

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Arizona vs Syracuse

Saturday, March 23, 2024

Storrs, Connecticut, USA

Gampel Pavilion

**Syracuse Orange**

**Felicia Legette-Jack**

**Dyaisha Fair**

**Kennedi Perkins**

Media Conference

Syracuse - 74, Arizona - 69

THE MODERATOR: We have Syracuse. We'll begin with an opening statement from Coach.

FELICIA LEGETTE-JACK: God be the glory. You all had a chance to witness a really good basketball game. That's happening all over the country. Women's basketball is right now. It's right now.

My hope is that everyone grab a hold to it and really just honor what we do, honor the work ethic that we have, honor how hard we play. Arizona is an incredible team, seven, eight players. It felt like 19 of them out there. They just left it on the line. They wanted it for their story.

But I have to give credit to my young ladies because we have a story too, and we're representing something bigger than ourselves. When our chancellor comes all the way from New York to be a part of witnessing what we do and his beautiful wife, we have to leave it on the line.

Director of Athletics John Wildhack, every chance I can thank him for this opportunity, I want to. Thank you, John, for giving me this opportunity, and we're going to continue to work hard to make you proud.

**Q. Dyaisha, you go down with that injury at the end of the third quarter and a historic run for you in the fourth. What's going through your mind throughout that entire sequence?**

DYAISHA FAIR: I was just hoping it wasn't anything serious. At first, when stuff like that happens, you think the



worst, and at first it was just overwhelming.

But I knew once I felt good, or I knew I was able to go, in the back of my mind, my team is still counting on me. If I can go, I'll go. I'm counting on me, and so was everyone watching and my family. So that was the mindset to get back out there.

**Q. Dyaisha, the other day you texted Coach Jack asking if you could have this last dance. In order to keep dancing, you had the historic run in the fourth quarter. What was it like going through that and what was your mindset heading into that stretch where you guys were down four?**

DYAISHA FAIR: I think we've been there before. When you have experience, you know what it takes to win, you know what it takes to have success. I think the scorer that I am and the confidence that I have and the confidence that my teammates and my coaching staff instill in me all throughout the year is just keep going. It's just keep going and trust your work.

**Q. KP, this is not the first time you've been a critical second half punch for the team. What about your game, about this team, allows you to be so clutch in critical moments, plus 13 in 22 minutes?**

KENNEDI PERKINS: I think just staying ready whenever my name is called. I saw we were down. I knew we needed some points. I didn't want to go home, and I knew my teammates didn't want to go home. So I did what I needed to do to continue this journey that we have.

**Q. When you come back on the court, the crowd goes nuts. Can you run me through the energy it gives you and the team when you've got the support and they're really giving you a huge cheer when you came back on the court?**

DYAISHA FAIR: To hear that, it was warming, I think, with it being my last few games with this team. It was a warming thing. In my mind, it's time to go. It's go time. So get back out there and get it done.



**Q. Dyaisha, when that play happened at the end of the third quarter, what happened and what did you feel? Was it banged knees, or what was it?**

DYAISHA FAIR: I think it was probably I twisted it and then landed on it, I think. Like I said before, it was like an overwhelming thing at first. You don't know what you don't know. So I just prayed that it wasn't anything serious.

But it wasn't, and I'm good.

**Q. You feel okay now?**

DYAISHA FAIR: Yeah, I'm good.

**Q. Dyaisha and Kennedy, what changed in the second half, especially that fourth quarter defensively? You guys were able to force turnovers and kind of got after them.**

KENNEDI PERKINS: During halftime, we got a talk from coach.

(Laughter).

And we just took everything she said to us. We came out more aggressive. We stopped them from scoring. We played our game. The first half, we didn't really play our game. We were attempting. We were almost there. But second half we started to play our game, and it started to translate on defense and offense.

**Q. Dyaisha, you had six steals. I think that's a Syracuse program record for an NCAA Tournament game. How did your defense in particular fuel your offense and just fuel this comeback in general?**

DYAISHA FAIR: I didn't know that. I didn't even look at that. I think my quickness is kind of what we feed off of, me just going and going and going and being able to get up under those passes or whatever and get my team going. That's the type of game we like to play.

We like to go in transition, and we like to go pretty fast at times. I think that's kind of what helped us get on a run. Then it built energy for us and gave us the momentum.

**Q. Kennedy, as soon as you stepped on the court, you never left, playing 23 minutes today. What has it been like for you to kind of battle through minutes down the stretch here among your other teammates, and what was different about today's performance for you?**

KENNEDI PERKINS: When you're trying to accomplish something like making it to the Final Four and winning a

National Championship, you don't focus on like the past when you're right here. So I wasn't focused on my minutes before. I was focused on what I had to do in today's game to help my team. So that's what I did.

**Q. Dyaisha, Coach Jack made a decision to go zone in the middle of the third quarter. What kind of confidence did you all have on defense that she could make a sudden change like that?**

DYAISHA FAIR: We knew what our strengths are and what their weaknesses were, so once we were able to recognize those, at that moment it was the best decision for us.

