

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Oklahoma vs Indiana

Monday, March 25, 2024

Bloomington, Indiana, USA

Simon Skjodt Assembly Hall

Indiana Hoosiers

Teri Moren

Mackenzie Holmes

Sydney Parrish

Media Conference

Indiana - 75, Oklahoma - 68

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement from Coach and then take questions for the student-athletes.

TERI MOREN: Thank you. Once again, I just want to talk a lot about Hoosier Nation and them showing up tonight. It never gets old to say how grateful we are. We needed everybody that was in the Hall tonight and they showed up big and gave us the energy and the push to get to the finish line. So once again we're really, really grateful for our fans. What a great team Oklahoma is. Coach does a great job with them. They're very well coached. Great balance. We knew that they were going to post a challenge for us. We knew it was going to be hard. We talked about it being difficult. It's going to be, we had to give everything we had and more. On a night that we didn't shoot it well. This 38 percent is a very uncharacteristic of this group as you guys know. But credit to Oklahoma, with that, you know, I thought again you just look at down our stat sheet and you can tell that we got help and whether it's point, whether it was defensive stops, rebounds, everybody contributed tonight and certainly we really stuck the ball in there to Mac in the fourth, but Syd, Yarden, although she doesn't shoot it great, she has probably one of the biggest, most important shots for us to give us some breathing room and put us up by four. Although we got out rebounded, I will give our group, they only turned it over four times, and that in itself is a miracle. But we're just really, really grateful, and I'm so happy for these guys. And as I told 'em, I prayed that Mac and Sara and Arielle to end their career by winning their last game in the Hall. And the other piece of that was Grace Berger



was in the house tonight. We came up short a year ago and felt awful about that, but as we said, she had a part of this tonight for sure. But, just really happy for these guys and really happy to be moving on.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Mackenzie, you're down four points in the last two minutes, you scored six in a row to give you guys a lead that you never gave up. What's your mentality in those last few minutes when you took over the game?

MACKENZIE HOLMES: Yeah, I mean, obviously I came out of the game a little frustrated a couple times. I was missing shots I knew I should make and my position coach came up to me and just kept pouring into me keeping me confident, keeping my energy, my motivation up and I didn't want to end this game with a loss. I couldn't let it happen again. I know how it felt last year, we all know how it felt last year, and I was going to do everything in my power to not let that happen again. I just have a really great team full of people who believe in me, even when I don't believe in myself and I think that's the difference maker.

Q. The emotions, the energy, you went running into the student section at the end of the game there. Take us there you that moment?

MACKENZIE HOLMES: I did that a couple years back when we beat Princeton to head us to, take us to the Sweet 16, and this is my last game at Assembly Hall, I just really wanted to take it all in so I asked Coach if it was okay if we did it and she gave me the okay and we just went for it. But I just want them to know how much I love them. They're the best fans in the country and I've been so blessed every second I've gotten to play in the Hall and I'll never take those moments for granted. The memories I'll take with me for the rest of my life and Assembly Hall is my favorite place in the world, so to be able to do that one more time was so special.

Q. There was a stretch in the fourth quarter where the possession changed and the lead changed like eight times in a row. Did you guys say anything to each



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other in the huddle or anything like that to say like we can't let this get away from us we need to do something special, sounds like the way you're laughing there was something?

SYDNEY PARRISH: Yeah, Mackenzie had a lot of emotion a lot of energy in the huddle. We just tried to keep her calm a little bit. We just trust each other and we believe in each other and we know that with those lead changes that go back and forth we knew it was going to be a really close game going into the fourth quarter as well, and just trusting each other and Mac had a matchup that I don't know anyone in the country can stop her in the fourth quarter, obviously, and so we just kept getting it to her and she took us to the end of that game.

Q. It was a really physical game for you. Obviously you play with a lot of emotion, I love that. How did you keep your head in the game and you kept shooting and even when they weren't falling at the beginning how did you especially keep your head in the game and then they started falling at the end. Kind of talk about that?

MACKENZIE HOLMES: Yeah, like I mentioned earlier, it's just the confidence that I know my teammates and my coaches top to bottom have in me. At some point I got to start believing in myself too, and those are shots, those are things I work on literally every single day, rep after rep, before practice, after practice, during practice, they're things that I do every single day. So I had to keep staying the course for the whole game because I knew if I quit on myself then I'm quitting on my team and I wasn't going to let that happen tonight.

Q. There seemed to be something in that fourth quarter, what was the moment where things changed?

MACKENZIE HOLMES: I don't know if I have a real answer for that. I think it's just the maturity of our team. Knowing that no deficit that we got ourselves into is going to be too much. Just getting stop after stop and really just controlling the pace of that game. Oklahoma is a great team, they like to play fast and they did that tonight and I think it caused some issues for us sometimes but once we took control of the pace of the game we got the looks we wanted, got the shots we wanted, I think that's when the momentum started to shift.

