

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Alabama vs Maryland

Monday, March 24, 2025

College Park, Maryland, USA

XFINITY Center

Alabama Crimson Tide Coach Kristy Curry

Media Conference

Maryland 111, Alabama 108

THE MODERATOR: First a statement from Coach Curry.

KRISTY CURRY: Yeah, you know, that -- there's a lot of emotion in the locker room. (Tearfully) What Sarah Ashlee and Aaliyah have given, Zaay believed. We're really blessed to have been part of her journey. And then CB and JeAnna, my heart hearts for those five kids. They've represented the University of Alabama and their families with such amazing grace and hard work and grit and toughness and gratitude and so it's difficult, you know. We just wish we had another minute or two and Maryland was able to make a play down the stretch and we weren't, so.

But I don't think you understand how much I love and I'm so incredibly proud of that group of people in our locker room and how they've represented all year long and had an amazing season and I don't want this one day to take away from what they've accomplished during their journey at Alabama. I love them all very much.

THE MODERATOR: Questions now for Sarah Ashlee.

Q. Sarah Ashlee, there was a little bit of a delay before these three foul shots. What do you have to do to get yourself in the frame of mind with the season on the line? You have to make them all.

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: Right. The first thing I did is I walked over to Karly Weathers and I said pray for me because the Lord is who I look to for me strength, my peace. He upholds me. On my wrist I write Isaiah 41:10. It says I will strengthen you, I will help you, and I will uphold you. Regardless if I would have made all three or not all three, he would have still been my rock and he still would have held my head high. I knew that and that's what Karly's words said during my prayers, just Lord, show her



that if she makes these three, it's your glory. If she messes these three, that's how her story was written through you and that's how you wanted it to be. So that's how I went up, stepping up on every single free throw, how lucky I am that the Lord has put me in that position to even do that and that's kind of all -- that's exactly what I went to. Who my strength is and that's my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Q. Sarah Ashlee, one of the things that Coach Curry said she wanted y'all to do was leave nothing in the Tank. Is that something that you feel like you guys did out there tonight?

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: I think any team that goes into two overtimes, had some of our players foul out, people diving on the floor, I think that we left everything we had out there tonight. I couldn't be more proud of the team that I play with. I love every single one of those people in the locker room and I kind of told them after, like, you can't question the why but what the Lord does promise is that he's going to bring us through it and he does promise that he writes our story and for whatever reason, it was Maryland's story to go to the Sweet 16 and props to them because they left their heart out there too and they gave it their all too. But I'm a firm believer that every single person emptied their Tank tonight and that's all you can ask for.

Q. Sarah, 45 points might be the most any opponent has ever scored against Maryland in this building. This is a pretty historic basketball venue. What does it mean to you? I know it's not the result you were hoping for, but what does it mean for you to be able to stand among legends who have played in this building?

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: Yeah, I think everything. Just the opportunity to be here. Just the opportunity to play Alabama and represent Alabama. Yeah, 45 points is a lot, but I would have loved to win instead of score 45 points, but at the end of the day, like I said, it's not my glory, it's the Lord's. He puts the super on my natural and so that's what he did tonight.

Q. Can you just describe playing in a game like this? You alluded to it a little bit as far as leaving your heart



out on the floor but as a competitive, high-level game, both teams making plays, both teams going back and forth, going into overtime, big baskets. Growing up, when you're growing up learning the game, is this the type of game you envision playing at the high level?

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: Yeah, absolutely. You dream of these moments. You live for those moments. It didn't go our way but at the end of the day, I'm going to walk out, like Coach Kristy told us in the locker room, walk out with your head -- hold your head high and walk out of the locker room that way because that was an amazing basketball game. For anybody who was watching women's basketball. I think we put on a show for women's basketball tonight. I'm very thankful for that. I'm very grateful that I'm in this opportunity and I was able to be part of such a great game like that.

Maryland had such great players. They have a great coach. Their coach said to me in the line no... she was like no team deserved to lose that game just because of how great of a game it was. I definitely agree with her on that. If you're a women's basketball fan or anybody that loves basketball, I think that every single person could say that was one of the best games they've ever watched.

Q. Sarah Ashlee, what will you remember about this team for years to come?

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: (Tearfully) I think I will remember the relationships that I built and that's why I'm so emotional because it doesn't matter about the wins, the losses, how many points you score, what you get on All-SEC teams. It doesn't matter. It's about the people in that locker room that are by your side every single day. Every single one of them has lifted me to the highest. When I'm down, they pick me up. When somebody else is down, I pick them up.

I think we just have such a bond that I'm going to remember for the rest of my life and I'm a firm believer your teammates are your sisters for the rest of your life. They're my best friends. I love every single one of them. I'm so proud of them. I wish I could have done a little bit more to send us to the Sweet 16 for them just because I feel like we deserve that and I just think what Coach Kristy and her staff has done for me and this program, I'm just so grateful that I've been part of it and I couldn't have asked for it to end any other way just because we stayed together tonight and that's all we've been trying to do all season. I love every single person in that locker room and it's more emotional just that I won't be able to play or be coached by Coach Kristy ever again with some of the people in that locker room, so.

