

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

Friday, March 22, 2024

Columbus, Ohio, USA

Value City Arena

Ohio State Buckeyes Coach Kevin McGuff Celeste Taylor Jacy Sheldon

Media Conference

Ohio State - 80, Maine - 57

Q. Coach, were you happy with the response coming out?

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah, I think overall we had some really good moments. We looked more like ourselves in terms of our intensity, focus, and just how hard we were playing. So I thought we had great moments today.

I wish we could have sustained that for longer stretches. I thought we got a little sloppy down there in the stretch in the second half.

Q. Taylor Thierry, you always say you want her to be more aggressive. Today she was really aggressive. What would you say about her performance?

KEVIN MCGUFF: I thought she played really well, had a really balanced game. Early on her offensive rebounding gave us extra possessions, really set the tone for us. Excellent game by her today.

Q. Maine coming in, not a particularly strong 3-point shooting team, but they came in and made their first four from deep. How does that change the game plan when you come in and get punched in the face like that?

KEVIN MCGUFF: Maine is a well-coached team. I thought they did a great job. They've had a terrific season, want to congratulate them on that.

They showed up like a championship team should, and



they were ready to go, and they made some big shots early. I think we adjusted finally to kind of get them out of the rhythm. They were ready. I was impressed with their team.

Q. Celeste, overall, strong defensive performance for the team, how locked in do you feel you guys were in on that end today?

CELESTE TAYLOR: Like coaches said we had some lapses I feel sometimes. But overall the energy was there to give us that push defensively.

Q. Jacy hit the shot at the buzzer in the first quarter, and I feel like that along with Harris coming in and really having an impact changed the game a little bit. Talk about the first quarter and first half a little bit.

KEVIN MCGUFF: It was obviously back and forth a little bit in the first quarter. We started to pull away a little bit. I think Jacy's shot gave us extra momentum as we headed towards the second quarter. I thought the bench was good. They came in, Rikki came in. Tai came in. They played with really good energy, and I thought that kind of helped us wear on them a little bit using our depth a little bit.

Q. Jacy, talk about that shot how it got you going a little bit.

JACY SHELDON: I think obviously time running down, just finding ways to score. I think really we picked up on the defensive end come the second quarter. And we sustained that for a little bit. I think that's what got us going in the second quarter.

Q. Celeste, seemed like you were seeing the game really well tonight. Talk about your flow tonight and what you were able to do out there tonight?

CELESTE TAYLOR: Felt pretty comfortable out there. Obviously as the season has gone on, I feel more and more comfortable. But I think honestly the defense is what gets us going, gets me going, so just trying to be in those passing lanes, trying to do as much as I can in the press.



When you have some dogs out in the front, it kind of helps a lot, too.

Q. What does it mean to just get back on the winning side of things. I know you guys had some time off to dissect what happened in the last two, but just to get back on that side of things?

KEVIN MCGUFF: It was just good to play a game. Feels like it's been forever since we've played a game. Playing against each other and our scout team. To have another opponent was refreshing. Like I said, I think we looked much more like ourselves today than we did in the Maryland game. I think we handled the time and the loss appropriately where we watched film, we processed it and we kind of put it behind us and moved on to this one.

Q. Jacy, you guys obviously have much bigger goals than just winning in the first round. What does it do for you guys to have a really big win, a little bit of a blowout win to kick things off in this run that you guys are expecting to go on?

JACY SHELDON: It's big for us. I think we've done a good job all season in the Big Ten regular season especially focusing on the game in front of us and the next game. That's what we're going to continue to do. We'll stay and watch this game. Same thing, be prepared and just focused on our next match-up.

Q. How do the last couple of weeks make you guys stronger as a unit, and how did you grow in that time?

CELESTE TAYLOR: I think obviously you're one-and-done if you lose. So it kind of puts pressure on everybody, I feel like. And us having it be our last year and the goals we have set out since the beginning of the season for the team and for each other and for ourselves, I think that's just something that keeps motivating us and pushing us. But like Jacy said, just staying consistent with the mindset of the first game and the games that come day by day.

JACY SHELDON: I agree. I think after that, after the loss against Maryland, we came back, regrouped, learned a lot from it and worked our butts off every week, pretty much. That brought us together. Had to go through some adversity there and we worked through it.

Q. Celeste, obviously Duke's playing here in a little bit. What emotions would you feel if you had a chance to play them in the next round?

CELESTE TAYLOR: I'm still close with a lot of them there. It's no bad blood there. But honestly you treat it like any other game, another competition. Obviously people would

assume there would be high emotions, for me it's just another competitor on the court because at the same time I go against my teammates in practice all the time. For me it's just nice to see them, see some familiar faces, but it will be really exciting. So hopefully they can pull out a win.

Q. Usually you guys come out much stronger in the third quarter. This time today it was the second quarter, a lot of it. What sparked that big second quarter run?

KEVIN MCGUFF: I thought our defense really started to pick up. We started to be a little more effective with the press. We got some turnovers and kind of sped them up a little bit. I think that's kind of where it started.

Q. Coach, your guys were able to shoot over 50 percent from the field that was both increase in field goal percentage and 3-point percentage against quarterfinal against Maryland. How important was it for the team to get that win tonight?

KEVIN MCGUFF: For sure, I thought the thing we did well today was we moved the ball. We made the extra pass, and we got some balance in our offense. They played zone for 40 minutes. We were still able to get the ball around the basket. We were able to get open 3s. We were able to get to the free-throw line, and if you look at the stat sheet, we really spread the scoring around. I think that's when we're usually at our best when we have balance in our scoring.

Q. What was it like getting that four people on the team getting into double digits how important is it that for you?

KEVIN MCGUFF: If you look at our biggest wins, where we've played our best, it's usually reflected in the balance that we have. And so I think today's a great example of that.

Q. Was there any trepidation at all after the time off, any kernel of the unknown? If so, when did it go away?

KEVIN MCGUFF: No, because we practice really hard. So the way we were practicing, I wasn't really worried -- I knew we had a great opponent today. We needed to be prepared to play Maine, but I wasn't worried about us, just based on practice, the effort, intensity, the focus that we were practicing with.

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