**Q. Kennedy, you've seen this before with the girl sitting next to you. Just run me through what the team thinks when she gets in that zone where she's getting the ball and she's scoring every possession.**

KENNEDI PERKINS: Oh, we love it (laughter). We know when she's cooking, give her the ball. We'll rebound. We'll get her open if we need to. But when Dyaisha gets going, who can stop her?

**Q. Kennedy, sort of building off that, how does your play style really complement Dyaisha's, and how does that sort of one-two punch create a different element for this team?**

KENNEDI PERKINS: Since Dyaisha's a three level scorer and I'm more aggressive on the attack, I feel like, once they go out to her or when she's driving and she kicks it to me, they're not ready for me to either do a pull-up or attack them back where she just came from. That's how we play off of each other, and it's been working.

**Q. Dyaisha, at the end of the game, your teammates are hugging each other, coming off the court together, and you were sort of like standing, walking off alone. It was hard to see what you were feeling. Can you take me through what you were sort of thinking in that moment?**

DYAISHA FAIR: I was trying to get up off the floor, I think.

(Laughter).

And realized like we actually won the game. As I walked back, I'm trying to take it all in, be where my feet are, and kind of think about what's next and kind of just like celebrate myself in a way.

I have a weird way of showing a lot of things. Like you said, you don't know, but that's kind of just me.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach.

**Q. There's been so many second half comebacks throughout this season. When it's tied up going into the fourth quarter, what's your confidence level at that point in time?**

FELICIA LEGETTE-JACK: This is a team that makes me believe that it's never over until the last horn sound. Even that last game we played over in the ACC Tournament, I thought we had a chance to win that one as well, but we dug ourselves in too deep of a hole.

I just love the resilience of these young ladies. I love that they listen to me and hear my crazy stories and my stories actually motivate them to become something different than what they believe they can be, and it takes them a little bit higher.

I'm just excited about moving forward with us and love, love, love to start off faster. But if it doesn't happen at the beginning, let it happen at the end.

**Q. Obviously you've watched Dyaisha play basketball over the last five years. Where does this moment rank in terms of everything you've watched?**

FELICIA LEGETTE-JACK: It's all great, you know. The moments with her, the greatest moments is off the basketball court. The greatest moment is when things don't go well and we try to figure out how to make it go well, and when you don't have an answer and when wrong happens for no reason at all and we try to figure it out together, and we did. Just waking up the next morning and realizing we survived it, those are the times that matter the most.

These games here are fun -- fun for the family, fun for fans, fun for you guys. But the biggest blessing and moments that she and I had together, it didn't touch the basketball court. It was helping her through the toughest times, the thing called life.

**Q. Coach, you talked a little bit yesterday about how Kennedi had earned a little bit more playing time over the past few weeks of practice. How do you feel that she set herself apart from maybe some other backup guards in that spot, and what propelled you to put her in today in that moment?**

FELICIA LEGETTE-JACK: I have some great assistant coaches. They don't get enough credit. Sue Ludwig, Kristen Sharkey, Khyreed Carter, Steven Gilbert, and Amber Moore, Matt -- and I've got to call my husband one

of my assistants too because he's been with us all season. They really make decisions for us. We talk about things in practice, in the war room, we call it, and when it's time to make decisions and sub people in, they say it's time.

They watch and witness the young ladies in practice who has earned the right to be on that court. Nothing's given. She's earned every single minute. I mean, two days of practice, we went after it after we lost that tournament, and we pushed them. She got real comfortable with that trash can, and she really didn't stop there. She says give me one more second, and she'd get back out there and play.

She has left it out there, and she's earned every minute. There's no question if it was for her or not. She earned those minutes. Our coaches said it. We all believe it. And she got out there and proved us all right.

**Q. Coach, when Dyaisha was in the locker room, you're not sure if she's going to return, what's the game plan for the last ten minutes? Because she had provided a huge bulk of your scoring up to that point?**

FELICIA LEGETTE-JACK: There's going to be a point when she's not going to come in that locker room, right? There's going to be a time -- it's right now. It could be right now. Her legacy begins right now, and that's the conversation we had with our team.

Who's willing to jump in those shoes? It might be all of us have to go in at the same time. Small feet, big shoes. And I looked at my five that was getting ready to sub in, all the players that was out there, they never blinked like what are we going to do? They didn't say, oh, about time, they didn't look like that either. They looked like they were just locked on ready.

All that she has done, we have the responsibility to pour out. Whatever that would have been would have been. But I thought those five that were ready to sub in, that subbed in, we managed that score, if you noticed, for the first 2:30, and when Dyaisha came in, she kind of took it over like she always do.

But I just like what we're building here, and I think that the future is in good hands.

**Q. Coach, we heard a little bit about your halftime speech, and it sounded like it was very passionate. Can you elaborate on what you said when your message was for the team to go back to playing its style of basketball?**

FELICIA LEGETTE-JACK: Just really to share with them that there comes a time when you're going to feel like



you're on this island by yourself and nobody's going to save you. You have to talk to some people who can make decisions for you, and they're going to be like deaf ear. That's when you have to dig and you've got to find your sister because that's the only one that's going to hear you, believe in you, and really honor what you're saying.