SYDNEY PARRISH: Going off that, she said we got the looks we wanted and that's what we were wanting toward the end of the game. Sara Scalia, they defended her tremendously and it was really hard for her to get open looks like she normally does. But she never let that get to her and down the stretch she made huge free throws that

potentially won us the game. I think that's really special and I think that shows the growth and character of Sara and how she was tonight.

Q. Looked like you had resilience throughout the entire game. What did this game mean for you playing in the Hall one last time for Mackenzie, Sara and Arielle?

SYDNEY PARRISH: I'm literally going to start crying, but I'm not going to. I thought about it earlier this week and it made me think about last year how we lost and how, like I was sitting -- me and Grace Berger's lockers were next to each other -- and just knowing that I let her, you know, leave the Hall with a loss. Just playing with these girls this past year has been so much fun and we said it every single game that we played at home that we need to protect Assembly Hall, protect our home court, protect the Hall, and we did that this year. I think that's really special as a team and I don't know if that's ever happened before, anyone? Maybe that's a first. Undefeated at home. First time ever.

TERI MOREN: No.

SYDNEY PARRISH: Okay, well it's been a long time. But just really lucky to play with these girls, and I've been thinking about it a lot this week, like playing for them. We wanted them to have this special moment for their last time on this court.

Q. Before you got here IU hadn't been to a Sweet 16, now it's the third time in your five years here. Just what does that mean to you?

MACKENZIE HOLMES: It means everything. This is the vision that Coach Moren had for this program and I knew when I got on campus I wanted to be a part of it. I could tell what she was building, the confidence that she had in her players and her staff and just to be able to be a small piece that have history is amazing, it's the greatest blessing in my life. I'm forever going to be thankful to be a Hoosier.

Q. What would you guys say is so special about this group that's going to help you keep dancing?

MACKENZIE HOLMES: I just think it's that it can be anybody's night, night-in and night-out, obviously last game Sara had herself a great game, and tonight Syd had a great night, Chloe had some huge shots down the stretch, Yarden, Sara, we have so many threats, we're so well balanced and I think it's just our maturity level and our composure and the competitiveness that we have that we are never going to quit no matter what the score is. I think

we kind of maybe the outsiders were questioning that about our team early on in the season, our toughness, our competitiveness, but I think we've done a great job of changing that narrative and showing that we're a team that's just going to fight for 40 minutes no matter what the score is.

SYDNEY PARRISH: Yeah, we just love each other. We love each other on the court, off the court, you see our bench players that players, some players that didn't even get in today they're cheering for all 40 minutes and that shows a lot about our chemistry on and off the court. The coaches love us. I love playing for a coach that wants to win it for us as much as she wants to win for herself. I think that's so special and you see her celebrating getting emotional into it and it's just a blessing for us. We all love each other and we're a big family.

THE MODERATOR: We'll discuss the student-athletes and take questions for coach.

Q. For Mackenzie, you guys are down four, less than three minutes to go. She takes over. It's kind of when great players shine, right. Is that something, is that, you know, as special as you've seen her kind of take over a game like that in a big moment?

TERI MOREN: Oh, my God, I think we have seen her do that, this wasn't the first night. She's had many moments like that where she's had to take over early in her career here at Indiana. But, you know, we just had a hard time tonight just finding any rhythm offensively. We just decided we had to get the ball in to her. So give our kids credit, the outside, the guards and Syd, for understanding what we were trying to do and just the patience that they showed. When she relocated it back out we were trying to get her deeper into the halo, but we wanted to continue to feed her as much as we could. So, yeah, it was a special night and we needed -- I think up until that point she was 5-6 in the fourth quarter but I think up to that point she was like 7-17 at the end of the third. So she even mentioned it, she was struggling, making, missing shots that she normally makes, but when we needed her to step up in the biggest moment, she stepped up. We just kept feeding her.

Q. (No microphone.)

TERI MOREN: Again, just play calling over there I just didn't feel like we could find any, I tried to run some high ball screen stuff with Chloe and Mac and that worked for a little bit, but then you can't get comfortable doing that against a team like Oklahoma that settles into what you're trying to do. So we just, I just kept trying to go back to our playbook, trying to find things that I could just try to isolate her. The only thing I wanted her to do was to try to catch it

a little bit deeper because they were pushing her out a little bit, but that's where I thought our guards showed great patience much she threw that thing back out, Mac had great patience. Then we could get the angle that we wanted for her to be able to score a little bit easier.

Q. We talked about this yesterday about the mental aspect of playing in the month of March. When you just analyze tonight there was a lot of big moments, a lot of moments that stacked up against each other. What is that special factor that allows this team to shine in moments like this?

