

# Big Ten Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Wednesday, March 1, 2023

Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

Target Center

## Northwestern Wildcats

**Joe McKeown**

**Laya Hartman**

**Kaylah Rainey**

Postgame Press Conference

Rutgers - 63, Northwestern - 59

JOE McKEOWN: Let me introduce my two seniors, who have been part of a great program. Let you open it up to them.

**Q. Congrats on a great season. Congrats on completing great careers here. My question would be, down the stretch it was five upperclassmen all on the floor, and you guys were really hustling and provided a spark down the stretch. What was that like for you guys to be around these players that have been around the team for so long and really trying to gut it out there at the end?**

KAYLAH RAINEY: It was kind of bittersweet for me because I started with them. I came with Laya and Syd and Courtney. And just being on the court with them, it was fun for me because we were out there playing good defense and making hustle plays. Just doing what we know how to do best. So I liked it.

LAYA HARTMAN: Kind of similar for me. I was sick for part of the season this year. So I wasn't sure if I was going to come back or what the time frame of everything was. For me to have the opportunity was really nice, and it kind of brought me back to last year, last season.

JOE McKEOWN: Let me make an opening statement. Hard-fought game. Really proud of my team. They did a great job of fighting back. I thought Rutgers was on fire, and the turning point for us, we come back and tie it. It was a great game in the fourth quarter. We just couldn't finish it.

I feel like our team was ready to play this week. We were



**WOMEN'S BASKETBALL  
TOURNAMENT**  
*MINNEAPOLIS 2023*

PRESENTED BY  
**TIAA**

excited about being here. It's a great league this year, the best league in the country. We probably played 10, 12 games against the top 25 this year. We probably had maybe the hardest schedule we played in a long time.

We kept fighting till the end. So I was really proud. We hit a shot with nine seconds. If we'd have got a turnover or a steal, you never know. I thought our team was really excited about playing in the Big Ten Tournament.

You heard them talk about Sydney Wood and Courtney Shaw, fifth-year seniors that came back, part of championship teams, Big Ten champions, NCAA Tournaments, teams that were ranked in the top ten in the country. Last year they both graduated and had tremendous opportunities in their fields beyond basketball. I'm proud of them for coming back.

Then for Laya and Kaylah who came in together, they walked in as freshmen and won a Big Ten Championship. The next year, winning NCAA Tournament games and playing on great teams. I'm really proud of those guys. I wish we could play tomorrow, but again, give Rutgers credit. We just couldn't rebound with them, and that was the difference in the game.

**Q. So late in the season, especially during the conference play, Paige Mott started to take a bigger role, taking that starting role. She looked so confident out there. Could you kind of speak to her development this year.**

JOE McKEOWN: Appreciate that. Paige Mott, I think, we saw it the first like -- I won't say the first time, but where I saw some confidence, we played at Duke in December. She just went toe to toe with them and started battling, making plays.

Since then, she just brought this energy, and then her post game has gotten better and better every day. She's become really hard to guard in the Big Ten. I'm just proud of her, how consistent she was.

She got in foul trouble tonight, and it hurt us, her and Caleigh Walsh, but Paige, I'm really excited for her



because we saw the potential, and now we're seeing it come to fruition.

**Q. Similar question to what I asked the other two: Down the stretch, you had five upperclassmen on the floor at the same time. Just curious, what advantage did that lineup give you? Was that primarily an experience thing where -- and it really paid off pretty well for you. If you would just talk to those five guys.**

JOE McKEOWN: Again, we've had a lot of injuries this year. Our lineups have changed a lot. Not so much -- we try to be a little more consistent with our starting lineup, but we've had a lot of different combinations of people playing. I was really happy for Courtney Shaw tonight, who I thought battled them hard and made big contributions late.

So that lineup, it gives us -- I thought it gave us defensively the things we needed to do to get back -- to get stops. We had some really good looks.

Rutgers, I thought, played really well defensively. I thought we had some really good open looks that those guys had. We had some stuff inside. Didn't go in. You've got to make layups and free throws in college basketball, if you're going to be any good. We've always been good.

But those guys did a great job all year for us.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports