

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Princeton vs West Virginia

Friday, March 22, 2024

Iowa City, Iowa, USA

Carver-Hawkeye Arena

West Virginia Mountaineers

Coach Mark Kellogg

JJ Quinerly

Jordan Harrison

Media Conference



tough defensive team. How would you guys describe your style of play on that end and what makes you guys so tough to score on?

JORDAN HARRISON: I would say that we genuinely love to play defense, so it's fun getting steals and playing out in transition, scoring quick. I think we just get excited off of that, and we feed off of that energy.

JJ QUINERLY: Yeah, same. We love getting out there, getting steals and pushing the ball to get easy transition points. That's really our identity, so yeah.

Q. For both of you, what do you make of the opponent that you're going to be facing tomorrow, the Princeton Tigers? What do you know about them and what kind of challenge do you think they'll give you guys?

JORDAN HARRISON: Princeton is a good disciplined offensive team. They play with a lot of ball screens. They've got a good point guard that can read ball screens well.

I don't really think we'll struggle much with them. I think as long as we bring our pressure that they'll struggle with us. As long as we're just disciplined in our ball screen coverage, I think that might be our biggest challenge.

JJ QUINERLY: To piggyback off what she said, they do great getting to their pull-up jumpers, so just us trying to stop that, basically them coming off the screens, just us containing that, we'll be all right.

Q. JJ, with having two weeks off essentially in between games, how have the coaches kind of tried to get some competition amongst the team? How have the two weeks been spent for you guys?

JJ QUINERLY: For these two weeks we had a couple off days, probably like three off days, I think, then we got right back into it competing with each other on the court. I think we had a couple of days where it was like three v three, four v four, then getting up-and-down, of course, and then we started prepping for Princeton. It's been a good week for us.

Q. For both of you, I know that you guys are a really

Q. Jordan, going back a ways, you obviously played with Coach Kellogg a year ago. How did he sell you that West Virginia was going to be a good spot for you when you came here?

JORDAN HARRISON: Honestly really it was just trusting in him. I knew he was a winner. I knew he would win anywhere that he went, so I just put all my trust in him, and West Virginia just turned out to be the perfect spot, too, as well.

Q. You two are neck-and-neck in the steals category. Is there a competition between you? Are you constantly pushing each other? How does that play out?

JJ QUINERLY: Not really. We don't really talk about it. We just go out there, see if we can get as much steals as we can, and at the end of the day whoever has the most, it is what it is. We're a team.

JORDAN HARRISON: Yes.

Q. Do you check the stats?

JORDAN HARRISON: I don't know who's leading, but when she gets a steal, it motivates me like I'm going to get me a steal now. We don't check the stats, but I know we're pretty close.

Q. JJ, have you seen a team that likes to shoot the mid-range shot as much as they do?



JJ QUINERLY: Honestly, no. They shoot a lot of pull-up jumpers. We take a lot of pull-up -- I'd say probably me mostly, I take a lot of pull-up jumpers, but I've never seen a team collectively take that many.

Q. Just knowing that tomorrow's sessions are sold out, Monday is sold out, what kind of atmosphere are you expecting, and how much are you looking forward to playing in front of a really big crowd here for the NCAA Tournament?

JORDAN HARRISON: We expect a lot of people, considering you said it's sold out. But we've played in big crowds before. We love it. We love playing in front of a lot of people and proving people wrong. It's a lot of fun.

JJ QUINERLY: Yeah, same. Crowds out there, we like to look good, play good. It's going to be a great time, great experience.

Q. It takes a certain type of person to want to press all the time and to live with the press and to play in that style. Could you each answer this question: What allows you to be such a tough competitor because it takes a lot to play that way?

JJ QUINERLY: I think just us as a group, I think we all collectively just playing defense and then him bringing in that pressure 40 minutes just made us even more hungrier ready to go out there and play, honestly. It makes it easier for us to score on the back end, too.

JORDAN HARRISON: Basically what JJ said. We prepare really hard to be able to press for 40 minutes. Shout-out to Zach and our September workouts. But yeah, basically like she said, we just love playing defense, so it just comes naturally for us.

MARK KELLOGG: Great to be here. We are thrilled. This has been a fantastic really first year. I'm almost a year into it from a coaching standpoint from when we got here a year ago, and we had goals and dreams and visions for what the program can be, and really excited and proud of the group that we've had and the year we've had.

Battled some adversity along the way, got off to the great start, I guess, to the season, and then battled through some adversity once we got into the Big 12 and some really close games, but I think we've gotten better through it, gotten a little bit healthier here of late, and excited to be here. Excited for the opportunity. When it's March Madness and your name gets called, that's always something really, really special about that, and I never want our kids to take that for granted or our program to

take that for granted.

Really excited. We know what's in front of us and a difficult task in Princeton, and I'm sure we may have some questions there, but really excited for the opportunity to compete again and take the floor one more time at least with this team. That's all you're guaranteed is one more. So we need to go out and play our best and see what we can do.

Q. I wonder if you could ruminate about Caitlin Clark. You're a step away from playing her. Then just the reaction to the reaction of your remarks on Selection Sunday.

