

Big Ten Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 4, 2023
Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA
Target Center

Iowa Hawkeyes

Lisa Bluder

Caitlin Clark

Gabbie Marshall

Kate Martin

Postgame Press Conference

Iowa - 89, Maryland - 84

LISA BLUDER: The first thing I want to talk about is the amazing fans we had here again. I mean, we're saying it's Carver North. It's just amazing how the Hawkeye fans have shown up.

I know there's a lot of people that can't come. Those that were here made a lot of noise. Those that couldn't come, we know we're getting your support from home. We just want to bring people joy. That's really what this team is all about.

Today I love five people in double figures. I thought that Gabbie Marshall, 7-for-13 from three, but over the last nine games she's shooting 58 percent from three. Nine games. That's about a third of the season. I'm so proud of her because she started out the season struggling. She kept believing in herself. She kept working hard and getting in that gym.

I couldn't be more proud of anybody, just what her effort was in getting back, and this team's belief in this woman is unbelievable. Gabbie was incredible on both ends of the floor.

McKenna, clutch free throws. Caitlin was Caitlin. It just was a really fun game for us, and I love the 24 assists and only 12 turnovers.

Q. The game was tied at 79. They had finally caught you guys. Gabbie, can you tell us what happened on that play then. I think there was a missed shot or something and then you hit the three. Tell me you



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remember.

CAITLIN CLARK: There was five seconds on the shot clock. We ran a play on the sideline, and hi to get it up. Mine went in and out off the backboard. McKenna gets a huge O board. Gabbie is standing all alone and gets a three.

Shoutout to McKenna. If we don't get that O board, they might go back down and score, but leaving Gabbie all alone was not great for them. Proud of her for making that shot.

LISA BLUDER: Photographic memory.

GABBIE MARSHALL: Seriously.

Q. Gabbie, could you just take me through the hot streak you've been on. I know the Maryland game is pretty forgettable, but you had a good game in that one. Did that help your confidence quite a bit over there?

GABBIE MARSHALL: Yeah, when you struggle like I did in the beginning and just knowing the confidence that my coaches and teammates have in me. I knew that I had to start making shots in order to open things up. I'm happy that I can do that for the team right now.

I'm not worried about what I'm shooting from three, but I'm just happy to help the team in that way.

Q. Gabbie, how does it feel when those shots just keep on falling like they've been?

GABBIE MARSHALL: Honestly amazing actually, especially because I know how I've gotten my confidence back. Just seeing all those shots go in is just a great feeling.

Q. Gabbie, we've talked about the veteran presence of this team and how much you guys have been through together. How pivotal was that for you this season as you worked through funks and confidence had to be restored and all that to where you get to this moment



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and you're putting up the numbers that you are?

GABBIE MARSHALL: It's a long season, and you're going to have highs. You're going to have lows. You're going to face adversity. But just having the team that we have, the veteran team that we have, we've been through it. We've been here before. We've been in the championship game.

We're so close off and on the court, and I think that really helps. I mean, it's a long game. They're going to go on runs. We're going to go on runs. We just have to stick together. Our circle's tight just because we've been playing together for so long. That helps a lot in March.

Q. Caitlin, I'm just curious, the way you ran us through that play for the first answer, could you do that for any play in any game, or was that more because it was pretty pivotal?

CAITLIN CLARK: I could probably do that for quite a few plays in the game, I don't know. As a point guard, you have to be able to assess situations like that and know what's going on and time and score. I always have to be aware of the clock.

I'm not going to say I can recite the entire game to you, but if you bring up something to me, I think I probably could. But I think it was such a pivotal moment and such a huge play for us, that it's really sticking in my brain and want McKenna to get credit for that O board because honestly, it was a game changer for us.

Q. You guys got a lead, and then they chased you the whole game. How tiring is that mentally and emotionally?

KATE MARTIN: Well, we know, like Gabbie said, it's a long game, and it's all about runs. They're going to go on their run, and we're going to go on our run. It's more about limiting their runs and maximizing ours, and I think we did a great job of that and we showed a lot of maturity.

