

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

Thursday, March 21, 2024

Iowa City, Iowa, USA

Carver-Hawkeye Arena

## UT Martin Skyhawks

## Kevin McMillan

## Kenley McCarn

### Media Conference

Holy Cross 72, UT Martin 45

KEVIN McMILLAN: Yeah, I was worried about their seniors and their system, because I watched them and they were really good and I enjoyed watching them execute.

What I wasn't -- and their coach was funny talking about it after the game -- we weren't quite expecting Cara to go 7 for 10 from three and then Flanagan to go 2 for 3. We actually played a really good first quarter. Made three mistakes and they hit threes on all three of them.

But what I saw out of our kids, and those of you that have known our season, we looked like we looked when we played the last game of our season. We looked a step slow. We looked a little tired. I thought they took advantage of it.

They played better than we did. But they're a good team.

**Q. Kenley, you guys seemed a little bit out of sync. How much did that come down maybe to just the moment? Obviously there is a lot of youth on this team. Do you feel like some of the inexperience and youth maybe caught up with you today?**

KENLEY McCARN: Yeah. I mean, it was a big deal being here and we're not used to that and we are very young. But, I mean, overall I think it's more that we haven't played in a week and a half, and so that kind of set us back a little bit.

But, I mean, yeah, definitely being young had a factor in that and being on such a big stage for sure.



**Q. Their defensive effort seemed to be pretty ratcheted up. Can you describe what it felt like defensively out there -- offensively for you -- their defensive effort and what they brought on that side of the court?**

KENLEY McCARN: Their defense was very good, very physical. They were guarding the shooters and syncing off the people that they felt weren't a threat.

They played very smart. They did what they were supposed to do. It was pretty difficult to get shots off and find open people for sure.

**Q. Kenley, obviously it's frustrating to lose, but for you guys I'm guessing there is a silver lining knowing there is a lot of time left with this roster. What's the big takeaway from this game maybe?**

KEVIN McMILLAN: Silver lining with Kenley McCarn?

KENLEY McCARN: It's really hard for me to have a silver lining.

KEVIN McMILLAN: If you know Kenley McCarn, there is no silver lining.

KENLEY McCARN: We are very young and plan on being back. I think the biggest takeaway that we need to take is we're not where we need to be for this level of basketball, and that starts in the summer.

I'm hoping we see that, and starting in the summer we go to work, and instead of just preparing for our conference that we look to the bigger picture and focus on all the little things we need to be good at this level.

KEVIN McMILLAN: You know they're taping this.

KENLEY McCARN: Yeah. (Smiling.)

**Q. These games just kind of show how important experience is in the month of March?**

KEVIN McMILLAN: I think Kenley and I were talking about



it out there. In the first quarter they were solid and they were good defensively, but they played a game last Saturday and I really thought we were as out of sync as I had seen us.

I think having this big break didn't -- I thought it was going to help us because we're so injured, but watching us out there, we were making decisions that we hadn't made since back in like mid-January. The ball wasn't moving like it had.

So I think that was my fault with our kids, that we probably should have done something, because our tournament -- we're the first tournament that ends, so we literally hadn't played in 13 days. We just -- we looked -- we just looked like we did back in January.

I wish we had looked like we looked in that tournament, because we were playing really, really well.

I think that the numbers of course got to us, and so when you add that up, then is when I think the experience is -- it killed us.

Because we didn't have a senior or a junior out there that said, hey, let me get us through this little stretch and we'll get going. But I just thought most of it was me having them out of sync and looking like we were a step slow.

**Q. Easy to see the fire in Kenley there. What does she bring for the future of your program and how excited are you to have her have that experience that she just had tonight?**

KEVIN McMILLAN: Well, what you don't know about Kenley is this is the first year since she was an eighth grader that she lost her last game. First time since she was in eighth grade she lost her last game.

So she doesn't know how to handle this, which for me is awesome, because she will vow to be back here. And, you know, listening to the starting lineups I heard senior, senior, senior, senior, and then for us it was freshman, sophomore, freshman.

And the kids that we have hurt ironically are freshmen, freshman, junior and junior. So can we use this to catapult and do -- we've done it before. We came here and started four freshmen the first year we ever got here.

We parlayed that into four appearances and a chance to win by the time those guys got some maturity.

You would like to see these kids get back. You would like to see her get back. I would like to see her healthy

because she's a special one and she showed it in the tournament, in the OVC tournament.

Tonight again we looked a step slow and like we weren't quite there. But if they use this as a springboard, I think we could be really good next two, three years.

**Q. Is it hard to be upset after a game like this when you kind of realize and look back on what you guys have gone through and treat it all as almost icing on the cake?**

KEVIN McMILLAN: For me or them?

**Q. For you.**

KEVIN McMILLAN: For me, I'm not upset. I'm -- well, let me say that differently. I'm upset that the girls are upset. I'm upset that they feel like they did not play the way they're capable of.

I'm upset about that for them.

For me, when you ask kids to play out of position and you ask kids to play 38 minutes all year long and ask kids to play when they're hurt, I mean, how can I possibly be upset?

Every time I've asked them to do something they've done it. They've continually raised the bar. Yeah, I can't be upset at them. I can't be disappointed.

I can't be more proud of a team of kids that as freshmen and sophomores. We've got MRIs set up for these guys as soon as we get home. And I'm not talking about one.

For them to play and give everything they've got for their teammates and our university, I can't be more proud of them.

There is nothing that they could do that wouldn't. They're just great ambassadors. They're thanking that the custodians in the hotels. They're unloading stuff for people.

They're just a great group of kids. You know, I'm proud to be associated with them, but I'm upset for them. But for me, when you ask them to do those things, I mean it hurts me to know how hurt they were and I still ask them to go out there and play. I feel awful.

Actually I'm probably relieved for me because I don't have to put them back out there, because they would go back out and do whatever you ask them to do. Just an unusual group in this day and age. It's not about me, me, me, me,

me.

**Q. What's the excitement level for and you the girls just knowing what you have coming back with this team?**

KEVIN McMILLAN: You know, I think for a while they're going to be disappointed. I think at some point it'll sink in what they were able to do this year. You know, I don't know what they're going to do with it.

In today's day and age, you know, who knows what these kids are thinking. I think that they're going to try to use it as a springboard. Is that what you asked me?

Okay. I don't know. I know that one will be upset for a little while and she'll hold it over my head for a long time because that's just how she is.

But she also has the ability to galvanize the whole team. If they jump on the Kenley McCarn bandwagon, I would never bet against that kid, especially if we get her healthy and get everybody else back.

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