

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Holy Cross vs Iowa

Saturday, March 23, 2024

Iowa City, Iowa, USA

Carver-Hawkeye Arena

Iowa Hawkeyes

Lisa Bluder

Caitlin Clark

Kate Martin

Media Conference

Iowa - 91, Holy Cross - 65

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement from Coach before we take questions for the student-athletes.

LISA BLUDER: I just want to congratulate Maureen and Holy Cross on a really great season. They've spent a lot of time here in Carver, they've spent as much time in Carver this week as we have, and I think they have really enjoyed their time in Iowa City. They're just a really tremendous group of people. I thought they were very fundamentally sound. They worked really hard and really it was just a great first-round opponent.

Tonight, I thought our first quarter we showed a little rust, but I think we got it going a lot better in the second quarter. I love that we controlled the boards, assists were really good, four people in double figures. I thought Addi O'Grady came off the bench and did some really nice things for us.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Caitlin, you were injured early, it looked like, got hit in the head. How did you recover from that and did it impact you at all during the game or did you just shake it off?

CAITLIN CLARK: Honestly, like, it was just kind of a stinger to the nose. I was lucky it wasn't anything worse than that. But yeah, it didn't really bother me too much. I think you just kind of respond. Nice to have two free throws and never run a play, but obviously it looked kind of



bad in slow-mo, but it wasn't on purpose. She didn't do that on purpose. She came up and said sorry, but honestly, I'm totally okay.

Q. Caitlin Clark, please.

CAITLIN CLARK: You don't have to say my last name. It's okay.

Q. It seemed like maybe even a little more than usual you were a little bit frustrated with yourself tonight. Would you say that's accurate and like how did you kind of calm things down? You end up with 27-8-10 after all that.

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, I would say I probably could have smiled a little more tonight. I think the first quarter kind of frustrated maybe all of us in a way. I feel like this is a game you want to come out and dominate from the start because this is what fuels your run. Like Coach said, I think maybe we played with a little bit of rust. I think the biggest thing is like they really packed the paint. They just sat four people in there, so it's really hard to drive to the basket and then when you miss a few long shots to start, it's kind of like what do you do.

But I think, like Coach said, it's like we really started running our offense in the second quarter and then I was able to create some plays for my defense that turned into offense, especially late in the game, and then just tried to bring more energy. But, yeah, I think I was a little frustrated, but I feel like that comes from knowing what it takes to be where we want to be. I think from here on out, every single team is going to give us a really good game. Every single team is basically a top-25 team at this point. That's what makes March so much fun. I definitely think I could have smiled a little bit more, but, hey, I'm competitive, I want to win, and I expect us to be really good all the time.

Q. It is my first time in Iowa City. I've seen so many people saying that you are beyond basketball already, that you are a role model for the kids. Whether they're boys or girls, it doesn't matter. So many 22 jerseys also. How do you explain this new dimension that



you've taken over the last month now and do you feel it like you're responsibility?

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, something you never get sick of is seeing somebody wearing your jersey, especially all those little girls and little boys who are screaming for your autograph. And I feel like this city has really embraced our team more than anybody. This state has really embraced our team and they love our team to death and that's what's made it so fun, that's what this journey has really been all about, is people really rallying around us and sharing in these moments and this joy with us. I think that's been super special not only for myself, but even like Kate and Gab and Sharon, who have been here and are moving on after these four years.

So I don't really see it as something that's -- the spotlight is always on me. It's my responsibility to inspire people, but I think that just comes with how I live my life and how I go about my daily business. It's not anything I'm trying to do. It's just the person I am and that's kind of what comes along with it.

Q. For the people who don't know you yet, who are you, Caitlin Clark, on and off the court?

CAITLIN CLARK: Holy cow that's a loaded question. We could go anywhere. You can Google that one. Google it and get your answers.

Q. Even for the French people?

CAITLIN CLARK: Even for the French people, yes.

Q. Kate, just how would you say this team played considering 12, 13 days off and just tell us a little bit about Addi's impact for you tonight?

KATE MARTIN: Yeah, a lot of people came in off the bench and played really well for us, Addi 7-9, so we were really proud of her tonight. But I think we had to knock some rust off a little bit, but I think kudos to Holy Cross. They came in here and they played really competitively and they're a good shooting team, so you can never really discount good shooting teams. So kudos to them.

But, yeah, we knocked a little bit of rust off and we had a good second quarter that really separated us. Obviously, like Caitlin said, we have high expectations for ourselves, so we're not super pleased with every single quarter. I think our defense wasn't fully there for three of our quarters. But knocking rust off and at this time of the year, it's survive and advance, so I'm proud of the way we responded in a lot of situations tonight.

Q. Kate, obviously you guys talk about knocking off some of the rust. After that first quarter, you're one of the vocal leaders on this team, is there anything that you said to the team? What was kind of the message there for the first quarter? And then second part, how is the head? It looked like you took a tough fall there.

KATE MARTIN: Yeah, no, I didn't really say anything too inspiring, honestly. I think we all kind of knew what needed to be done, and it was our defense, and we responded really well in the second quarter. But, yeah, we also keep talking about, you know, we only have one more game left in Carver now too, so this was one of two games left for us seniors here in Carver, and so trying to enjoy every single moment and that puts things in perspective for us. But yeah, I think my head's fine. I just have a nice little goose egg back there. How do I look?

CAITLIN CLARK: Horrible.

KATE MARTIN: Oh.

Q. Gabbie Marshall hit a couple of three-pointers early. The first one it sounded like the roof was going to collapse. How did that help you as a team, just kind of give you a little bit of a breather, and then how did that impact you going throughout the game, just a couple of her three-pointers?

KATE MARTIN: When Gabbie's on, it really is like lights a fire under all of us, honestly. When she's hitting her shots and playing with passion and just sticking her tongue out or like cheering, it really lights a fire under all of our butts. So when Gabbie's hitting, it's really fun for us, and when you see one go through the net and it was her first shot and our first points, then makes are contagious. So it was really good to see that out of Gabbie and -- Gabbie "Marchall," it's been fun for her and I've been loving seeing her knock down some shots continuing over from the Big Ten tournament.

Q. Caitlin, you guys are up 23-21 after the first quarter and almost instantly it felt like you guys were up almost 20. Can you speak to how fast you guys are able to make runs and how that happens for you guys.

CAITLIN CLARK: I think that's one of the best parts of this team, is like we always are in a game no matter what situation it is. Obviously that situation is a little bit different. But I think that just speaks to our offensive fire power. When we're able to string stops together, that's when our offense really thrives, when we get out in transition, I think. We got a few stops there in transition. I think we made a three, and then I know Addi ran the court and got a layup and then it forced the other team to call a timeout.

So I think, you know, it just speaks to our offense, but it really, honestly, for us, starts on defense, and I think when we're able to string stops together, that's when we're really able to execute. I know we kind of sent them to the foul line a lot, especially there in the first half. It felt like there were a lot of dead ball situations where we weren't really able to push the ball. So I think when we get stops, that leads to our best offense, which is transition offense, and that's what we want to get to.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. We'll excuse the student-athletes and take questions for Coach.

Q. Could you tell us what was up with Hannah not playing in the second half and are you concerned at all about Monday with her?

LISA BLUDER: She didn't feel well, and it just wasn't worth putting her in there when we didn't have to have her. So just trying to save her for Monday. I thought, like, again, Addi went in and did a great job. We were 11-16 with our center positions tonight, which is pretty good.

Q. I think a lot of people just expected the 1 seed to come in and handle the 16 seed pretty easily. Curious to hear your thoughts from beginning to end how you feel like your team played today. Is this a performance that you're happy with going into Monday?

LISA BLUDER: You know, I'm happy with it. I'm not going to ever complain about a 26-point victory. Of course the first quarter I thought we were a little bit rusty, as I said, but I thought we got it going after that our. Three-point defense was really good, and that was a key for us, was three-point defense. I thought we did a great job with that. I thought we did a really good job on the boards. We got great paint points, took advantage of some of things, so, yeah, I'm cautiously optimistic (laughing).

Q. We talked about those little runs you had there in the first half. The first one came I think you were down 11-10 and went, scored 10 in a row with Caitlin on the bench. Could you just tell us a little bit about that run there?

LISA BLUDER: Yeah, sometimes our offense, we just pass the ball a little bit better when Caitlin is on the bench, so I thought you saw that tonight. I thought our team really moved well, they cut hard, and it's really comforting to know that if Caitlin is on the bench that we can still score really well. I thought some other people really stepped up in that situation.

Q. Watching this maybe through the eyes of the Holy

Cross team, but I didn't see any intimidation, any fear, and some good ball. Where does that come from?

LISA BLUDER: For Holy Cross? I know you'll have to ask Maureen that, because I think she will be in here next, right? But they're a gutsy group, and it comes from Maureen. I mean, Maureen is, I mean she, she coached or played at Marist for Red Fox there, I mean, he's a great coach and I think she's such a good fundamentals coach. Their team played very well. They only had 13 turnovers tonight. They weren't intimidated at all. I think it helped them being in Carver for such a long time this week. But certainly they were not, I think, intimidated by our crowd or anything. I thought they just enjoyed the experience and that's what you want to do as a 16 seed that's what you have to do, and they got a great win in the NCAA tournament the other night.

Q. I know heading into tournament play a big concern was kind of the how the back-up post players were going to perform, some of the inconsistencies. You mentioned, O'Grady had a big game, I guess some other post, I guess your thoughts on some of the backup post players' performance today?

LISA BLUDER: Yeah, I had Addi O'Grady put the Iowa sticker up today, because I thought she came in and played that well for us. She's 7-9 from the field, has five rebounds, 14 points. I thought she did a good job. I think A.J. came in and did some things. Sharon obviously in a really small amount of time has five points for us. So 11-16, again and 40 paint points is very, very good.

Q. A question about Caitlin. You've seen her grow up over the last years. Did you imagine she would become someone so important on and off the court for the whole sports?

LISA BLUDER: I don't think you can ever imagine what has happened with Caitlin on a national level. I just don't. I mean I could sit here and say, Oh, yeah, I knew she was going to be this great, but whenever you recruit somebody you have great optimism for 'em, you think they're a great player, that's why you recruit 'em. Could you have predicted this level of success? No, I mean, no way. The popularity obviously is something that's quite amazing. Social media helps with that, television exposure, getting to the National Championship last year, being on national commercials doesn't hurt your popularity. So she deserves it. She's a great representative of women's basketball on the national level.

Q. So she sent me on Google, but I prefer to ask it to you directly. Who is she, what are her qualities on and off the court as a player and as a person?

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LISA BLUDER: I mean, she's the ultimate competitor. I mean, she's upset with a 26-point victory tonight, she's not real happy with the way she played, she's just the ultimate competitor. She's a great kid, too. She's tremendous in the classroom, she's a tremendous role model, she wants to spend as much time as physically possible with young kids. I continue to be impressed with her and her abilities, not only on the court, but just the type of young lady she is off the court.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you.

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