

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

Friday, March 22, 2024

Iowa City, Iowa, USA

Carver-Hawkeye Arena

Holy Cross Crusaders Coach Maureen Magarity Bronagh Power-Cassidy Janelle Allen

Media Conference

Q. Janelle, was your brother there last night, and where are some of the places he's shown you around town?

JANELLE ALLEN: He was there last night. He was sitting front row with my mom, and yesterday or maybe two days ago, he gave us a tour of the football facility, so he kind of showed us a little bit of the ins and outs, the locker room, showed us the field, some of their meeting rooms. It was definitely a really cool experience.

I visited maybe once to see one of his spring games, but I've never seen the facility myself, either, so it was a cool experience to give my team, my coaches.

I think Coach Mags talked to the head coach, too, so it was kind of a little bonding moment, and we had a great time.

Q. You got a chance to play on the court last night, get a game in. What was it like playing in an arena like this and now that you know it's going to be sold out for tomorrow?

BRONAGH POWER-CASSIDY: Yeah, it was great. I think it's a nice court to play on. No complaints about the baskets. Honestly, as much as it wasn't sold out, it was still a great atmosphere last night. We had a lot of family show out, so I think we're all just so excited. I think right now, this arena is kind of the basketball capital, so to be able to experience that Saturday is going to be unbelievable.

JANELLE ALLEN: I mean, like Bronagh said, it was amazing. We shot great, so that's always a plus when you



do that. I will definitely say that the arena, it was comfortable, it was something different about it that just made us flow, and I think for a lot of viewers, it kind of looked like we were definitely comfortable yesterday, so we're definitely hoping that this comfortability flows into tomorrow. Despite the crowd, we're kind of taking that not as a negative but more as a positive and just playing hard and doing what we've got to do in front of a whole bunch of supporters.

Q. Is there any way to simulate the noise you're going to face tomorrow?

BRONAGH POWER-CASSIDY: Honestly, I'm not too sure. I know we actually had a kids' game earlier this year, and it was, I think, 12:00, packed stadium, and I remember the first basket I thought my eardrums were going to burst. I guess --

JANELLE ALLEN: It was like 3,000 kids.

BRONAGH POWER-CASSIDY: But they were all just screaming at the top of their lungs.

No, I think we've just got to go in there and be focused on each other and enjoy the atmosphere. It's going to be loud, but I think that's something that you just kind of play with, and it's going to be a lot of eye contact between us doing our best to communicate in other ways if we can't hear each other.

Q. Did you get to see the pink locker room? And Jeff asked you how you simulate the noise. How do you simulate a player like Caitlin Clark in practice? How do you try to figure out what to do with her?

JANELLE ALLEN: Well, we did see the pink locker room. I didn't even know that they did that, so that was absolutely hilarious to all of us. Definitely a good tactic that I think a lot of schools should probably take under. It was definitely really cool, very funny. I like that they do that.

We're going to try our best. She's a great player. We all know who she is. We're just going to play our game, play basketball. Once we go through scout teams, we're going

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to try to simulate her as best we can.

But at the same time, it's basketball. It's fundamentals. It's what we've been doing for years. We're going to play basketball. We're going to try our best. We're going to do what we have to do to get stops, play defense, and get buckets.

BRONAGH POWER-CASSIDY: I think the pink locker room was probably my favorite part of the tour. I thought it was incredible.

Yeah, I think today it's going to be important in practice just whatever player on our team gets the assignment of these girls. It's more on the shots they get to take in practice and trying to simulate the shots they want, regardless of make or miss. It's just trying to see how we can contain.

It's difficult to simulate, but I know our team is going to do their best and try and just understand the actions of what we're going to face tomorrow.

Q. It's obvious what the challenges are with guarding Caitlin, but is there an element of guarding against, wow, Caitlin Clark is out there, you've been watching her for two years, she's the biggest star the sport has ever seen? Is there an element of stepping back because it's not like facing any other player in talent or her stature?

BRONAGH POWER-CASSIDY: Yeah, for sure. She's a celebrity. I think she's the face of college basketball right now.

As another woman in sport, you've got to respect everything she's done for bringing attention to the women's game.

Yeah, there is that kind of moment, but I think once you're between the four lines, you're kind of like, okay, there's 94 feet, there's two baskets, and she's incredibly talented. We don't really need to say much on that. But I think we just want to be present in the moment and realize the stage we're on, but we're still there, we've got 40 minutes to play a game. It's just kind of taking that in.

JANELLE ALLEN: Yeah, definitely, of course we all watch her, so when you're a woman in any sport or anyone in general, everyone is watching her. You don't have to have a specific label on it. Of course there's excitement. Of course there's this little moment where it's like, okay, we're going to be on the same court as her, so of course it's going to be fun and exciting. But at the same time once you step on the court and you tie your shoes, you're a competitor, you're not a fan.

