

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - UNLV vs Creighton

Saturday, March 23, 2024

Los Angeles, California, USA

Pauley Pavilion

UNLV Lady Rebels

Coach Lindy La Rocque

Desi-Rae Young

Kiara Jackson

Media Conference

Creighton 87, UNLV 73

LINDY LA ROCQUE: First off, congratulations to Creighton on the win. If anything, hopefully it was an entertaining game. They played better than us today, so we've got to give respect to that and give them their due.

In terms of for us, this one loss doesn't sour an incredible season. To win 30 games in back to back years, it's really special. Really, really special, and it's really hard to do. I'm incredibly proud of our group.

Again, just the daily commitment that that takes, they don't understand it. They probably hate me for it on the daily, but they'll look back and really appreciate and realize just how special our season was.

Tonight we came up short, and so we're disappointed and sad more than anything because we don't get to practice tomorrow. But it's just been such a joy to coach this team, these players. These two next to me are our captains, our leaders. They poured their heart out on the court tonight, and I couldn't ask for more and better people to be able to coach.

Then we've got a whole locker room of players and people that are just great humans first and good basketball players that trust and believe in me and this program and do anything that I ask. Yeah, we're sad, but have to recognize and appreciate just a phenomenal year.

Q. Kiara, 7-0 run in the middle of that second quarter to cut the lead to four. Creighton goes on an 8-0 run in the 56 seconds immediately following that. After that



point did it seem like the team was kind of swimming upstream the rest of the way?

KIARA JACKSON: A little bit, I guess, but we knew that that only happened because our defense wasn't good, so we knew we were still in the game, that we could come back if we did what we needed to do.

Q. Desi, Coach talked about what this season has meant, but all year we've talked about what your career was going to look like. I know it's right after the moment, but when you reflect on your time as a Lady Rebel, what do you remember most?

DESI-RAE YOUNG: I mean, making it to the NCAA three times in a row. I can't remember when UNLV went -- in all the games I came to when I was young, I can't remember a game where they went to the NCAA Tournament. I'm just happy that I was able to be at UNLV and make history.

Q. Desi, you subbed out with a couple minutes left. What were you feeling in that moment coming off the court talking to your coach and then just for the last time?

DESI-RAE YOUNG: I mean, obviously this is going to be my last game, but I'm extremely happy and extremely proud of everything that we've done. Being able to let the younger group come in and play out here and let them experience this because they will be back here next year.

Q. Kiara, when you talk about Desi-Rae, what kind of impact do you believe she's had on the program, and what were your emotions watching her for the last time?

KIARA JACKSON: She had an amazing impact. We wouldn't be here without her, and I'm going to miss her.

Q. Kiara, along what Coach kind of said, how is it balancing the emotions of a tough loss but also accomplishing so much this year?

KIARA JACKSON: Obviously we're upset, but we can't forget what we did this year. We had a great season so



we've got to remember that, and we'll be ready next year.

Q. Desi, I know you touched on the futures being bright, but along similar lines, talk about being a part of this turnaround at UNLV women's basketball program.

DESI-RAE YOUNG: I'm just grateful that I was able to make history. I've been here since 2020 when Coach Lindy came in and it was just uphill from there, so I'm just extremely proud. We've won 60 games in the past two seasons that we played, so that's amazing.

Q. Kiara, can you talk about defensively what makes Creighton so hard to rush out and guard and how they were able to get so many open threes, especially in the first half?

KIARA JACKSON: They're a great shooting team. Their transition offense isn't traditional. They don't have a first post run, they all run wide five-out. So that was pretty difficult for us.

Q. What type of role model has Coach Lindy La Rocque been for you guys in your time here as a Lady Rebel?

DESI-RAE YOUNG: She's been amazing. I've been here since 2020. I've seen her have a child, and that's just much of an eye opener. I've said this before and I'll continue to say it: Lindy La Rocque is someone that I want to be. She has the house, she has the car, she has the children, she has the family. She's done everything for us.

We're her family, too. She treats us like we're her daughters, but she treats us like we're her best friends. I'm just grateful for her, and she's been a great role model.

KIARA JACKSON: She's amazing. I just love how she treats us as people and we're not just basketball players to her. She cares about us on and off the court, so I love that.

Q. We talked about that run that they got up by double digits, but what was Coach telling you the rest of the second half, especially as it came to just stopping them from having a good three-point shooting night?

DESI-RAE YOUNG: Just get stops. That's what we had to do in order to come back and try to break that double digit lead that they had on us. We tried our hardest, and we will continue to try our hardest.

Q. What was the message after the game to the team after the tough loss against Creighton?

LINDY LA ROCQUE: Yeah, well, it's not about breaking down the nitty-gritty of this one game to try to beat ourselves up. Obviously we're disappointed with the outcome, and we didn't want this. There's a lot of emotions in there. Obviously more sad than anything. So just try to do my best to put into words the phenomenal season that we've had, the career of Desi and Ashley, and remind them that this was just what they do. It's not who they are. This one loss doesn't sour a whole season of awesomeness and travel and great times and big wins.

It's hard, but it wasn't about breaking down what we didn't do well today to not get the win.

Q. Jim was talking about they can be a tough scout, how they play. They're not traditional, like Kiara said. As you saw it, did that come out at all in how they play and how difficult they can be to guard?

