes Rice, 14 seed, playing LSU. All of our reactions were genuine and exciting and -- it was definitely nerves everywhere, do what we came to do, and we're here, and we set out for that.

LINDSAY EDMONDS: Exciting times. Really, really proud of our team and our accomplishments.

I think our February skid that we went on, no coach wants to go on that, but it allowed us to refocus. It allowed us to shift our mindset. It allowed us to have a hunger in our eyes when we went into the conference tournament, and it was everything that we needed.

I kept saying early on that some of these adversities that we're going through are going to bring us March blessings, so man, this is a big one. We're excited about the opportunity. I know this is something our young ladies are going to remember for the rest of their lives, so excited to be here.

**Q. Curious your thoughts on LSU. Obviously they're so widely circulated, but as far as a team goes, what do you see in them?**

LINDSAY EDMONDS: Yeah, they're a tremendous team with a lot of talent, very diverse in their scoring. Like five players averaging more than 12 points, so very spread out. Obviously Angel scores a lot and rebounds a lot, but

everybody really chips in in the scoring category.

There's not a player -- there's a lot of times in our scouting reports that we can say, hey, we're going to help off of this person to go defend this person. That's not something that we can do this game. Really talented. They push the ball really well in transition. They force you into turnovers to score in transition, and they rebound the basketball at a high level.

We've got to try to slow them down as much as we can in transition. We've got to try to keep them off the boards and not allow them to get easy put-backs or just send them to the free-throw line on the O-boards. Those are some of the tasks that we have that we're going to be faced with with this team, but they're a very talented team for sure.

**Q. Lindsay, a lot of people this time of year talk about on the women's side, there's not many double-digit seeds that upset single-digit seeds. Do you guys talk about that at all, or is that just something that you guys sort of just keep outside the periphery and just this team being able to go on the run that it's been on, how do you guys take that and turn it into hopefully a win tomorrow?**

LINDSAY EDMONDS: Yeah, you know, we haven't talked a whole lot about the number that's beside our name in this tournament, but we did just go through a tournament where we were a 10 seed and we won four straight days. Our back was against the wall for all four of those games. No one believed that we were going to do what we did other than the people in our locker room.

So we were just trying to have that same mindset, talk about the same things, game plan the same way we would, but we're throwing the numbers out the window and not talking about that as much. It's just about -- there's a hoop, there's two teams. It's the same length it's always been, the goal is the same height it's all been, let's go out there and play basketball and put our best brand of basketball on the national stage.

**Q. How unusual is it to play LSU in the fact that your players probably see a lot of them on social media or they may have listened to a Flau'jae Johnson rap song or seen an ad with one of these girls in it? It's not the usual team in terms of their notoriety. It doesn't help them score any points or stop you from scoring, but it's a little unusual. Could they be a little star struck?**

LINDSAY EDMONDS: Yeah, maybe. When we went into our scouting report meeting with the coaching staff, it was the first time that I was like, I don't need personnel because I've seen them enough that I know who they all are. Coach

Nick showed me anyway, but that's unique in that situation.

There's going to be some things that we're not used to. We haven't played in an NCAA Tournament. We haven't played in an arena of this size that's going to have an attendance. We haven't played against the status of these players. So I hope in the first couple minutes we can get our nerves out and then just settle in and play basketball, and hopefully all of that other stuff is kind of -- we block it all out and we just play basketball.

But yeah, it's unique for sure.

**Q. Kim said a couple of her former Baylor managers are on your staff. She said they might have a good insight into her philosophy. Have you been picking their brains at all?**

LINDSAY EDMONDS: Yeah, so Coach Nick, one of my assistants, was a manager for her at Baylor, and then my director of operations was also a manager. They definitely know the Kim Mulkey brand. But they were with her at Baylor, and now she's at LSU, and teams are different. What they do know is she loves defending. She loves getting the ball inside. She loves rebounding. Those are all the things that I can see from watching their games anyway.

So I don't think there's any insider tips being traded. But it's cool for them to be able to have a moment where they can see her, as well.

