

American Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Tuesday, March 10, 2026

Birmingham, Alabama, USA

Legacy Arena At The BJCC

Florida Atlantic Owls Coach LeAnn Freeland Vivian Onugha Madi Gerwitz

Postgame Press Conference



Florida Atlantic 74, Charlotte 70

LEANN FREELAND: Charlotte is such a great team. In the regular season they beat us twice, so we've been trying to shift around the game plan figure out how to stop them.

Their guards are so talented and their bigs are so strong and so efficient down low. We just had to figure out way to play as a unit to try to slow them down.

The first half I thought was very effective. They had to go to some guard play in the second half, all guards, which kind of affected our flow a little bit.

But I'm really proud of our team. Finished strong and finished together.

Q. What did it mean to come out here and, especially the day Madi had, to come back and especially a team like Charlotte that kind of has a name...

VIVIAN ONUGHA: For me I think it's like this is my first time, you know, having this experience. I think it was like teamwork and we came together and stuff.

We are like so mad that they beat us, so the second game was like tie and they got the three and stuff. So I think we played together and for us to be talking right now, it's because of the team, so...

MADI GERWIRTZ: Yeah, just means everything. We came so close in game two so we just knew just come together for 40 minutes and we could get the win we wanted.

Q. And the start, to start as fast as you did and be able to end the first quarter... especially starting a game that well.

MADI GERWIRTZ: I would say just sticking to the game plan. We knew who to sag off. They're way bigger than us but helping off the post and rebounding. We knew that was going to be the thing of the game so we knew we had to stay strong and fight for every possession.

I think in the first quarter we did really good rebounding other than one play, so just sticking to the and getting those rebounds.

VIVIAN ONUGHA: For me I think it's just the mindset because I really had to come and forget about what was up for me because I had injury with my leg which I'm trying to fight through.

So I told myself I'm not giving them the chance or I'm coming out 100 percent, so give my best and stuff. With my team cheering me up and everything, I feel like I came out with 100 percent to go and start, yeah.

Q. Obviously you had a very good statement in the first half, 34-20, and then you had to fight off a rally in the second half and you made some big plays down the stretch in the overtime period. What went down in the play making decisions that allowed you to come away with the win today?

LEANN FREELAND: I think it's just toughness and resiliency. We've had to fight through a lot. We've got some players fighting through injury.

We only have nine players so it makes us a very tight group and I think that's why we were able to finish strong. We believe in each other, they fought together and pulled off the overtime victory today.

Q. Madi, a very big corner triple in the overtime period to allow you to get the distance you needed. What are your thoughts on her big moment in that overtime period?

LEANN FREELAND: I thought she played remarkable all game shot. We've been asking her to look for her shot more. She is such a great scorer. Her efficiency is off the charts.

We told her she had a mismatch today. The bigs were going to have to match with her and I thought she did a great job taking what came to her and taking her shots when it was available. We found her well and she finished, so it was great watching her play today.

Q. Madi, what were you thinking when you made that big triple from the corner to seal the deal?

MADI GERWIRTZ: I knew if I didn't shoot that, the coaches would be like, shoot that, because there was one in the first half where I think it was Haley kicked it out and I passed up the three with six seconds, so I just knew in that moment just go up in rhythm, and luckily it went in.

Q. Coach, obviously next matchup in the second round you have North Texas, a team you've faced twice and lost in big deficits.

LEANN FREELAND: Thanks for the reminder.

Q. Sorry about that. Now you have to get payback the third time around. What's the approach going into that game tomorrow, or do you have the edge over the Mean Green?

LEANN FREELAND: I just think we're going to have to get recovered as quickly as possible. Ice baths are ready to go. Making sure that we're mentally and physically as ready to go as possible.

They have a lot of depth. They've got great guard play, and obviously Megan Nestor is just an amazing player. So we're just going to have to get refocused and put together a game plan quickly and do the best we can.

I've told our players, like, the outcome, just let go of the outcome. We're going to go out there and fight as hard as we can. Whatever happens, I'm proud of them. We've had an amazing season. We were picked 13, so here we are. I'm proud of them.

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