

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Four - Holy Cross vs UT Martin

Thursday, March 21, 2024

Iowa City, Iowa, USA

Carver-Hawkeye Arena

Holy Cross Crusaders

Maureen Magarity

Cara McCormack

Media Conference

Holy Cross 72, UT Martin 45

MAUREEN MAGARITY: Wow. That's the first word that comes to my head. Just an incredible performance, you know, led by our seniors, which they've led us all year long.

Just Cara just came out, and just we talked about it for the last couple days, we just -- this group is so special and they love each other so much. We just didn't want it to end or be the last practice, last shootaround. We didn't want it to be our last game.

So obviously just all the credit goes to these players that every single day they just love each other so much and want to win for each other.

You know, we shot the ball really well but defensively I thought we really stuck to a great game plan. My staff did another incredible job of coming up with an amazing game plan.

You know, and UT Martin is a really good team. We caught them today. Obviously we shot the ball extremely well. Caught them on a tough shooting night.

You know, and they're young. They're going to be back. They're just really, really good team and they've obviously had to deal with a lot of injuries, and we're really lucky that we had to play our best basketball today to come away with a win.

Q. Cara, you were on fire tonight. How did it feel out there and how do you take that momentum come into the next game?

CARA MCCORMACK: Yeah, I mean, obviously felt great



to play on Iowa's court. Shots were falling for me tonight and my teammates kept finding me. I always say it's a credit to them drawing so much attention in the paint with Janelle and Bronagh always drawing so much attention.

So credit to them. Obviously great game, but it's time to turn around and we have another game to play, so we have a new game plan to start figuring out. We're looking forward to playing and having an opportunity to keep playing.

Q. Just wondering what are your expectations for what the atmosphere will be like against Iowa and just what you know about them and what you expect.

CARA MCCORMACK: Yeah, I mean, I think everyone is really looking forward to it. We haven't been trying to talk about it because we were focused on our game against UT Martin today and that was our main focus.

I've heard it's going to be sold out. It's going to be a lot of attention and probably the biggest stage we'll ever play in. Super exciting, and I think everybody is really looking forward to it.

Q. Coach mentioned the defense. You can look at shooting numbers; really impressive, 16 of 61 from the field for UT Martin. It seemed like you guys were locked in on the defensive side.

CARA MCCORMACK: Yeah, that's been our identity the whole year. I think going into this game that was what we were focusing on. It's great when shots are falling for us.

But I think holding a team to 45 points in a game is something we do well. Usually when we do that we're able to pull out a win.

But credit to our coaches for having a great scout. I think we were really locked in and able to execute that game plan.

Q. Just wondering if you could describe your coach sitting next to you. What makes her good at what she does? Just what do you enjoy about playing for her?



CARA McCORMACK: Yeah, I mean, she's obviously a great coach, and I think something special about our team is that family atmosphere. I think it all stems from Coach Mags. I mean, we were all so close to her. She's so easy to get along with. I think just having that close environment with all our coaches is really important.

I feel like she's what we all look forward to before games and I think the postseason and this game especially she really got us excited and really motivated us.

I think that's really special.

Q. Coach, you mentioned the defensive effort. Just from your view, what made the defensive effort so special tonight?

MAUREEN MAGARITY: Yeah, I just thought we really did a nice job on our doubles, and I think I mentioned earlier, a couple days ago, I think our last couple games leading up to this in the Patriot League tournament we had to double some really talented bigs in our conference and did a tremendous job of just limiting touches and points in the paint.

So that was obviously a huge key to our game plan, keeping them off the glass and really hoping to kind of wear them down with that.

And then our pace. You know, like once we got the rebounds we were able to push in transition. But I just think everybody really stepped up, you know, 1 through 5 and obviously was an amazing day that I could play everybody. That doesn't happen very often.

So I thought even off the bench, and some of our young are players that haven't gotten a lot minutes, they really stuck to the game plan as well.

Q. Just looking through I guess your guy's season, looks like you won nine in a row. Also lost four in a row. Just go through basically how the season has been for you and what's led to getting to this point?

MAUREEN MAGARITY: Yeah, it's definitely been a season of a lot of ups and downs for sure. We won last year so we were picked pre-season No. 1, so we had the target on our back.

Our league this year had a tremendous amount of parity. Played a really tough non-conference schedule that helped prepare us for the league, and then took a little dip there when we lost four games.

Our scoring, we were in a little bit of a drought. Offense really wasn't flowing. But all the credit goes to the players. You see we have four seniors that are so invested in this program and never put their heads down, never point fingers.

It was just a testament to their leadership. We were able to obviously play our best basketball when it mattered the most.

Q. Coach, you mentioned yesterday about first time on a charter and the joy of playing in the tournament. You can see the smiles afterwards and the experience of this. What's that mean for you as a coach to see players be able to get everybody in and see the enjoyment and the experience so far with that first win?

MAUREEN MAGARITY: Yeah, I think we had the experience last year where I got -- had the opportunity to play everyone, but it was a little bit of a different situation, different score.

But, yeah, I mean, just to have that joy keep coming and to have another opportunity to play with these girls again, and they really are truly family and the best of friends, it just was -- it was amazing to see.

I think going to this game, honestly, I never thought, oh, how am I going to be able to get everybody in? I thought just the way we shot the ball, just how much fun they had and how they were just playing for each other just is continuing to make this trip that much more special.

Q. It's not easy to prepare for Caitlin Clark when you have a week or two weeks. You guys have to do it on a quick turnaround. How do you try to do that to the best of your ability?

MAUREEN MAGARITY: Yeah. That's a great question. (Smiling.)

You know, I think our players have watched a lot of Caitlin Clark, and obviously we have all the respect in the world for her and what she's done for the game of basketball, not only just women's basketball.

So obviously we have to try to limit her touches, but it's one of those -- she's just one of those one-in-a-million type of players that even if you do that, she's one of the best passers that I've ever seen as well.

So it's a lot about Caitlin, but obviously they are the team they are because of all the people she can pass to, too. So defensively we know who we are. We just have to go

out there and play the way we know how to play. We just have to show up with confidence.

With this senior class it's the one thing I've never had to worry about. They're very confident. We have been here before. We played Maryland last year. That place was rocking, too. We fought. We have to fight and to figure out ways to just get possessions and we'll -- there is no doubt in my mind we'll be prepared and this team is ready. It's going to be an amazing experience.

I think just to have the opportunity to play on Saturday, I think is obviously a dream come true for all of us.

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