

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Second Round - West Virginia vs Iowa

Monday, March 25, 2024

Iowa City, Iowa, USA

Carver-Hawkeye Arena

## West Virginia Mountaineers

## Coach Mark Kellogg

## Jayla Hemingway

## JJ Quinerly

### Media Conference

Iowa - 64, West Virginia - 54

THE MODERATOR: First we'll go to Coach Kellogg for an opening statement.

MARK KELLOGG: Thank you, Steve. First, congratulations to Iowa on a great season on advancing, great atmosphere. They've done something really, really special here. Fun to play in. Fun to be a part of. Great talent. Very well coached. Congrats to Iowa on advancing in the tournament.

With that said, I'm so proud of our team, the resiliency, that's kind of been our word all year. For them to be able to showcase what we've known but I think a lot of people maybe didn't know about West Virginia women's basketball, so hopefully there were some eyes on this game tonight so people across the country got to see how special this group is.

I said all year this is the most fun or one of the best seasons I've enjoyed in my coaching career in year 19 or 20 as a head coach, and I credit that to the players. They've just been phenomenal. We've talked about buy-in and allowing these kids to be themselves, and that was our goal, and I think we've been able to do that.

That defensive effort tonight was, I thought, tremendous and special and to do some of the things statistically to that team for as good as they are offensively, it was a credit to our players. Of course, wish we could have made a few more shots and made a few more plays.

When we were tied with, I think, five minutes to go, that



was what we wanted to be. The game went about to script for us as far as holding them down and trying to give ourselves a chance late.

So just so proud of our group. I am just tremendously proud to be the head coach at West Virginia to coach this group of girls.

I look forward to the future and certainly thank the senior group that got us to this point because we're in pretty good shape right now with our program.

**Q. Jayla, during one of the home Big 12 games, either Texas Tech or Houston, we kind of asked you about your whole five-year career, and you said, My knees hurt. How are your feelings after this game going toe to toe with Iowa for nearly 28 minutes?**

JAYLA HEMINGWAY: This probably won't be a shocker, but my knees definitely still hurt.

I'm just grateful to even be able to have this whole extra year to be able to play here at West Virginia. I'm just grateful to be able to have this team and this coaching staff that came and embraced all of us. Yeah, I would just say I'm blessed to be here.

**Q. JJ, I know Jordan's not up here, but a lot of people are going to look and say she only scored 3 points, but she also had 9 assists. Could you speak to her play and how important she was on the offensive end with those 9 assists on feeding the entire team.**

JJ QUINERLY: Jordan, she may not have had a lot of points, but she does other things, like defense. Her defense is amazing. Her passing skills are amazing. Even when she's not scoring, she'll still make something happen on that court, and we need her out there.

**Q. JJ, I'll address this to you, but Jayla, feel free to jump in as well. Just curious, particularly in the second quarter and the fourth quarter, you held them to 20 percent shooting and then 10 percent shooting. What was working so well to really lock Iowa down?**



JJ QUINERLY: Our defense. Our defense has been our identity all year. That just speaks to how tough and resilient we are.

JAYLA HEMINGWAY: I second that. I think that our ball pressure and our full court press dictates a lot of the things that happens on offense because, when we get going in transition and get people turning the ball over, that's really what gets a lot of our points in transition.

**Q. JJ, I was just curious, as such a defensive-minded player as you are, what was it like tonight going toe-to-toe against Caitlin Clark on her home court in her last basketball game?**

JJ QUINERLY: It was amazing. I think a lot of people would take that opportunity as a golden opportunity, opportunity to either beat the best player in the world or go toe-to-toe with her and compete all 40 minutes. That's what we did the whole game, competed the whole time, and nobody can take this away from us.

**Q. JJ, I kind of caught towards the end -- at the end of the game when you were heading back towards the locker room, it looked like you gave a little bit of a signal towards the Iowa faithful, a great crowd, and just kind of thanking them is what it looked like to me. Is that what that was? Can you speak on how great this crowd was and how great of an opportunity it was to get West Virginia in this spot in the second round?**

JJ QUINERLY: I think I waved to our fans and I also waved to the Iowa fans because they're a great supporting fans, like I've never seen anything like that. So got to give credit to that all the time. So yeah, of course.

**Q. JJ, with as many games as you guys have won, obviously you believe you can win every game, but when you erase that ten-point deficit in the fourth quarter, was that when belief really started to kick in that you guys could get the result?**

JJ QUINERLY: I think we believed in ourselves since the bracket came out, as you've all seen. I think Coach believed in us that we had the ability to beat this team. We just came up short.

THE MODERATOR: Jayla, do you want to take that one as well?

JAYLA HEMINGWAY: Yeah, I don't think that confidence was ever lacking. I think we always felt like we can compete with any team in this country, especially with our defense. I think it showed tonight.

**Q. I'll address this one to JJ, but Jayla, if you have something. If there was a message that you guys would send to the national media now that you are in the spotlight and you went toe-to-toe with Iowa, were tied with a couple of minutes to go in the game, really locked them up defensively, is there anything you want them to know about West Virginia basketball going forward?**

JJ QUINERLY: You all keep watching us. We got more coming next season.

JAYLA HEMINGWAY: Don't underestimate any of us. I think that West Virginia definitely is going to be on the map going forward, period.

**Q. Coach, it seems like you're close to really breaking through and becoming a power program. I mean, not that you aren't already, but maybe to get to a Sweet 16, an Elite Eight, maybe even a Final Four. Can you talk about what it would take for your team to take that next step and become the kind of elite team I just described?**

MARK KELLOGG: Time, experience, probably more than anything else. Maybe some depth. Three coaches in three years, remember, so these kids were recruited by several different coaches that we had to blend together in one year.