MARK KELLOGG: Yeah, it wasn't really even about that. Your I guess initial question, she's the greatest scorer in basketball history. She's fun to watch. My kids are here. They love to watch her. A lot of people even that sit in my seat can, yeah, sit and watch as a fan because she's talented. She's changed our game. She's changed viewership.

It's not just her, but she certainly is the face. But the coaching staff puts her in a position to shine and let her teammates shine around her.

So I think it's more than her, from what I can tell. Honestly I haven't studied them a ton yet as a coach-coach. I've watched much more as a fan than I have yet as scouting and trying to figure out a game plan because we aren't to that yet.

It really wasn't about, to your next question, there was so much talk and conversation that led to that. It's kind of been fun, I guess, in a way since then, but that wasn't the intent. I'm not a trash-talking -- I wasn't out to get Caitlin Clark. It's not Mark Kellogg versus Caitlin Clark. It really was there was some surprise in the room is kind of how it got going with our seed is honestly really where it started. So it was, whoa, okay, I thought we were a little -- that wasn't really the seed maybe that some people in the room were expecting, not even from me necessarily.

So it turned into, okay, well, let's get past that. Now let's talk about Princeton, so we discussed Princeton, as we should and talked through what we knew about them, and then it came to Iowa and we talked about Iowa, and then of course everybody in the room knows Caitlin Clark. So it turned into Caitlin Clark, and actually somebody else in the room is the one that used the "packing" line to me, and it turned into, well, guys, if we want to do something special, we have to win one and then we'd have to send Caitlin Clark home essentially, metaphorically, because people are all over it. Now it's like well, she's going to be home if

you were to win.

It's all been kind of half so funny. There was really no intent in any way. I wasn't trying to do anything other than we had a group of people there that asked all the questions and we talked it all through and then that came out. You know how social media works. I'd see it and the clip just keeps getting shorter and shorter and shorter and shorter, and then finally by the end of it it was Mark Kellogg is calling out Caitlin Clark or whatever. Anyway, it's where we've gotten, but I promise our attention has solely been on Princeton. We haven't even discussed Iowa other than the initial when it came out and where we were going and those types of things.

But she's a generational talent, and we would be fortunate to get the opportunity to play against her, but we've got plenty of business first.

Q. Let's continue to talk about Caitlin, the other Caitlin.

MARK KELLOGG: Thank you.

Q. Let's talk about Princeton, as well. What do you expect from them tomorrow? What are the challenges your team will be up against, and specifically how do you hope to contain the other Caitlin, Kaitlyn Chen, in tomorrow's game?

MARK KELLOGG: Yeah, because that Kaitlyn is really, really good too. She is special good. Watched her a ton, just trying to figure out what we're going to do to slow her and slow them down.

But I think extremely, extremely well-coached. They run great stuff. They're veteran. They've done this now I think it's five consecutive if I'm not mistaken. They've won the first game the last two years against North Carolina State and Kentucky.

They have our complete attention, our full attention is on Princeton. We know how good they are. Played a great non-conference schedule, other than I guess what the Columbia loss kind of handled the Ivy schedule I thought the way you would expect a really quality team to do.

So I think those three guards that start are really good. The other kid off the bench, the guard, is really good, 13. Then those posts are tough. They're physical. They're strong. They're good. I think they're really, really good. This is going to be one of the best teams that we've played all year, so we've got to find ways to slow them down on the offensive end, and then they may not get enough credit for how good they are defensively. This team is really

good on the defensive end. Very solid. Very fundamental in what they do. They just do a great job on both ends. This is a very well-balanced basketball team.

Q. Two questions about your scouting of Princeton. You talked a little bit about the posts and I'm curious to get your take on the rebound battle with Princeton being one of the best rebounding teams in the country by rebounding rate, just how you approach that, and then just defensively I know you guys are both really tough defensive teams. Can you compare and contrast your style versus theirs defensively for me?

MARK KELLOGG: Sure. I thought you were going to say we are not a good rebounding team but you just talked about them. It's been our achilles heel without question, and it's every night for us. We've been in the Big 12 playing against elite size and rebounding and we've had to figure out how to at least just hang around.

A lot of rebounding, though, is limiting second-chance points, so I think that's something to keep an eye on is just what do those rebounds lead to, and we find different ways to steal possessions, which a lot of times has been steals for us, and so that's how we kind of counteract or counterbalance the rebounding that has just been an achilles heel for us. We know that coming in. Got some ideas on maybe how we can try to slow it down a little bit, but a lot of it is just personnel, and they pursue it, and they're really good at it, and so we've got to be dialed in there.

Then yeah, both teams I think are really good defensively. We just do it completely opposite ways. Ours is making you uncomfortable with our pressure and obviously the press and we can get some runs fairly quickly if you don't value the basketball, and we can get out in the open floor and get going and use some of our speed and our quickness, and they do it the other way, take away your speed, be there on every single catch, their hands are high. I know their three-point field goal percent defense is not great, but they don't give up very many, either, so it's really a weird dynamic which teams shoot it at the rate they do but they still only give up I think 5.8 threes a game, which is not a ton, so that will be an interesting thing to keep an eye on, as well, is what happens both ways from the three-point line, I think.

