

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Duke vs Ohio State

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Columbus, Ohio, USA

Value City Arena

Ohio State Buckeyes Coach Kevin McGuff Taiyer Parks Taylor Thierry

Media Conference

Q. Third time doing this for you; as the tournament evolves, as the games go, what have you learned about as the stage builds for this tournament?

TAYLOR THIERRY: Yeah, this time of year is very exciting for me, especially this year we have a lot of new pieces and I'm excited to compete with them. I think each year it gets more and more exciting, and I think as I get more experience that I'll be able to help contribute more to this team. So I'm just excited.

Q. Does the leadership factor amp up a little bit as it goes year to year for you?

TAYLOR THIERRY: Yeah, for sure. I know we have a lot of older people on this team who kind of take that leadership role more than me, but I know as I move forward next year I'm going to have to take up some of that leadership. But it definitely grows for sure.

Q. Taiyer, what about you? First year at this program, but you've done this before, and you're a leader, a veteran, fifth year, right? What's this stage like as it builds for you as you are a little older than TT?

TAIYIER PARKS: From my experience, it's all about taking one game at a time, don't get too far ahead of ourselves, and I feel like that helps with any personal anxieties or team anxieties, so just leaning on each other and taking it one game at a time is pretty much my game plan for the rest of the season.

Q. As your role builds and your minutes build and your impactful moments for this team continue, what's



that meant to you and how have you adjusted to that as the year has gone?

TAIYIER PARKS: I take pride in it. Any way I can help our team be successful I'm willing to do. Even if it's two minutes, 30 minutes, it doesn't matter, as long as I'm just helping contribute to the team.

Q. Taiyer, you played 12 very productive minutes yesterday. Duke is coming in, they're a very tall team. They've got a lot of 6'3", 6'4" young ladies. Do you anticipate additional playing time tomorrow and just how do you prepare for a team that's the size of Duke?

TAIYIER PARKS: Just keep it the same game plan that we had. Anything that our coaches draw up for us, we're just going to execute. I feel like what we have in store we'll be able to handle whatever Duke has for us.

Q. Taylor, you were very, very effective early in the game yesterday, five offensive rebounds early, number of points, and then also leading the press. Second quarter is when it seemed to really kick in. What happened there, and what contributed to Ohio State's success in the second quarter because that's really when you guys put the game away?

TAYLOR THIERRY: Yeah, it might have been the nerves a little bit. It was our first game back after a week and a half. But in the first quarter maybe we were making a little bit of mistakes, but we came together, kind of locked in and focused on the mistakes we were making, and I think that helped with our energy coming back in the second quarter and we were able to build off our mistakes and just be aggressive and cause a lot of turnovers, and I think that carried out to the rest of the game.

Q. There's been an awful lot of talk about our press and Duke going up against it. Is that certainly a key for tomorrow?

TAYLOR THIERRY: Yeah, our press is always a key for our team. I think that's a weapon that we kind of use against a lot of teams that we face. We are going to keep working on our press, improving it in various ways, but



we're excited to execute it tomorrow.

Q. The Duke head coach talked about you guys being a veteran older team and that being a key factor. Whether it's strictly business or good nature, you've got a lot of vocal input from your leaders, your teammates. If you're in a huddle and Rickea or Jacy or Cotie, if they have the wheel, so to speak, and they're imparting something on you guys, who do you individually want to hear from and who might bring a little bit of that good natured humor to that group?

TAYLOR THIERRY: I think it's a little bit of everybody. When we come into our little huddles, if somebody sees something on the court that maybe other people are missing, everybody has a voice and we're all willing to listen. I don't think there's a certain person that I'm more prone to listen to. Just any input I get really I'm listening to all my teammates. I just want to get better and help my teammates.

TAIYIER PARKS: I agree. It's always lighthearted when we're messing up. We're supporting each other, and if we see something on the bench we'll let them know the next time-out and they literally implement it the next time they get back on the floor. Very open ears on our team.

Q. Can you talk about Duke's defense. It's kind of a defense versus defense, very different kind of sides, though. What do you see with Duke?

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah, excellent defensive team. Obviously they put a lot into that end of the floor, and they're really good. They're very disruptive. They've got great ball pressure. They're heavy in the passing lanes to try to disrupt the flow of your offense and create turnovers. This will be one of the best defensive teams we've played this year.

Q. Also on offense, they're now known as a high-point scoring team, but it seems like this year on offense, once they get the ball in they're getting it down the court as fast as possible. What's that do --

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah, they're playing with great pace. I thought they inbounded the ball very quickly yesterday, so we'll certainly have to get organized quickly to either be back in transition defense or organized in the press very quickly because they're going to get it in fast.

Q. A lot of players will be playing their final game here tomorrow. Celeste is going to be playing against her former team. Is that something you address with the team at all just to make sure they're focused on the task at hand?

KEVIN MCGUFF: No, I think we've had good focus, and I think with the leadership that we have, they'll make sure that everybody is focused on the right stuff.

Q. What are the biggest challenges that you feel like Duke presents to you that you have to elevate your game in order to make sure --

KEVIN MCGUFF: Well, they did a great job on the offensive glass yesterday, on the offensive boards. So I think our ability to block them out will be huge.

Then just execute offensively against a really good defense, against their really good defense.

Q. They have a bit of a size advantage. Yesterday you were the ones with the size advantage. Going into tomorrow they have a size advantage. What are you looking to do to balance that out?

KEVIN MCGUFF: Well, I just think really that where the size could potentially hurt us is their rebounding. We've got to be really physical and pursue the ball with five people. I think that'll be huge.

Q. I know you mentioned practice the last two weeks have been really intense. How did that come into play coming into this game?

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah, we obviously wanted to make sure we were sharp and ready to go into this weekend, so we've practiced pretty hard, so hopefully that will pay dividends tomorrow.

Q. They're a very young team and you guys have a lot of players who have been here before, have this experience. How does that give you guys kind of an edge?

KEVIN MCGUFF: Well, hopefully it does, but sometimes the young players don't know that they're not supposed to be doing these great things that you see them do sometimes.

Hopefully it's an advantage. We have a lot of people that have played in a lot of big games, but sometimes it's fun to have those youthful teams and just let them go play.

They didn't look young yesterday to me. They looked like a veteran team who's played a lot of good basketball this year. I expect that that probably won't play into it that much tomorrow.

Q. There's a lot of players who will be playing their



last game, one of them being Jacy. She went over 2000 points yesterday. What has she meant to this program?

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah, we could talk for hours about what she's meant for this program, but just the way she's played on the court and everyone sees that, just the effort, the energy, the leadership, but probably more importantly just how she's represented herself and our program off the court and in the community has been really special.

Q. What was your first impression of Jacy back when you first met her?

KEVIN MCGUFF: You know, anytime -- like first time I saw her, just how hard she plays and that she just never stops going. She's just everywhere, offense, defense, just going as hard as she can, as quick as she can, and she just never stops. You just don't see kids like that that have a motor like that and they just never turn it off.

Q. In this era of the transfer portal where it's getting rare to see players stay for that long, what does it say about her to be able to grow in one program versus transferring?

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah, no, she has been committed to our program and the success of it from day one. You're right, it's a little bit more rare these days to see that, but I think we've done a better job recruiting really good kids, and that's why we have some four- and five-year players that have really meant a lot to our program.

Q. Whenever you're scouting Duke, they're a team that gives the ball away a good amount, almost 18 times a game. Does that push the team a little more to kind of challenge them to, okay, let's see how high we can go --

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah, obviously if we could get that number up there, that would be really helpful for us because they're so good in so many other areas.

But we'll kind of play the same way that we always play, and hopefully we're effective with our style of play.

Q. Madison mentioned yesterday was the first time she's played an NCAA Tournament game even though she's been here so long. What kind of value does she bring, having her available?

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah, she's a really good defender, and the other thing is she seems to make everybody around her better. Each week she seemed to get a little more comfortable this year. It's good to be able to have her out

there.

Q. How have you seen her persevere behind the scenes to get to where she is now?

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah, it's been tough. For two years in a row she'd be on the side working with the strength coach or the trainer. But she showed up every day and she did the work, so it's great to see her have an opportunity to play in the NCAA Tournament.

Q. You've been here before; what is the difference between the team and the mentality and just the vibe around the team this season compared to last season when you were at this point?

KEVIN MCGUFF: You know, I think similar. Everybody is pretty focused on the task at hand. We were kind of going day by day, practice by practice, game by game, and that's kind of what we had going last year, and it's a very similar feel mostly because we have the same leaders and a lot of the same people.

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