TERI MOREN: I think there's a couple things. Syd hit on it. They really do care about each other. They're friend on and off the floor. They celebrate each other's success. I tried to not go down the rabbit hole yesterday with you guys in terms of did it still bother us how things went last year, but it's bothered us, it really has. If that gave them some extra motivation, that very well could have, you know, I selfishly wanted Mac and Sara and Arielle to win their last game in the Hall. But to be able to do it for a trip to the Sweet 16 makes it even sweeter. Give our kids credit, it was, it was back and forth, it was kind of like that boxing match giving each other their best -- and again you guys y'all know this, the game is, it's runs. Everybody has their runs and even when they hit the back-to-back to back I think threes and we called the timeout, we talked about, okay, that was their run. Now we have to respond with our own run. There was great confidence in that huddle that we knew I told 'em by the time I think it was about the four minute mark that I saw 'em either we wanted to have it tied up or be within a point or two of going into the fourth.

Q. I don't know about you, but I'm exhausted. These were very, two very different games. The other night talked about pace, it was a track meet. Tonight this was like you said it was a boxing match. Toe-to-toe. But you guys pounded it inside, you got to the free-throw line 29 times. Was that the plan going into this game?

TERI MOREN: Yeah, well, you know, we always have, it's always one of the keys for us up on the board offensively is trying to manufacture points in different ways. We really felt like we could get down hill to the rim. And then at the end some of that was just because they had to foul. But, yeah I mean give our kids credit for all of 'em, Chloe staying aggressive, Mac, Syd, we knew that again on a night where we nothing seemed like it was going in easy for us, we had to figure out other ways to put points on the board. One of the ways you can do that is by getting to the free-throw line. I was always telling, peel those ears back and try to get to the rim. I thought they did a great job of attacking and getting themselves where we needed 'em to

get and that was the free-throw line.

Q. This game was a poise tester, from the start, I mean you've talked about some of it, they didn't allow you to really get your transition game going among other things. Down four of course and how proud are you as a coach you expect your players and you hope your players rise to the moment, and collectively Mackenzie had those six points in a row but there was no flinching, no turnovers, no sign of any kind of nervousness. How proud are you as a coach, because it's one thing to call the plays but they got to do it and what's going through your mind as you're watching that?

TERI MOREN: I'm just, again, grateful, proud, we talk about maturity, I talked about maturity of this group for the entire season. They're an experienced group, they're a mature group. When you have somebody like Chloe out there that's your point guard that doesn't get rattled, right, that's really important. Because ultimately she's the one that is getting us into our sets and running offense and understanding pace and rhythm and what's working, what's not working. So I thought Chloe's play tonight was so critical to the game and winning the game. Get better, just the maturity, just the poise that they showed. But also, there's a fight in that group too. That they were not going to go away quietly. Like I said, in that timeout I knew that they understood, like that was their run, now let's run it back and we got to have our own run. With great confidence. I mean there was no -- other than Mac being emotional, but that was okay, she was just trying to, you know, get her teammates excited about getting back out and trying to regain the lead.

Q. You came in here and your hair was all wet. Did they give you a Gatorade bath?

TERI MOREN: That's the favorite part, yeah, I think, of going to the, being able to advance in this tournament that's the water afterwards. They got me pretty good. Yeah. They got me pretty good. But as I mentioned, you know, I'm soaked toe-to-toe or head to toe, but it was all worth it just to be in that room, you know, just celebrating with that group because certainly they're really excited. But I told 'em that I thought the team that wanted it the most was going to win it tonight and I thought that clearly especially in the fourth they were a team that really wanted to win.

Q. Mackenzie led the team up into the student section like she did two years ago when you went to the Sweet 16. How special is it that that was one of, that was her last moment at Assembly Hall?

TERI MOREN: Yeah, and she was a little bit emotional asking if she could do it, which says a lot about the character of Mackenzie Holmes and how much she loves this place. But, you know, she, you know, asked if she could, if they could all thank them for being such a special part of the night and of course I told 'em that they could do that. But that's something that Mac did a couple years ago when we earned our trip to the Sweet 16, and I think for her tonight it was really special. She was a little bit emotional after the game. Listening -- the band was playing and so forth, this place has meant the world to her. And she's meant the world to us.

Q. I believe with 5:18 left to play you took make out sat her on the bench and she went back in a possession later but what was the message to her specifically in that moment?

TERI MOREN: Get your breath. Just really we're just trying to give her a quick blow. Keep doing what you're doing, but gave her a drink of water and it was quick, but just enough for her to sit down for a second, get a drink, Brett probably said something to her and then get her back in as quickly as we could, so it's nothing, other than that it was just to get her a quick blow.

Q. It was a slow night for Yarden from the field, but she hit a shot that gives you breathing room to go up four. What is it about her that makes her comfortable even on an off night to be the one to step up and take that shot?

TERI MOREN: I've said it and I'll continue to say it, she is not afraid of the moment. She's just not. She's hit some big shots for us in close games. This is not her first one. She is -- she's Uber confident in her play, in herself as a basketball player. But I think the closer -- I don't like 'em, the tighter the game is, the better she likes it. Because she loves the competition piece. But she is not afraid of the moment. That was a big one for us. But it takes a lot of courage to take that shot on a night, as you mentioned, where her shots weren't going in as easy. But we were not surprised when she took it and she stuck it in that moment.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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