

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

Saturday, March 22, 2025

Columbus, Ohio, USA

Value City Arena

## Tennessee Lady Volunteers

**Tess Darby**

**Jewel Spear**

Media Conference



individual goals and we talked about we didn't want this year to be a year where we rebuild. We want it now.

You see it now with us competing for a spot and a chance to be in the Sweet 16. I think it just speaks to her and her culture and also us, the people that came back and the transfers that came in, us having a common goal.

TESS DARBY: I think it speaks volumes, just like we decided we want to stay and Coaching coming in and she wants to win now; that, and leaving the program better than we found it is something we have both talked about and we can kind of hang our hats on.

**Q. You both have played Ohio State. What is it about getting the chance to come back to Columbus and face them, especially after last year, and having them handily beat your side on your own court?**

JEWEL SPEAR: Yeah, I think it's a great opportunity. We know they are a great team coming into this matchup so we are going to focus on what we can control this year, as opposed to last year, and knowing their system is a lot of pressure but we like to press a lot, as well. So seeing those two dynamics, and going out there, having fun and competing.

**Q. How much has Coach leveraged the two of you, because you played against Ohio State last year and you played against a different style press from your press with a lot of similarities. How much has she leveraged your experience preparing for tomorrow's game?**

TESS DARBY: I don't think we've talked about it much, just knowing our style of play compared to theirs is going to be very fast-paced and aggressive, and just coming in and knowing what we do.

**Q. Feels like Coach, with her winning pedigree is coming in trying to put Tennessee back to where Coach Summitt had it a couple years ago. What does it feel like for you as players that are still with the program everything and, the idea that Tennessee is on that kind of an up swing and you want to put it back where it was, I guess?**

JEWEL SPEAR: I think it's special. That's what we talked about when coach Kim came in this summer for the first time. That's what we talked about, our team goals are

**Q. The substitution pattern she uses, five in, five out, pretty consistent every couple minutes or thereabouts, first time I've seen it in action in person is last night. As players that played in a different system, how effective has it been and what are the pluses of doing it this way that you always have five fresh people on the court, and everybody knows their role? Just what has this been like for you guys?**

TESS DARBY: I love it. I think it's really fun, last night, whenever you have five in and five out and you're coming in and we're feeding energy and playing off each other. It's honestly better whenever you see the other team getting so tired and they have no more bodies and subs left. That's where we get more energy, and it's like, let's go, keep going.

JEWEL SPEAR: I'd say it's actually very fun, like Tess just said, feeding off each other, five in, five out, and having energy on the bench, the bench energy providing energy for the people that are on the court and vice versa.

I think it's really important, and I think that it just shows the depth that we have on our team; that we have multiple people that can score and shoot threes and make plays, and it makes us harder to guard.

**Q. Yesterday you were well rested after a tough spell to end the regular season. How much did that tough spell bring your team closer together and have such a dominant performance yesterday?**

**ASAP** sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

JEWEL SPEAR: I think it forced us to get on the same page. When you go through adversity, you have to get closer. You can't go further apart because then it makes things harder. I think it forced us to get closer, and I think we did get closer during that time. We got rested and we got this new spirit of energy. With having a lot of seniors on our team, we know this is our last go around, so just giving all we have, and our team is doing the same as well.

**Q. I don't know how much you all got into watching video stuff with the game so late tomorrow, but what are the differences that you see, and you played against it, too, between your press and Ohio State's press?**

TESS DARBY: I would say obviously their's is a 2-2-1 and ours is run-and-jump at all cost. That different style.

But I don't know, we see presses, literally all day every day because we are practicing against each other.

JEWEL SPEAR: Exactly what Tess said. We practice with each other. Just getting that familiarity with that. But Ohio State has a unique press that we're going to be prepared for. I think it going to be a really fast-paced game. That's what we expect with both teams pressing each other.

**Q. You mentioned last night that the team followed the scouting report, and I know coach Kim has talked about at Florida at halftime, we basically have to go over the entire scouting report again.**

You both are fifth-year seniors. I don't think the issue is seniors not following the scouting report, but how do you get the team to buy in to a scouting report? Because you're right it, makes a huge difference when everybody, the five on the floor, are on the same page?

JEWEL SPEAR: Yeah, it's huge. At USF last night, we knew they had a lot of plays and they ran a lot of sets and we knew they might have put in a new set. When you communicate and you know how to guard actions, it makes things a lot easier. So I think that just speaks to us in practices, like when you have a short turnaround, us preparing for Ohio State, you have to pay attention to the little details you don't think makes a difference but it really does. So making sure the younger players know that, or the people that this is their first NCAA Tournament, making sure they hone in on that; and what we get to the time, we make sure that it translates.

**Q. If Tess can weigh in on that as a senior; and Kim was talking last night about how competitive Darby is on the floor and they will do anything to win in**

**practice. Growing up, who was the most competitive sister, and did it sometimes get kind of spicy between the two of you?**

TESS DARBY: So definitely answering your first question, scouting report is huge. I think that's just an extra few points every now and then that we can get, just knowing what personnel and teams do. But being confident in what we do and knowing we practice it, and I think when you're confident, it translates to the floor.

Edie is a very, very competitive player and person. She always wants to win. And yes, things did get spicy a few times, just in the yard, in the driveway playing. We had to call quits to a couple games. But I think that's a good trait to have.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

