

Big Ten Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 2, 2023
Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA
Target Center

Purdue Boilermakers

Katie Gearlds

Abbey Ellis

Jayla Smith

Postgame Press Conference

Purdue - 57, Wisconsin - 55

KATIE GEARLDS: I never make opening statements but like Jayla making the game winner, first time for everything. No, you've done that before.

First of all, hat's off to Wisconsin. Coming in we knew it was going to be a battle. They'd won 4 of their last 5 games, had been playing really, really well, just knocked off Michigan at home.

We come out a little tight, missed a lot of shots to start, get down by a few points. But just a gutsy, gritty effort by our ball club. We had the ball on the last play and made one more play than they did.

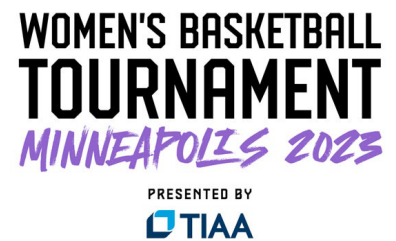
Q. Jayla, was that the biggest shot you've ever taken and made in your lifetime?

JAYLA SMITH: In my lifetime? I feel like I had some moments in high school, but my college career, yes. I think that was a big shot, especially for us to go to the next round and play Iowa. It's all about going to the next game.

Q. This is also for Jayla: Was the play run for you, or did you just happen to pop open at the right time to get the three-pointer off?

JAYLA SMITH: I was where I was supposed to be at the right time. I think there were multiple options. There were multiple options off the play. J.T. could've took it, drove it down the lane for a layup. Cass in the corner, me on the wing. Whoever has the best shot. That was it.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, ladies.



KATIE GEARLDS: Abbey looks pretty up here.

Q. This is not about the game itself, but could you comment on Lindsay Whalen's resignation this morning.

KATIE GEARLDS: Actually, I sent Lindsay a text and haven't heard back. I've got a few messages right now, but got all the respect for No. 13 there.

It's crazy because, when we played against each other in college, she was always my favorite player to play against because she was so smooth, silky smooth, never got rattled. They kicked our butt on Sunday. So you're welcome, Lindsay.

Whatever's next for her, she's a winner by all means of the books, and I'm excited to see what's next for her.

Are you going to ask me if Jayla was in the right spot?

Q. Wisconsin came out and played really good defense on you guys in the first half. What sort of adjustments did you make at halftime in order to get some better looks in the second half?

KATIE GEARLDS: We went small. We had watched on film the last few games they had been doubling the post really big and aggressively. That's when I said maybe we just didn't prepare Caitlyn and Rickie enough to see those looks. Because it gave us a lot of fits.

I thought in the first quarter were getting some open shots. Maybe came out a little tight. Throwing bricks up there, a couple of some airballs. Maybe the moment got us. But once we were able to settle in and we went small, I thought Ava did a really good job for us rim running on the defensive end, and in the second half we went even extra smaller to give ourselves some looks, and our kids stayed with it.

I told them there in the locker room there wasn't one timeout when I looked in their eyes and I didn't think that they thought that we weren't going to win. Every single time, I think they believed that we were still there, whether



it was 17 or 18, we battled back and got it to 9. But every single timeout, I think that group still thought they were going to win this game.

Q. Defensively, I was curious what adjustments, if any -- or maybe not adjustments. What changed, what were you able to tighten up defensively after you got down 30-12 that really kind of helped your team kind of start coming back in this game?

KATIE GEARLDS: We went small. We throw in Ava Learn, and we were able to switch some things. I think a couple of their bigs were in foul trouble, so they were small. Just organically we went small.

We were a little bit more aggressive on their bench players, got our hands on stuff, got in the open floor, made some plays. We were able to cut it to nine.

Second half the biggest adjustment we made is we put Cass Hardin on their big player, whether it was 3 or 25, we wanted to make sure she was hard hedging ball screens because we just had a fit getting over the top of ball screens on all their shooters, and they were just kind of picking us apart.

Hard hedging is not something we do a whole lot, and Cass Hardin, she stepped up and made the plays, and just proud of our group for staying within and believing in that.

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