So lock into family. It's go time. We probably threw a couple other words in there, but that's kind of the message.

**Q. Me and my colleague both noticed, despite you all not taking the lead until the fourth quarter, your team was more composed and had better body language than Arizona throughout. How rewarding is it for you as a Coach and an educator to see the lessons you pour into the young women to come out at such a critical time and it being a continued theme of your season?**

FELICIA LEGETTE-JACK: I'm so proud of this team for what they've been through. Sometimes He just bless you even when you probably don't deserve it. What we've been through earlier in the season, to see the composure of these young people, to see the fight, to see the communication, to see the silly laughs where I tell them to be quiet, they just became a family.

Everybody throws that word out, family. This is a family for real. One thing that they knew is that I already got warned, so I couldn't put myself into that emotional state. I got a call -- an e-mail from one of the best coaches at Syracuse, Kayla. She's the head coach for the women's lacrosse team. And she said, Coach, there's going to come a time where you're just going to have to stay calm, and you've got to let them be.

When I got warned, that was the only thing I thought about was the words she wrote me on that e-mail. I took her advice, and I allowed them to lead. They proved us right once again. These ladies are ready to do something way more big than just this game or the next game or the next game or whatever it's going to be. They prepared themselves for life, and I'm just a witness. I'm so grateful to be a part of it.

**Q. Coach, what can you say about your big men and their presence today and those offensive boards really keeping you guys in this game?**

FELICIA LEGETTE-JACK: Our big players were really special. I love that Iza is back, and she does her -- she's still got to get her cardio together, but she composes everybody. She talks a lot on the bench. Somebody subs out, she's the one touching a knee. Even I sat next to her, she grabbed my knee and made me feel calm.

She could be a coach. She's just a special young ladies. My hope is to get her back next year.

Kyra was dead tired, and Dyaisha was like she can't sub out. Kyra was like, I'm okay. They knew they were needed when they showed up. That rookie, Alyssa Latham, she played top of the zone, back of the zone. She got beat. She came back, and she got a block on the back end. Saniaa didn't play as many minutes as she should have, but she showed up. Sophie did a great job on the defensive side of the ball, hit that big time three. We could say something about all of them, not just bigs, but the guards too.

This is a special group, and my hope is we continue to show our special light every time we get a chance to get on that court.

**Q. What did Dyaisha say to you as she made the walk back up and you high fived her after she came back to the bench? What were your thoughts when she went down? It looked like it would have been such an unfair ending?**

FELICIA LEGETTE-JACK: When she was down, I said, you can't be crying. No crying. There's too many cameras on you. She said, give me a towel then. When you say something fun like that to them, the tears go away, and now you focus on really what's the pain like?

That's what I try to do, I try to get them to think about something different. Then when she came to the bench and I looked at her, she said, Coach, two words. I'm good. I smacked her hand so hard, I might have broke her arm.

You know that's a fourth quarter kid and she says I'm good, you say who's coming out? Coach KC made the call and got the right person in. I think we had to get Alaina out that time and make some decisions with that. She came through. She's a special young lady.

**Q. Coach, in the first quarter, Dyaisha only took two shots from the field, but as the game progressed, she ended with like 22-ish. What was the difference in getting her the ball more, and what sort of changed offensively?**

FELICIA LEGETTE-JACK: You've got to read the defense. That's a great defensive team we played against. That stick 'em defense, that's where that name came from because, when I tell you those young ladies know how to play defense and coach that defensive side of the ball, we had to figure out how to get her open. When you get open, who's guarding you? What kind of kid is guarding you? Is

it a small kid? We've got an opportunity to score. Is it No. 13, who's handsy?

We had to discern what was the right opportunity to be in attack mode. Let's make that pass. Let's make that pass. Then when she started feeling good about I see what they're doing right now, that high IQ she has. All right, let's call some plays for her right now, and that's what we ended up doing. Pretty special young lady.

**Q. Coach, you talked about going through some struggles earlier in the game, and Kennedi mentioned what you were talking about with turnovers at halftime as well. When you guys are turning the ball over and free-throws aren't going down, what are your messages to the team? How are you encouraging them to keep moving forward despite things not going their way on things they can control?**

FELICIA LEGETTE-JACK: First, I needed to be encouraged because I was like, what are we doing? Are we throwing this game or what? My coaches were like, we got this. What's the next play? They got me thinking about next play stuff. We can't control what we can't control. Whether the ball goes in or not, we can defend.

So we decided we're going to stretch our defense a little bit and then stick with those guys and bring them back into the zone and give us an opportunity to shorten the game up a little bit because we thought they were getting a little bit tired. We decided to do that.

I'll tell you, no one gets to the top by themselves. I'll tell you, I hope I can keep my staff a long time. They're ready to be something special, and I just hope that we can continue to stay as long as we can this season because I know that they're ready to go out there and do some fantastic things.

I can't thank you guys enough for loving women's basketball. I can't thank you enough for supporting women's basketball. Stay with women's basketball. It's the sport that everyone's going to be willing and ready to embrace moving forward. It's happening all over the world, and it's because you guys are promoting it and sharing the word. So thank you for all you do for women's basketball.

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