**Q. More of a general current era women's basketball question: With recent changes in the transfer rules, how much do you have to spend or how many resources do you have to dedicate to just retention, worry about it? Has it changed a lot for you? Any examples of what goes into that now? Would you like to see any tweaks to the rules?**

LINDSAY EDMONDS: You know what, I think Rice is a unique and special place. Young ladies go there for basketball but also for that degree. So to be able to walk away from a degree at Rice, I feel like it's got to be a bad situation for them, and I think a lot of those young ladies want that degree. I have engineers on my team. I have premed. I have pre-dentistry. To walk away from that is a little bit different. It's a little bit harder for them to do, I think.

Honestly, I recruit my players every single day. I treat them like family. I love on them. We treat them fairly. We treat them right. We have a culture that people want to be a part of.

So I think that's half the battle for where I'm at. I'm not saying no one will ever leave, but I haven't had anyone go into the portal since I've been the head coach at Rice.

I think a lot of that has to do with the degree, though. Obviously LSU, Power Fives, ACC, SEC, they deal with it on a much higher level of transferring. But I haven't faced it a whole lot. I'm not saying it won't.

I would like there to be some type of limit on how many times players can transfer. I have a hard time believing that players should be at four and five schools. But that's just me. I don't know that we're teaching these young ladies anything about life if they can just transfer four or five times.

I do think there's reasons for transferring, and those definitely deserve the opportunity to transfer, but four and five times in a career is a lot.

**Q. I'm assuming this will be the first NCAA Tournament game for maybe most of your roster. I know you've been there as an assistant coach. Do you share kind of your experience with them kind of leading into this? I feel like it'll be a different atmosphere than what they're used to. Do you share what you've experienced?**

LINDSAY EDMONDS: Yeah, absolutely. During the season when we were going on our skid, I was trying everything to get us back rallied again and saying this is hard, like this is the dog days of the season, and yes, we've lost some games, but the pain that you're feeling right now is temporary, but if we can push through this and we can cut down nets, it's something you're going to remember for the rest of your life, and it's something that is so memorable and enjoyable and it is so worth it. We talked about that a lot late February, going into March. I told them about what the NCAA Tournament could feel like, what it could look like. It's definitely something that I've tried to share my experiences with them as much as possible.

**Q. Has NIL done anything to make the job less fun for coaches, or do you hear -- even if not you, do you hear grumbling among colleagues about that? Are there any obvious solutions to you to tweak that?**

LINDSAY EDMONDS: Yeah, I've definitely heard it from a lot of colleagues about how life has changed with NIL and what recruiting now looks like and trying to find ways to get players to come with money.

I think the NIL started out as you come, you perform, you play well, and then all this other stuff is going to happen,

but it's become more of like a pay for play, like you come here we're going to give you this automatically. Some coaches have been able to -- two of my mentors, Kenny Brooks, Wes Moore, they've been able to adapt to times of it because if you don't change, you're not going to be able to stay relevant and you're not going to be able to probably have the success that you want to have in our day and age.

Coach Moore, he struggles with it more. That's not what he wants to be doing. He doesn't want to be thinking about who's getting this amount of money. He wants to think about the X's and O's and the wins.

I do think you see more and more coaches getting out. There was a coach today that retired that I was really shocked by her retirement announcement because I thought she was pretty young in coaching. But I just think it's changing. It's evolving. Coaches are getting worn out by the grind of NIL and what that all can look like.

I don't know that there's a way to fix that, though, because I think it's hard to monitor as is, so how do we fix it when it's really hard to monitor?

**Q. As a coach going against a coach that has multiple National Championships, do you take any joy in your game plan in preparation going against a coach that's kind of got accomplishments like that?**

LINDSAY EDMONDS: Yeah, she's obviously a Hall of Famer coach, trailblazer for the women's game, has done what she did at Baylor to coming here at LSU and doing it that quickly is amazing. So yeah, great coach.

I'm excited to be on the same sideline with her. I'm excited for that opportunity. I'm excited to see how our team can stack up and how our team can compete with them.

Again, I know it's a tall task, but I'm just excited for the opportunity.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports