

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Maine vs Ohio State

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Value City Arena

Maine Black Bears

Adrianna Smith

Anne Simon

Media Conference



ADRIANNA SMITH: No, she doesn't. She likes to think of us like this is our own experience. Like this is -- she's a coach now. I mean, we know about it and we know that it's possible and it's nice to have her as a coach, like knowing that it's possible and that she's done it before. But I think we are focused on what we are doing right now and what we can get done now.

Q. You win the regular season, you win the tournament. What kind of pressure difference was there come tournament time to make sure you backed up what you did in the regular season, if there was any?

ANNE SIMON: I think the whole season is like we're playing games with pressure because especially in the America East, we get the best games from everyone.

So it definitely is not easy and I think especially the tournament, I mean, if you lose, you're out, so it doesn't matter what you did all season long. And I think even the first two games, they were a little bit tight for us. We were down in the semifinal I think at one point by ten but we turned it around and I think in a championship game, we just were really prepared and focused because we knew we could do it but determined is definitely more pressure than regular season.

Q. Coming to Cole abuse and Ohio State where they have seen a big growth in attendance for women's basketball. What is that like being part of women's basketball and seeing that growth and what have you seen in your own program?

ADRIANNA SMITH: Since I've got to Maine, I've seen a lot of growth in our attendance. At home we have like a crazy atmosphere. Our gym isn't nearly as big as this one but we do get sell out games and our fans have our back always and we even have fans coming traveling here to watch us play, so I think it's amazing to see everything and obviously like on TV, you watch how the women's attendance game has just skyrocketed, and even beating some of the main teams sometimes. That's amazing to see, and I'm grateful that I get to be a part of it. It's exciting, and I'm excited to play in this environment and in

Q. Maine is a team THAT IS used to winning. What does it mean to get to the NCAA Tournament and play at this level?

ANNE SIMON: I think we are all really excited to be here. We knew about the conference that we could do it. We believed in each other and I think for all of us being the first time, it's special, and we're just really excited.

Q. Yeah.

ADRIANNA SMITH: This was our goal all season, we talked about even as soon as our season was over last year, we knew this is what we were working for, so to be here is just a testament to all of our work that I think that we've done. We are just really excited to be here and play our best and go out there.

Q. With Ohio State's press, they are known for really strong full court defense as you have all have been preparing for. Have you seen anything like that in your season that prepares you for tomorrow?

ANNE SIMON: I don't think we've seen like, I mean, the press that Ohio State is playing is like very, like extraordinary, so I don't think we've seen that. Like we've seen presses from other teams but not quite the press that Ohio State has.

ADRIANNA SMITH: Yeah.

Q. Your coach has their own unique experience with NCAA Tournament with Maine being part of the upset back in 1999 against Stanford. Does that ever come up? Or does they ever bring it up?



this gym.

Q. Both of you guys, you've been a very good defensive team all year, give Indiana trouble earlier in the year. What is it like to watch the defense come together? Throughout the process?

ANNE SIMON: It was definitely one of our key points coming in this season. We knew we had to step up our defense and that's what we focus on all season long.

So I'm just really proud of the team of how we did develop our defense. I think our coaches have done a good job at preparing us, and we knew that every game we came into, like defense is going to be the key no matter what. O.

Our offense is going to flow and it's going to come but we have to start on defense, and even the games that we ended up losing, a lot of it was because of defense because they just got two easy baskets. And just watching that again, and seeing that we can stop teams if we come out strong in defense it, then it's going to work, and I think that's what we focused on the last couple games.

Q. So I have two questions, the first obviously both of you are in very prominent leadership positions, so as much as you're allowed to share to the world, essentially what is your message to your teammates as you prepare for this really big stage that you're on?

ADRIANNA SMITH: For me, I would just say enjoy it, and we're here for a reason. We earned this spot. This is what we've been working for, so even like how our message was like in the tournament, like we're here for a reason. We're the 1-seed for a reason. Like just stay where our feet are, be present in the moment and this is what we do.

We play basketball all season long. We practice for it. So just staying in the moment. Appreciating that we're here, and having fun while we're out there.

ANNE SIMON: Yeah, for me, too, looking back at my five years in total at Maine, it definitely has not been easy. We have lost -- I mean, I have lost I think two championship games, and then Adrianna has lost one, and then there was the COVID year where we could not make the Championship game. It was canceled. So it wasn't always easy.

But to be here now is the reason why I came back for a fifth year and just to everyone out there, it won't always be easy but just enjoying the moments as long as you can and if you get this, that's perfect.

Q. Obviously you come back this year, I know from

speaking to you, your teammates mean a lot to you and you mean a lot to your teammates. The moment that you entered the playoffs, every single win got you more time with this team. What does this extra time, more opportunities what has it meant to you to be with your teammates?

ANNE SIMON: Yeah, it's special. I couldn't wish for a better team, for better coaches. Just Maine in general, is just very special, with our fans, too. I'm just really happy that we got to play the playoffs at home. Being able to win the Championship at home in front of all the fans is what I wanted for the past five years and I'm just really happy that we got to do it this year.

Q. I know this firsthand but a lot of people who look at this team think it's the Anne & Adrianna Show, and yet there's great balance within this club. Can you talk about your teammates, those who start with you, who come off the bench, and what they mean as far as the balance for Black Bears Basketball?

ADRIANNA SMITH: We get a lot of the media attention and awards and that kind of stuff but even the people that start with us, also, bring so much to the game and even people that come off the bench.

Like I think Paula had a really big tournament, and she showed up really big each and every game, and that's not easy to do when you come off the bench and you're not sure what type of minutes you're going to get in every game.

She steps up every time, and Liv is shooting like 75 percent the last few games and Sarah, she's everywhere. She's getting rebounds and playing great defense and all that stuff. And so I think a lot of that comes into play and a lot of people don't that, but yeah.

ANNE SIMON: Without our teammates, both of us wouldn't be standing over here obviously, and like she said, we get a lot of credit. But the team isn't built with two players. It's the others around it. Even players that might not see a lot of minutes on the court.

We have a huge scout team that prepares us really well every time for every game and without them, we wouldn't be here. They might not see a lot of minutes on the court but they are the reason we end up winning games because we are really well prepared.

Talking about Annika (ph), I've been with her for these five years. She has not always had the easiest road. This is actually her first season where she was able to play, like fully. So just really happy for her, too, that we both got to



experience this together, and yeah, she had to fight through a lot but just she never gave up and she is that type of player that kind of tells you how our team is built. Everyone is mentally really strong and gives a hundred percent to this team and both of us wouldn't be here without them for sure.

THE MODERATOR: Any other questions?

I've got one.

On December 30th, you were 7-7 and since then you've won 17 of 19. How confident are you? Maybe the first question is, what happened from the end of '23 until now and then how confident are you coming into this game?

ADRIANNA SMITH: I think our coach puts us in a really competitive out-of-conference schedule every year because she knows that that's what's going to prepare us in order to go into conference and get those wins. I think that has a big part in it; that we push ourselves pre-conference, and when we come into conference and we are really dialed into what was working for us and what can't work and we are able to tune all of that up.

I also think, like I said before, the whole goal the whole year was to go win the America East Championship and that's what we were playing for. When the conference play started, that's when we started focus and dial in on all those things. I think that's what allowed us to get there and just all the hard work that we have put in.

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