

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

Friday, March 22, 2024

Iowa City, Iowa, USA

Carver-Hawkeye Arena

Princeton Tigers

Coach Carla Berube

Kaitlyn Chen

Ellie Mitchell

Media Conference



all just really excited to be here, and we're going to make the most of it.

Q. The TV announcers have said, Kaitlyn, that you will elect to take your fifth season somewhere else. What sort of things are you looking for in a school, if you indeed do that?

KAITLYN CHEN: I'm not really focused on that right now. I'm more focused on hoping to make an NCAA Tournament run right now, so that's my main focus and concern at the moment.

Q. So West Virginia obviously is a pressing team. You guys faced some pressure against Penn in last weekend's semifinals. You won the game, but there were a lot of turnovers in that game for you guys. What did you learn from that game, and how are you preparing to handle the press tomorrow?

ELLIE MITCHELL: I think across the board in that Penn game, it was our third time playing them -- we had played them the week prior. Across the board I don't think we really played our best basketball, and we kind of let them speed us up, and a lot of times they played great defense, but a lot of times it was kind of also ourselves unforced turnovers.

I think in Columbia we did a lot better because they pressed us a little bit and just across the board taking care of the ball, we kind of slowed ourselves down and didn't let them speed us up, so I think that's really important for us, no matter who we're playing.

KAITLYN CHEN: Yeah, I think we all know tomorrow we have to take care of the ball extremely well and just stay composed and sort of have a lot of confidence in ourselves.

Q. Kaitlyn, forgetting anything that's going on in the future, being the last run at Princeton, how does that impact the way you're looking at this tournament, the way you're feeling, just one last run with these teammates you've been with?

Q. Would you like to respond to this quote from Jordan Harrison of West Virginia earlier today: "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."

ELLIE MITCHELL: I don't think we have much to say in response to that. Ivy League basketball is tough basketball, and we've had a lot of challenges throughout the year. We're excited to play West Virginia tomorrow. We'll see what happens, but we're looking forward to it.

KAITLYN CHEN: Ellie said it well.

Q. For both of you guys, obviously you guys have won in the NCAA Tournament before and know how to do it. How does it feel being on this stage now as seniors, and what makes you particularly confident in this year's group to make some noise this weekend?

ELLIE MITCHELL: Yeah, we've said it a lot before. Our experience and our success in previous years, obviously it's nothing to rest on, but it also gives us a little bit of confidence like we can compete in these big-time games. Anything can happen, but we've been here before. We have that kind of experience.

We're ready for tomorrow, and we're looking forward to it, and we're just trying to remind the rest of our team who -- they haven't been here before, but trying to remind them that we're going to be fine. We're going to do well. Yeah.

KAITLYN CHEN: The rest of our team has stepped up all year, and they've played really, really well, so I think we're



KAITLYN CHEN: I mean, I'm obviously extremely excited to be here, especially with Ellie and all of my team. I don't think it changes really from year to year. It's still super exciting and just a great opportunity that I don't think every team gets to experience, so I'm just trying to make the most of the moment.

Q. I wanted to start with that West Virginia press. Curious how you prepare for that. Also I was trying to think back, and when was the last time you guys faced a press similar to this or were pressed consistently in the way you're expecting they're going to come out and do that?

CARLA BERUBE: Yeah, good question about the last time we've seen that kind of pressure. Yeah, excited. Excited about it. It's certainly going to be challenging. They are aggressive. They're athletic. They have quick hands.

Yeah, they run that 2-2-1 press and they have a 1-2-1-1 press, and they make it really difficult. It's certainly been something we've been working on to make sure that we have a good plan in place, and yeah, excited for the challenge ahead. I really don't know who has had that much success, I guess, in a press like that.

Q. I'm curious whether or not you've checked in at all to get the two cents from your counterparts for the men's team because they do face Cornell every year who runs a press pretty similar to what West Virginia does, and so they've had to scheme that out every season. Have you talked with Mitch at all or any of the other folks on the men's program?

CARLA BERUBE: No, no, we have our own plan in place. We certainly watch a lot of basketball and see what has been successful against it. Every team is different. We aren't men, which makes it a little different on how you can break a press.

Yeah, we'll have a plan in place for tomorrow, and hopefully we can be successful against it.

Q. What was the U-16 experience like with Caitlin because she certainly wasn't what she is now?

CARLA BERUBE: Caitlin -- awesome. She was great. She was a lot of fun to coach at that age when they're still developing as players. She was young for the under-16 team at that time. The younger players were Caitlin Clark and Paige Bueckers and Izzi Fudd. Yeah, it was a lot of fun coaching Caitlin in that group.

You had a glimpse into the future of just how successful she could be. Nowhere did I think this kind of success.

But you could see the work ethic she had and the IQ.

I remember end of quarters, not a lot of our games were very close, but she'd still hit buzzer beaters at the end of quarters from deep range, and at 14 years old that was pretty awesome to watch.

Q. We were talking about the press before and having someone like Kaitlyn back there, the experience that she has, how vital is that?

CARLA BERUBE: Yeah, I think it's great to have somebody with the experience, that composure and poise that she does play with, the floor general. Smart, strong, sees the floor well, and doesn't let the moments rattle her. She's someone that doesn't get too high, never gets too low, and that's what you really need from your point guard and your captain and your leader.

Same thing with Ellie, too. Ellie is actually a great handler of the ball for a 5 and a strong passer. But I think just having Kaitlyn back there, I trust her with the basketball and to make good decisions with it.

Q. Carla, looking at the rebounding numbers for both teams, seems like that could be a place of advantage for you guys, and I know that's always a point of emphasis. How much are you looking at that as a key to this game, and are there other areas that you're saying are especially going to be important in determining tomorrow's outcome?

CARLA BERUBE: Yeah, I think them having not a lot of defensive rebounds also is skewed because of how many turnovers they force, so like opponents don't get that many shots.

But yeah, that's a huge emphasis and has been all season and will always be with our program is boxing out on the defensive side, not allow second-chance opportunities, and now we want to crash the boards on the offensive end and get second-chance opportunities for us. Ellie does a phenomenal job, as you know, at that, and we want to be able to crash and create those opportunities.

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