You've seen it in this tournament so far. There's been a lot of upsets. There's been a lot of comebacks and everything. For us to maintain that lead and keep that lead, sure, it's exhausting, but I think it just shows a lot of maturity.

Q. For any of you, all five starters in double figures, how important is it to -- and what's the key to having such a balanced scoring attack on a night like this against a really good defensive team?

CAITLIN CLARK: I think that was super important. I think it was important to have that going against the box and

one. You can take away me and Monika, but when the other three play like they did and we have other people coming off the bench and contributing, there's only so much we can do.

We scored 89 points, and you're basically selling out on two players. It's something we've been working on in practice since we saw it when we went there, and some other teams have tried it too, but I think our confidence level of what we have right now is really good. We'll welcome any defense that any team wants to bring at us.

Q. For any of the players, I know you guys are the type where you flush a bad game and move on, but just less than two weeks ago you took it pretty hard down in Maryland in kind of an outlier game. Does this kind of pretty feel good to get that out, kind of flush that?

CAITLIN CLARK: For sure.

GABBIE MARSHALL: I think we took that personal, and this was like a revenge game for us. So we came out locked in, ready from the beginning.

CAITLIN CLARK: And we knew that wasn't an accurate description of what our team is and what we have been all year. We really just went back to work, and we started off really well. It started with the Indiana game at home when we played Maryland. It could have gone one of two ways: We could've come out and knew we weren't playing for a Big Ten title anymore, but we wanted to respond. We wanted to beat the Big Ten regular season champs, and that's exactly what we did on our court. And then we knew we were coming up to Minneapolis and our goal is to be Big Ten champs here.

I thought this team really responded well, and it's just a credit to the maturity and the veterans that we have on this team.

Q. Kate, you were able to find Monika on a couple of steals and get the ball to your play makers, along with McKenna and Gabbie having good games. How dangerous is the offense when they're not able just to key in on you and Monika?

CAITLIN CLARK: Yeah, I think that's the key for us. We knew that coming in. I knew I had to distribute and get my teammates involved. That's the way we were going to win this game. So I'm really happy I could have nine assists. Kate also has seven. We have 24 as a team on 31 made baskets. That's pretty incredible.

Mon was getting hounded in there all night. I remember the play we ran out of horns where she slips and gets the

great catch and gets the and-one. That was a huge play in the fourth quarter. I think getting everyone involved is super important. Monika doesn't get a lot of credit, and she converts the and-one there.

So I think in the fourth quarter, just looking for my teammates, finding easy ones for us. Game management was really important. That's what I was trying to do.

Q. Three straight appearances in the Big Ten Championship, when you think of that, what's the first thing that comes to your mind?

CAITLIN CLARK: It's all I know.

Q. For Caitlin, how did Maryland specifically defend you differently today versus the last time you played them? And how fun was this trilogy of games this season playing Maryland three times? It's rare you play an opponent three times, and beating a team twice is definitely tough. So if you could talk about that, that would be great.

CAITLIN CLARK: They didn't guard me differently. It was the exact same thing that I saw when we went to Maryland, so I knew I had to respond. We all knew we had to respond and be better. We've worked on it so much over the past two weeks since we played them last. We knew you can't box-and-one a team like us when we have so much shooting power on the outside. I've got to give a lot of credit to Gab, the way she stepped up and made threes. You can't leave her open. Honestly they didn't really change anything.

I think the three games with Maryland just show how exciting women's basketball is and how deep it's been in the Big Ten. That's the semifinal game. I guess we're excited to see what the championship holds too. I'm glad we got the upper hand on them at 2-1 in the series.

Q. When you've been, as mentioned before, playing on Sunday all three times, all that Caitlin knows, how helpful is it when you've been here before in last year and the year before as you're going into this again?

KATE MARTIN: I'd say it's definitely a competitive advantage. It's just like any practice. You practice to get better, and whenever you've been in those situations before, you can expect what's coming. I mean, it's just a competitive advantage for us definitely.

Q. Obviously after a very physical game tonight, and you got your third one in three days tomorrow. How is everyone feeling physically after hitting the deck a few times, playing for quite a few minutes?

KATE MARTIN: Great.

CAITLIN CLARK: Amazing.

