

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Michigan vs Kansas

Friday, March 22, 2024

Los Angeles, California, USA

Galen Center

Kansas Jayhawks

Coach Brandon Schneider

Holly Kersgieter

Zakiyah Franklin

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Kansas guards, Zakiyah Franklin and Holly Kersgieter. Questions from the room?

Q. Can you guys sum up five years at Kansas and what it's been like to get to the tournament twice now?

HOLLY KERSGIETER: Now that this is our second time, it's just as exciting, and obviously we've put in a lot of hard work and time and dedication, so we have a lot to play for. We're excited.

ZAKIYAH FRANKLIN: Like she said, it's our second time. Last time, unfortunately, but like she said, it's a lot of gratitude going into it, very grateful to be here, and it's a lot at stake and a lot of sense of urgency behind it.

Q. Michigan is a team that's been in the tournament a lot lately. How do you draw on the experience of two years ago the fact that you have been in the tournament and won a game here? How can that help this weekend?

HOLLY KERSGIETER: When it comes down to it, I think experience helps, but also it's March, and usually you have to play every play like it's your last, and you never know what's going to be next.

I think it's two teams that have a little bit of experience lately, just makes it a little more competitive, builds a little more anticipation. We both know kind of what to expect, and we're both going to play really hard.

ZAKIYAH FRANKLIN: Like she said, both teams have



experience. Pretty much like she said a lot is at stake and they are pretty much playing their best basketball, too, like how we are, so just going to it.

Q. You're in Los Angeles. Not much time for free time, but if you had one thing to go see in Los Angeles what would it be?

HOLLY KERSGIETER: I kind of just want to go to the beach. I just love the beach.

ZAKIYAH FRANKLIN: I would agree, probably just the beach, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you ladies.

Now we are joined by Kansas Head Coach Brandon Schneider. Coach, opening statement?

BRANDON SCHNEIDER: Obviously we're excited to be here. Glad that travel went smoothly and looking forward to competing against an excellent Michigan program.

Q. Brandon, take us through the emotion when you and the team saw the name pop up on the Selection Show after just missing it last year and winning the NIT. What did it feel like to see Kansas up there for the second time in three years?

BRANDON SCHNEIDER: You know, I think it was a different feeling this year, because I think we felt that our name would be called. It was more just an anxiousness of who was the opponent going to be and where would we be playing the game. Much different than a year ago when we were just devastated, because, again, we felt like we would be picked.

But credit our players. I feel like we built a much better resume this year, and obviously played a much tougher nonconference schedule to prepare us for Big 12 play.

Q. Your team played so well down the stretch in Big 12 play. What was the key with this veteran group to be able to turn it on at the end?



BRANDON SCHNEIDER: You know, I think it started with improving defensively. I think if you go back and look at our numbers, we really grew there, and we're much more consistent on the defensive end.

Q. Michigan is an excellent program. They've been in the tournament a lot. Does experience play a big role this week? Some of your teams have obviously been here before, two years ago.

BRANDON SCHNEIDER: Well, I think we have some players who have some experience in the tournament, but I think it's two programs that are pretty similar in terms of making their best basketball in late February and early March.

They won four out of their last six, and those two losses were to number 1 seed Iowa and a number 2 seed, Ohio State. So we do have some common opponents, but I'm just really impressed with how balanced they are.

They collectively rebound the ball really well, they all shoot the three. Obviously Phelia is their leader and is a First-Team, All Big Ten player, but I think just a lot of balance around her.

Q. You won't have any free time in Los Angeles but if you did, what would be the one site you would want to see if you had to pick just one.

BRANDON SCHNEIDER: Wow, I'm going to -- I've never been in the Coliseum. You know, you made a left there, and it just kinda hits you in the face. It was an impressive turn into campus. I've done some of the other things, touristy things, but with all the history that's taken place in that venue, I think I would like to walk out on the 50.

Q. Thank you for your time today, Coach. Looks like your team is a close-knit group. Is there anything in particular that you guys have done off the court, bonding wise that's helped invigorate this program this season?

BRANDON SCHNEIDER: You know, I would answer that -- we did take an international trip this season. We went to Italy and Greece, but I think even more importantly, in years past we take a team retreat in August where we spend a lot of time just talking about culture and team values and things that mean a great deal to us as we prepare for any season.

Q. I know a lot of teams nowadays, there's special people that come into your program, whether it's some kids in the community, anything like that. Is there anyone that's become a super fan or a special person

within the program that your players have adopted this season or have looked to as far as anyone outside of their own team that's become special to you guys?

BRANDON SCHNEIDER: Well, we have a fan, her name is Amanda Young, and Amanda waits for me after every game. And when I walk out of the media room following the press conference, she sprints down the hallway to give me a hug. That means a great deal to me. It's been something of a tradition between her and I for many years.

I know that we only lost one home game this year, so those embraces were more celebratory, but we have had some rough years where I needed that hug. So definitely Amanda met us at the airport yesterday with a send-off and a sign and cookies and treats for everybody. It's a relationship that's very important to me personally and to our program.

Q. (No microphone.)

BRANDON SCHNEIDER: Gosh, Amanda is in her early twenties now I believe.

Q. (No microphone.)

BRANDON SCHNEIDER: Just as a big fan of KU and I think has been growing up. Just a relationship that I think has really grown over time.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

BRANDON SCHNEIDER: Thank you.

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