I think that's the biggest thing of knowing this is basketball, this is our game, this is our chance, so when you go out there, it's like a mentality switch. I think all 14 of us, our coaching staff, we're all going to have that mentality switch.

Q. I want to know what your daughter's scouting report is on Caitlin Clark.

MAUREEN MAGARITY: Don't let her make any shots. No, they're just overwhelmed and just so excited to be here. I feel so lucky that they can experience this.

But I probably shouldn't say this, but we did go to the bookstore yesterday, so there was one shirt we were really looking for that was about to be sold out, so we might have had to buy that. What a great experience. That was really cute that people picked up on that from the last interview.

Q. Looked like your team was very comfortable with the arena last night, shot the ball well. Can that be something you can take as momentum seeing as they've already played well in the gym and shot well going into tomorrow?

MAUREEN MAGARITY: I sure hope so. That was incredible. Just how we came out, how confident we looked.

We feel like this is like our second home at this point. We've been here a little under a week and have had practice and shootarounds, and just so proud of how we really rose to the occasion yesterday and with such a strong senior leadership that just knew we had to get the job done. But how we shot the ball yesterday was absolutely incredible. Honestly, I was stunned at the outcome of just how well we played and defensively how we were really able to lock them down. What a night. It was really fun.

Q. How in the world do you simulate playing in front of 15,000? It's going to be loud. It won't be like it was last night and probably nothing like you've faced this year. How do you prepare for that and keep this from being a little bit of a culture shock?

MAUREEN MAGARITY: Yeah, I don't think there's anything that can really prepare you for what we're about to face. But you know what, credit to this team. We have seen a lot. Like I mentioned, we have four seniors that have been with this program for a long time. You can go back to last year's championship game, we were at Boston University, sold out. They call it the roof. The floor is shaking. It was incredible. The decibel level in that gym was off the charts.

This year on our campus at the Hart Center, another sold-out crowd again, big rivalry game with BU again. We've had education games with sold-out crowds with screaming kids, 3,000 plus screaming kids at 11:00 in the morning.

I think we've experienced a little bit of what we might see tomorrow, but again, just the stage that we're going to be on and the crowd, it's going to be a once-in-a-lifetime experience for us.

Q. Your team and Iowa's team seem to not have the gigantic post players like a lot of teams have. What do you see in Hannah Stuelke for Iowa that might cause some problems?

MAUREEN MAGARITY: Yeah, she's just a tremendous player, and the ability for Caitlin and the rest of the team to find her on the block, her footwork, she's obviously a really tough matchup for us.

I think these last couple games we've done a really nice job with our rotations being able to double and keeping people off the block, but this is next level.

But we're ready. I think we've done a nice job even last night how we had to double the low post and we did a nice job pushing her off the block, as well.

Q. The challenges of guarding Caitlin are very obvious, but is there something else you need to guard against players stepping on to the floor, someone who's such a large figure in this sport, someone they've seen on commercials and on TV for years and has been covered in a way no woman basketball player ever has?

MAUREEN MAGARITY: Yeah, we just watched film. We had our film session right before we came to the gym. It's hard not to be in awe of everything she does. She just does everything at such an elite level, her scoring obviously, her passing, her court vision. Transition game is incredible, and that's something we've really watched a lot of clips on.

Yeah, like you said, she could arguably be the best player to ever play the game, and I think what an incredible opportunity we have to just shoot our best shot. We're here. We're here for a reason. We've earned this. We've played against a lot of really great players. Obviously Caitlin is really, really special.

But I think defensively we are who we are, and we've nationally been ranked in a lot of different categories, and

we just kind of have to take that and obviously play the game of our lives defensively and also make pretty much every shot that we take. But we're ready for that.

Q. Janelle Allen was saying her brother gave you a tour of Kinnick Stadium, the ins and outs of the stadium. What was that experience like to see that while you're on this trip here?

MAUREEN MAGARITY: Yeah, that was a really, really special experience. Janelle's brother she hasn't really seen in a while just because of distance and different sports, so that was really fun, and how gracious the football staff was to let us tour the amazing facility, get on the field, run around. My daughters were in awe of everything. They ran down and back on the football field, so I appreciated that, getting them worn out.

But it was really special just for the two of them to be able to spend some time together. We went to the NIT men's game on Tuesday night, and Junior came and sat with the team. It's just an extra bonus, obviously, just to be here and experience this amazing university, but just what a special connection we have, so we're really appreciative of the football staff, and they took a lot of time to give us that tour, so thank you, guys.

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