GABBIE MARSHALL: Perfect.

Q. I was going to ask you, Caitlin, what happened on the play where it looked like you were writhing in pain. And obviously Kate clearly slapped the ball when you had it out of bounds. Were you taught to do anything different? That's a technical, right?

CAITLIN CLARK: It should have been a called technical. I don't know who the foul was on. It was either on me or her. I didn't touch her. I don't know what he saw. He called it from behind me. I don't know. It's a tough call at the end of the game.

I thought we responded really well. That's all you can do. He's not going to back and change the call. McKenna goes to the line and makes two free throws, and we get another shot. That's all you can do is respond. Can't go back in time.

Q. I was talking about when you got hurt.

CAITLIN CLARK: Oh, that hurt. Gabbie was trying to pick me up, and I'm like, no, I can't breathe. Diamond is a really good player. You see her coming full steam at you, it's not an amazing sight. Probably the first charge I've taken in my career, but it came at a good time. Coach Abby has got to buy me coffee for that.

Q. For all three of you, when you think about the way you finished the regular season, come here and win two games, just where's the confidence level right now?

CAITLIN CLARK: I think it's really high. This is kind of the situation we were in last year. So I think understanding you can't get too hung up on one win that's really good or too hung up on one loss that was really bad.

In one week we experienced the lowest of the lows and the highest of the highs, but it's what you're going to do to move on, and I think this team has really moved on and keeps continuing to prepare for the next game.

That's exactly what we're going to do tonight. We're going back to the hotel and begin scouting. You can't celebrate this for too long. That's the biggest thing is understanding, if we want to reach our goals, you can't get too hung up on one game, good or bad.

Q. Coach, it looked like Maryland was really persistent, especially in the second half. What was the game plan to respond to that?

LISA BLUDER: We just talked about at halftime being mentally tough. We wanted to get out and play a little bit better three-point defense. We did a little better job doing that.

They got us in transition a little bit. In the first half, I thought we did such a good job with that. Really we just talked about being mentally tough and really valuing the ball and just keep executing like we were.

Q. You took the Maryland loss two weeks ago pretty personally just in terms of how the offense looked on that day. To see the adjustments materialize that quickly when facing the same opponent, what kind of confidence boost does that give to your offense that already plays with a lot of confidence?

LISA BLUDER: I hope it gives them confidence. I mean, I did, I did not have them ready for that. So that was totally my fault. I wasn't going to let it happen again. So you learn, right? I thought that the team did a great job of really focusing on it the last couple of weeks and came out and executed very, very well today.

Q. Lisa, Gabbie's had a rough start to the season from the three-point line. She's really got it going as of late. What are kind of your feelings for her the way she's been able to step up in a key part of the season and tonight have a season-high seven three-pointers?

LISA BLUDER: I couldn't be happier for somebody. I mean, Gabbie, she works at it. She was really pretty down at the beginning of the year. We just kept trying to pour into her, and over the last nine games, 58 percent. That's like a third of the season.

So I think the beginning of the season is a distance, a long ways away, a distant reminder. We're just moving forward, and today her adjusted field goal percentage was 75 percent. So I'd say she's moving forward pretty well.

Q. Something Coach Frese always talks about is assist-to-turnover ratio, 24 assists to 12 turnovers for you today. Just curious how you thought your team was efficient throughout the game today.

LISA BLUDER: Maryland is a great team, all right? They are a fantastic team, and we knew we had to bring everything in order to beat a team like Maryland. It's oftentimes when you are limiting your mistakes, limiting your turnovers.

We've always tried to be a high-assist team. We're always talking about give up a good shot for a great shot. When you have Caitlin Clark on your team, some of those passes are simply amazing, quite honestly.

Then tonight Kate had seven assists too, so that was fabulous. But I love the assist-to-turnover ratio tonight. I did.

Q. In ESPN's bracketology, there's two 1 seeds from the Big Ten in the latest thing. Do you feel like you're playing for more than a Big Ten title tomorrow when you take the court, in terms of NCAA seeding?

LISA BLUDER: I think playing for a Big Ten title is enough. I didn't really want to talk about it with them because right now you don't want to put any added pressure on them. They're playing for a championship tomorrow.