I think we're close. I think we've been close all year, but no one wants to give us, it doesn't feel like, a whole lot of credit. I feel like our seed was not what we were -- was not the representation. I don't think we were an 8 seed. I don't think we got all the credit we deserved through the regular season. Our kids have battled. We've been one of the best defensive teams in the country.

I'm glad tonight we got to showcase that so maybe people will start to understand what we are and what we're about.

So, yeah, I do think we're close. I think we need more depth, we need experience. We hadn't played in one of these games. We didn't have anybody on our roster, other than Kyah Watson who had played and been to a Sweet 16.

This was new for us. It was new for me. Phenomenal environment. I've said now that I've been here that I want to get that thing in Morgantown. If we're going to continue to do this in women's basketball and give the top four seeds that kind of environment, I want to create that in Morgantown.

I thought we trended the right direction this year and had



the second highest attendance we've had in our school's history, so people are starting to fall in love with it.

We represent an entire state. That's what people don't know about West Virginia. We have no pro sports. We're the only Power 5 in the entire state. The Mountaineer fans are rabid. They just love their mountaineers.

I want to play off of that. We are hard working and blue collar and those things. I want a team that represents the state. I'm certainly proud of them tonight because I think we did that.

I don't want this to be the finality. I don't want this to be -- when we talk about advancing, I don't want it to always be one round. Not complaining about that in year one, but certainly would like to advance a little bit further.

**Q. You said you hoped you showed basketball fans something they hadn't seen before with the West Virginia Mountaineers or something they didn't know about. What are you hoping general fans of basketball and women's basketball can take away from this Mountaineer team?**

MARK KELLOGG: I hope you can appreciate the resilience and the toughness and everything we showed in a crazy environment, when the whistle didn't go our way. In that fourth quarter, when they go 1 for 10 and score only from the free-throw line, and our kids could have gone the other way, and we didn't, and we battled in a tough environment. That place was loud a couple times. We worked on all of our nonverbal cues, and kids just bought into it. I was really, really proud of them.

I think a lot of people -- at least I hope. I haven't seen anything yet -- but I assume people are pretty proud of that performance, especially in our state, but even outside of our state, I think people can be proud of what we did.

**Q. Coach, you go from the gauntlet of the Big 12 to the Big 12 tourney to you get a week off, but then you're in March Madness playing Princeton and Iowa. Such a great run, but how long do you take to decompress before trying to address the transfer portal and trying to address maybe replacing Lauren and Jayla?**

MARK KELLOGG: Not long. With the portal the way it is -- and somehow that's ridiculous, and that's probably another story for another time or conversation, but that thing doesn't need to be opening a week ago. So you're already doing some of it. You're trying to prepare for an NCAA Tournament and the portal opens on the same day.

No, you don't rest. There is no rest yet. Once you get your

roster complete, you rest. We'll get back at it tomorrow and probably be back on the phone. Maybe some recruits watched this one tonight, and they're like, hey, I would love to play in that system. So that's what you hope.

**Q. Coach, I know you guys average forcing a bunch of turnovers. You had 15 tonight, not as many as you normally do, yet you held Iowa to 64 points. What did you like best about your half-court defense?**

MARK KELLOGG: We were still plus, what, I think eight on the turnovers, and even on the second chance points. I think we had more offensive rebounds than they did. So we won the possession battle. A lot of that too in the press was going to be to slow them down. We needed possessions to be a little bit lower, did not want possessions to be too high tonight. I thought we controlled that piece of it.

We ran different kids at Clark as much as we possibly could to give her as many looks to hopefully frustrate her, give her the little guys, go guard her, JJ and Jordan, put our bigger players on her.

They just bought into the game plan and into the scout. I thought we were disruptive. That's kind of been our MO all year on the defensive end. People think we press. Sometimes they think that means we play really fast, but we don't have to do it. I've always wanted to win multiple ways. If we need to play fast we can, or if we need to grind out a half quarter like we did tonight, we need to be able to do that.

So, yeah, it was just a full team effort on the best offensive team in the country.

**Q. I know this is your first year here, Jayla's been here for four years. Just the one year that you've gotten to coach her, even all the seniors, what would you say about the role that they've played on this basketball team, not just this year, but moving forward as well?**

MARK KELLOGG: Hopefully every senior wants to leave a legacy, and we all want to make it better than what it was when we got it. I think we're moving in the right direction for sure. Jayla's been here the longest. She's our toughness. A lot of our toughness was wrapped up into Jayla. I told her that from the jump.

Really proud of her. She came off the bench for us all year after starting the vast majority of her career and took it with flying colors and has been really good, and I loved her tonight. I know she didn't shoot it great, but still loved her out there.

Lauren struggled a little bit offensively late in the year, but she's one of the premier defenders in the country.

Tavy Diggs is our other senior who didn't get to play tonight or here, but she had some really good moments for us, and she's a transfer that's been here a couple years.

A really, really good senior class that left a really nice legacy for us as we move forward.

**Q. I've asked you about Tirzah before and the impact that she plays. She led the forwards in minutes tonight. What can you speak on her contributions tonight, apart from the scoring section of the stat sheet?**

MARK KELLOGG: Tirzah was really good. She's battled injuries this year that really affected her flow and rhythm for the most part. We thought it was probably going to have to be her and Kylee, especially because how fast their post players are, especially Stuelke in the open floor. So we needed speed to hang with them because they're so good when they get out in transition.

Tirzah needed to play big minutes. I was proud of her. I thought she battled her butt off and gave us some great minutes and a few big buckets for us. Probably I thought she got a whistle on a couple more too that we didn't get. So really disappointed from that, but not from Tirzah's standpoint, just that we didn't get the opportunity to play through some of the whistles.

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