LINDY LA ROCQUE: I mean, they're a very good team, and we knew that coming in. Their five-out motion, obviously it's different for us. There's some teams in our league that play something similar -- Colorado State kind of plays five-out. Not quite the same motion. Wyoming runs a similar motion but they do it kind of more four-around-one, so they are definitely a tough guard, especially when we kind of play two traditional post players and asking them to guard on the perimeter.

I don't totally think it was the half-court defense that troubled us, it was our transition. It was our transition defense that they just -- especially in that first quarter, first half, they got too many wide-open looks.

I know I told you guys that the threes wouldn't beat us, but I expected us to at least be there. They had too many wide-open ones, and those were in transition. It wasn't really their half-court offense.

Then obviously in the second half we were climbing uphill, and then you could really kind of see some of how their motion kind of affects when you're on your heels because then you want to try to press the three a little bit more, and then they get some lay-ups and different things.

I mean, I think we're a tough scout, too, though. They made shots today for sure.

Q. Lindy, that run, you had them scoreless for about three minutes and then they answered back. Looking back at it, how much of that was kind of a missed opportunity and how much did that put you guys behind in the second half?

LINDY LA ROCQUE: Yeah, we were just trying to get some momentum going back our way. We cut it to four, and then they finished on an 8-0 run, and two of those threes were in transition. So again, that was kind of where we broke down defensively.

Obviously credit them for making the plays and making the shots. But we kind of felt like we got it right where we want, at three, four points, a couple possessions, and then to kind of finish off the half, obviously it didn't feel that good going into halftime, so obviously then we were kind of fighting uphill.

We challenged our team with some small goals to get back within striking distance, and obviously we just couldn't get stops.

Q. Desi subbed out and you guys hugged. What were you telling her, and as you reflect on her being along with you on this journey, how are you going to remember her and her legacy here at UNLV?

LINDY LA ROCQUE: Yeah, well, just trying to give her a moment of respect from the crowd and for the fans and our team. I mean, she came to play today. I don't know if I could ask more of her, 30 points, nine rebounds. She was pretty efficient. I wanted to kind of give her that moment.

Obviously I embraced her and just -- it was emotional. But I love coaching that kid. We came in as freshmen together. I'd like to think that we've kind of grown up alongside each other, too. It's just gone so fast. She's a special player.

Q. Regardless of the finish tonight, you've been very, very vocal about remembering how storybook this season was. As you close the book on this one for year four for you, what do you feel like you've learned about yourself as a head coach so far?

LINDY LA ROCQUE: I mean, I feel like I learn something new every day. But each year is just a totally new set of challenges. You've got maybe some of the same players, but as a team, they're very new every year.

I think that challenges me to try to figure out what makes them tick and really reach them. So in turn then I grow individually, and I don't treat them all the same. I try to meet them where they are.

This year, I think a lot of personal growth that I've had to really lean on my staff. Being pregnant during the season is hard, probably harder than I anticipated. But I couldn't take it back, obviously. Without just such an incredible staff, I've really had to lean on them, and they're

tremendous. Obviously my three coaches, but just the support staff, administration. That's hard for me to do. So maybe that's my personal growth for the year.

Q. It's the third year you guys are out in the first round. For a moment we saw you as you were leaving the court, tears kind of filling your eyes. Did this one hurt more knowing how special this group was to you? What was that moment like for you in that teardrop?

LINDY LA ROCQUE: Yeah, you know, not that the other teams weren't special and didn't deserve to win. It felt different this year. This group felt different. So it hurts. I really wanted it for them. They wanted it really bad. The problem is we don't get a redo. I'd like to play Creighton tomorrow, but we don't. That's not how it works.

Just sad.

Q. What were you looking for with that press break you've showed a lot in the third quarter, and why did you think it was so easy for Creighton to break it so often?

LINDY LA ROCQUE: Well, we were just trying to throw the kitchen sink at them and see if something would work, get them off balance. You kind of saw their veteran play. They had five people out there that have played a lot of minutes. They're very disciplined. They executed their press break and kind of made us pay for trying to gamble and trying to get a quick steal or just a quick turnover.

I wasn't going to go down without a fight, and you can't start fighting until the last two minutes. We tried some different things in the third quarter and fourth quarter just to see if we could catch them off balance. Obviously we didn't. Credit them.

Q. Before you guys left, you said you were expecting fans to really travel and you were getting all the texts and calls from everyone. You guys had quite the fan section. I think the only bigger crowd is UCLA fans out there right now. What did it mean to you to see that sea of red?

LINDY LA ROCQUE: We talked about it, that anyone wearing red in the gym was going to be for us because all these other teams are blue. There was a lot of red. There really was. Obviously in our section across from the bench, from top to bottom, they were there, they were loud, they were into it. There was even red kind of sprinkled around the rest of the arena. That was really cool. That was really cool to see. I think that is a testament just to the growth of the program, people willing to travel to follow to watch us play. That hasn't happened a lot I don't think

lately. I don't keep track of that. But that hasn't happened a lot.

So to see people get excited about the NCAA Tournament, to recognize how special it is and try to come give our team a little bit of an edge and really support them -- we won the fan fight today. We definitely had more people out there. I can't say how much I appreciate that support from obviously our player families really showed up, but then just -- I don't know who everyone was up there, whether they were from Las Vegas or they live here in California. They were wearing red, so we loved it.

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