They're smart, and they're going to know what that really means, but to them, playing for the championship is really, really important, and that's first and foremost in our mind right now. We're not thinking about NCAAs. We're really going to try to talk about winning this championship.

Q. Can you talk about just the challenge Ohio State brings tomorrow. You're going to face a different Ohio State team now with Jacy Sheldon back.

LISA BLUDER: Yeah, they're much more dangerous with Jacy Sheldon. She's a fabulous player.

Obviously the press is something we have to prepare for. We did a good job at their place. We did get them at their place. We had a solo meeting with them this year.

To be quite honest, I didn't watch that game. I was totally focused on this game. I had three coaches that were here scouting it. They're already breaking film in the locker room, and we'll be ready to go. But I really am not prepared to talk about Ohio State right now.

Q. What's the challenge in slowing Diamond Miller down when she gets in the paint and she has those up-and-unders and that kind of herky-jerky motion that seems to draw a lot of fouls?

LISA BLUDER: 16 free throws tonight. I think her average may be 7, so she was way above her average tonight. She is so hard to guard. And that's why Kate Martin and Syd Affolter did such a great job when they had to guard her one-on-one. And she is so tall. She can get the up-and-under. You think you have her stopped, and you don't have her stopped. Fabulous player. Going to be a

great WNBA player.

Q. Now 7-1 when Kate Martin scores at least 10 points, came close to a triple-double. What impact does it have when she really has her game going?

LISA BLUDER: Well, I'd better tell her to get her game tomorrow then, right? Honestly, Kate does so many things people don't notice on the stat sheet. She almost has a triple-double tonight. She has seven assists, nine rebounds. It's not just always about the scoring. It's about the job she did on Diamond, even though I know Diamond had, what, 21 points, but that girl's capable of 40 points. She really is.

Kate means so much to this team in the locker room. The way she holds this team together, the way she holds them accountable, the way she motivates them. I really am proud of Kate and glad that she had a great game tonight.

Q. You mentioned how well Iowa fans travel to see you guys, but I'm curious interestingly this year there's fans of other teams that stayed to get Caitlin's autograph after games. What does that say about her this year and her place in the game?

LISA BLUDER: And it's been everywhere. Everywhere we've went, kids have been lining up from the opposing team to get her autograph. It's been amazing. I mean, how much she is growing this game. She's fun to watch. She embraces that part of the game.

She was that little girl. She was that little girl looking up to Maya Moore. Come up to the Lynx games and watch her play. So I know she enjoys that part of it. Some of it can be draining. Like right now we're trying to protect her a little bit, but I know she also really enjoys it. She understands her responsibility in that. To me she's the face of women's basketball across the United States, and she's treating that responsibility really well.

Q. We've talked several times throughout the season about trying to get to your guys' best level. All five starters scoring double figures tonight. Gabbie Marshall hits a bunch of threes. McKenna has almost 20 points. When you envision playing at your top level, is this pretty close to what you imagine?

LISA BLUDER: You know, it really is. As far as taking what the other team gave us too, like we shot 40 threes tonight. That's a lot of threes. That's a lot for us. We shot a good percentage from there.

But 40 of our 68 shots were threes. That's not ideal for us. But we still had 28 paint points. So I love that we were

able to balance still getting the ball into Monika with the 28 paint points with shooting well from the three-point line.

So I think we played really, really well tonight. It's going to take a really good game tomorrow to beat Ohio State.

Q. You just said Caitlin Clark is the face of basketball in the U.S. She said that this is -- that this matchup really is a big example of what women's basketball is. So just curious for you, with how good the Big Ten has been this year and how competitive these matchups with Maryland have been, how fun was it to coach these three games against a really good team?

LISA BLUDER: I mean, it's always fun to coach against great competition, and that's what this conference has given us all year. I mean, you have four teams ranked in the top 15 in the country. You play 18 conference games, and now we've played 20, 21 tomorrow. You're going against the best in the country.

We need somebody from the Big Ten to get to the Final Four. It has to happen because we have such good teams in this conference and such good coaches in this conference. I feel like this year could be that year.

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