Q. Just a couple seasons ago, the team was in the NIT and now they get to be in the March Madness and you've been one of the pivotal players that have been able to help this program grow. What does it mean to represent Alabama and especially see the growth that's happened over the past couple of years.

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: Yeah, I think obviously the ones that were there when I first got there, like Hannah Barber, Brittany Davis, you've got to give props to them just because of what they did for setting the tone and when I got there, they were building this program on the way up and so... and then when they left, it was kind of like hey, you got to take this and keep going up with it and I think that's what we did for the past two years when they left. I think it just means everything because being a Birmingham kid, 45 minutes away from Tuscaloosa, like, to represent Alabama has been honestly meant so much for me. I told her in the locker room, I was like I didn't think I was going to end my career at Alabama because I chose Georgia over Alabama and I am like thank the Lord that I ended up at Alabama to be able to play for Coach Kristy for three years and be able to represent the state of Alabama the right way and continue on how she's building this program the right way. Alabama is not done. I think we're just showing what they're going to continue to do the next couple of years and I'm just super, super proud of where this program has gone.

And props to Coach Kristy and her staff. It's not just the players that take it that way. She got here and she took over a program that was, I mean, pretty bad. I'm not going to lie and look at it now. I wish I could have taken her to the Sweet 16.

THE MODERATOR: You can head back to the locker room now. Thank you for joining us.

Questions for Coach Curry?

Q. Coach, obviously Maryland got to host, which meant this was a really loud, hostile environment. What did you try to do to calm your team down as the lead is slipping a little bit in the second half and what was it like just for you to Coach on the road like this in the NCAA Tournament.

KRISTY CURRY: It was an incredible environment for women's basketball but we have seen it eight times in the SEC. Our experience of playing in that league, the best league in the country, we've seen this over and over. We put ourselves in some road positions early in the season and saw it, so I think we were -- the crowd was incredible and it was a great atmosphere and I have so much respect for how much they support Brenda and her program but



we've seen it so much. It was nothing new.

Q. Hi, Coach, looking at your shot chart hear, it was layup after layup for extended periods. Did you guys expect to have opportunities like that in the paint given the way they were defending you and defending the three-point line?

KRISTY CURRY: We obviously did a great job defending. They're a bucket or two ahead of us there at the end. Yeah, I think when you make the choice to face guard and do some of the things with Aaliyah to try to slow her down, we felt like we had driving lanes. Felt like we could really get the ball to the paint. That's what we do in counter with what they were trying to take away, so we just wish we had another bucket or two. I thought we did a really good job getting to the free-throw line. There were nine missed free throws. Credit those guys. The free-throw shooting was pretty easy. They just made a few more than we did. Both teams on the offensive glass, they were just so good. They're so big. They're so physical. They're very similar to who we see in our league. We just came up a little bit short.

Q. Can you just share -- I think we saw it out there but in words, what has Sarah and your senior class meant to your program.

KRISTY CURRY: Yeah, I don't think I have the words right now. They believed when a lot of people didn't. I think we had been to a couple tournaments. COVID came about, we would have been and so now, you know, it would have been five out of five and they have just continued the legacy. I think she mentioned Hannah and Brittany and Jasmine and all those kids that have come before and, you know, they're just incredibly special people. They're everything that's good and we talk about grit. We talk about love. We talk about gratitude. The classroom, court, and the community. They represent their families and the University of Alabama, the way it should be, and I just wish I could have done something a little bit different down the stretch to help us get just one step further because they truly are the hardest working group and have character and I just feel like I could have done something different to help them down the stretch.

THE MODERATOR: We do have a question in Zoom so we'll go to that.

Q. Coach, I just want to ask, you've seen Sarah Ashlee Barker go through a lot and overcome a lot at Alabama and continuously make history. What kind of legend do you believe she is for this university? Alabama is known for where legends are made.

KRISTY CURRY: She truly is one. She's such a fearless competitor and an amazing Christian, witness the example.

She's what every little girl should aspire to be in the classroom, court, and community, and I'm incredibly proud that she chose Alabama and for me to be her Coach and I know she's going to have an incredibly bright future ahead as is Aaliyah, as is Zaay. They're projected on the draft boards, JeAnna and CB, all five will continue to play, and all five -- four of the five will leave with multiple degrees. Aaliyah's working on her MBA, so it's incredibly special. They represent everything a student-athlete should.

And I do want to thank you for covering us all season long, you, too, thank you for the support and love for coffering us at home.

THE MODERATOR: I don't see any other questions on Zoom so at this time, we'll let Coach Curry get back to her locker room and to her players. Thanks for joining us.

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