Q. You said something interesting at the top. You said she's the greatest scorer in college basketball history. Does all this transcend gender, what she's done?

MARK KELLOGG: I think so, yeah. I do. I think this is the stuff she's doing at her age, the shots she takes, the

confidence she has. And I think the ability to pass, too. We talk about her the scorer but then she averages -- it's nine plus, right, nine plus assists her game? That's what just takes it even to a whole 'nother level. She's a dynamic scorer, has been, always was, and I do think it transcends both genders. When I say that I am talking men and women. I think she's the biggest name in college basketball right now, men or women. I think all the eyes are on Caitlin Clark.

How does she maneuver Iowa City day-to-day in a town like this with that name and everything that she's done for our sport, and really basketball in general. She's completely changing a lot of what our sport has been and I think the direction that it's going.

Q. You obviously knew the type of player that Jordan was coming into this year. Did you expect maybe some more growing pains as she got used to the major conference level, or were you not surprised to see what she's done?

MARK KELLOGG: Honestly, not too surprised. Talking about Jordan Harrison, right. Jordan Harrison came with me from Stephen F. Austin and had a really good freshman year and really picked up where she left off. I thought she might have a little bit of an adjustment period early but really not too bad. She has really picked up. I thought she was a phenomenal defender, always has been.

To have her and JJ out there together is as elite as it gets, but she's the point guard. She's the brains behind it. She's the coach on the floor with me.

She leads us, and our team looks at her to lead us. She's just a sophomore, so she's continuing to grow. This will be her first NCAA Tournament. But I'm excited to watch her, and I think she's prepared her whole life for this.

Q. When you look at JJ Quinerly, her growth over the season, had All-America recognition, Big 12 Defensive Player of the Year, but maybe the most standout thing is her growth as a leader, as well, since we're on that topic. Feels like she's more comfortable being that No. 1 sort of a reluctant superstar; seems like she's grown in that role in just this one year?

MARK KELLOGG: Yeah, no, I would say so. I've termed her the unassuming superstar all year and was really even quiet when I first got here. She's opened up a ton. She's learned how to communicate a little bit better, learned how to lead.

It's not vocally all the time. Most of the time it's just by her effort. But I think she's grown into that. I think when you --

I don't know how she was when she was just up here, but hopefully she did a pretty good job because she's come a long way in that area, in the ability to speak, but I think if you came to a home game and watched the 50 to 100 little girls that were waiting for her outside the Country Roads gate in Morgantown to get her autograph, that says something. We were getting pictures at Halloween with little girls dressed up as JJ with her little tattoos on their body trying to look like JJ.

No, we have a state that's rallied around her, but to her credit, she's taken onus of it and really taken it to a whole 'nother level.

Q. You come into this tournament actually having lost four of your last six, although I'll note that all of those losses save one were against teams in the tournament this year, so high-quality opponents. Does that concern you at all? Is that all behind now, or is there any concern on your part that there's a little bit of carryover on -- a bit of a slow finish to the regular season?

MARK KELLOGG: No, not at all, other than we need to find ways to win those close games.

But no, great opponents. Oklahoma State would be the exception, who was still a really, really good basketball team, I think top 60 NET, just didn't make the NCAA Tournament, and that was our third game in six days. That was the only game to be honest with you that I was a little disappointed in our performance all year. We didn't have it. We didn't have the juice. We couldn't get over the hump at all in that game.

But we go to K-State and lose in overtime, we had come back I think the game before, go to Baylor and get beat in a really good game, lose in a heartbreaker to Baylor at home, a game that we had every opportunity to win that one and then have a three to tie Kansas State again in the Big 12 tournament.

Those are high-quality opponents, and we are right there. We have been right there, and I think to answer your question, I guess, as I hope that's just a learning experience for us that helps us in these types of situations, and that's what you hope the Big 12 has done for us is because we've been in so many close games -- some we've lost, some we've won, but you're better because you've played those games.

These are good opponents. It's going to come down to the fourth quarter in some way, shape or form I have a feeling, and then it's kind of who makes the most plays late.

Q. Have you seen a team get so much offense from their mid-range game as Princeton does? Do they compare to any Big 12 opponent?

MARK KELLOGG: No, we have some that are very much mid-range driven. Probably not the quality and quantity of Princeton. They shoot it at a high, high percentage, which you just don't see a lot, and the analytics tell you not to shoot that shot and then you watch Princeton do it and they do it at such a high level, you're like, maybe it's still not too much of a lost art if you can do it the way that they do it.

This is a team that does it like at so many different positions. Normally you have one or two kids on a roster that live at the mid-range but they just keep coming and they keep coming, so obviously it's taught, it's practiced, it's recruited, but they're pretty efficient at it, so that's what scares you a little bit. Normally at times you're okay giving it up a little bit, but you'd probably better be careful against Princeton because they kind of make a living in that area.

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