

Big Ten Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Wednesday, March 5, 2025

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Gainbridge Fieldhouse

Iowa Hawkeyes

Jan Jensen

Lucy Olsen

Sydney Affolter

Postgame Press Conference

Iowa - 81, Wisconsin -54

THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and get started with the press conference for Iowa. We have Coach Jan Jensen, players Sydney Affolter and Lucy Olsen.

Coach, if you would make an opening statement.

JAN JENSEN: I'm just really pleased. It was a really nice opening round victory for us. When you're in a situation where you hopefully have the opportunity to play five games in five days, that's what you're hoping for. Even though that would be really difficult, it's what we want to do.

It was a nice way to start out that we could play limited minutes and get everybody in. That's always fun for the kids who work so hard that don't get in.

I just thought we started the game really, really sharp, and I'm just really very thankful that we had that kind of a start and thrilled. It will get a little difficult tomorrow night, but for tonight, more difficult, we are certainly excited.

Q. Syd, you've obviously been in the heart of this month. You know the focus, the energy, everything that you have to have this time of year. How much was that there really from the opening jump, and how big was that to kind of start this journey with a showing like that?

SYDNEY AFFOLTER: I thought we started this game with a lot more intensity than the first time we played them. We adjusted a few things from our scout, but ultimately just coming out with that confidence knowing that we are one of the top teams here and we want to be here for as long as possible and to make our mark known on the first day.



I thought we did great, and that's definitely a confidence builder going into the rest of the tournament.

Q. Lucy, 2,000 career points tonight for you. You got 1,000 last year. What allowed you to go on a scoring tear these last two years, and what does 2K mean to you?

LUCY OLSEN: It's exciting. I'm just happy to be playing basketball still, and I wouldn't be doing it without these great teammates. They gave me a lot of nice passes. Yeah, I'm just lucky to be playing with them.

Q. Lucy, you've been a part of big games at Villanova, and now you're in the Big Ten, and you got a taste of a Big Ten Tournament. What were you thinking on the court as the game was going on?

LUCY OLSEN: I just don't want to lose. I want to keep playing. This team is so good and so special that I'm just trying to do whatever I can to let us keep playing some more basketball.

Yeah, the environment is awesome. I don't know. I'm just taking it all in right now.

Q. Syd, you led your team in rebounding tonight, and that ended up being a really big part of the game. You guys outrebounded Wisconsin quite a bit, got a lot of points from it. That's an area we've seen you do well in the season. Can you talk to me a little bit about it.

SYDNEY AFFOLTER: I've always said that rebounding is all about heart and hustle. Maybe I'm a little bit undersized at the 4, but I'll always bring that effort. I want to be the first one to the loose ball.

It's nothing special. You go hit someone and put your butt in someone, but it's more about just go get the dang ball. Don't get second chance opportunities for your team and limit them to one chance. It's definitely an emphasis for me.

Q. You opened the season the first 19 games, shot 31



percent from three. Over the last 11, you're shooting 41 percent. It seemed like it started with a 69% showing against Washington. What's allowed you guys to heat up from the outside over the last dozen games or so?

LUCY OLSEN: I think the confidence that the coaches gave us and confidence in each other. Yeah, I think we're just trusting each other. We're getting used to finding each other and finding the spots where everyone likes to shoot the ball from. I think that plays a lot into it. Yeah, and I think just the confidence.

Q. Syd, Jan talked about it in the opening, getting all the freshmen, not just minutes to help you guys through this weekend but to get them, this is their first March obviously, to kind of introduce them. In this type of game, how beneficial is that across the board?

SYDNEY AFFOLTER: This freshman class, they're such a great group. They have so much potential. I feel for them. I know it's hard when you don't get a lot of minutes or you don't play in some games. But just pouring into them, giving that confidence, knowing that they should be here, they should get to play and that they're good enough to be out there.

That's huge, and I'm glad they got to play some valuable minutes today.

Q. Coach, I was really intrigued at the end of the third quarter you put in five freshmen on the floor. I don't think we've seen that at all this year. How important was that to give those five freshmen experience on a bigger stage like this one?

JAN JENSEN: They've been working so hard, but I thought it was a nice opportunity because we were able to do it, which I was really fortunate that I could do that. They are the future, right? Our vets are really stepping up now. This year has been kind of interesting.

It was the climb of the innocents earlier this season. Our freshmen were stepping up and doing a lot of things to put us in position to get close, did some things great in the nonconference. Our vets were playing a little tight.

Then as we flipped it a little bit, the vets kind of leaned in or are hitting a groove or have been. Certainly it's going to get a lot more difficult tomorrow night.

I just felt this was a good time to give Callie Levin an opportunity. So I hope they enjoyed that and got a taste of it. It would be awesome if we could do that more often throughout the rest of the season. I think it's important to

reward that but to give them just a little taste of what it could be like if they're paying attention to the lessons that this kid right here is teaching and so has Lucy.

If they're learning the lessons and absorbing it in this new day and age of athletics, I think that class is going to be just fine.

Q. Jan, did your women take any -- I don't want to say umbrage, but as the 11th seed, do they have a chip on their shoulder?

JAN JENSEN: You know, someone asked me that earlier, but we really didn't. I think the fact is, look, this league is really hard. Tiebreakers all abound, right? I also think that we were going through it there for a while in adversity.

I just telling them, guys, you're closer than you think. We're closer than it feels. It was hard to keep showing up every day when you had disappointment after disappointment.

I think our coaching staff just took the approach like I just wasn't going to look backwards. I didn't want to be like, oh, man, if we would have, if we could have, it would have been great. You know what, all that journey helped them get to this point of really appreciating it.

Then there's just a lot of good teams in this league. If you get the chance to survive, you get another shot at it. So I just tried to look at it with a little bit more of a positive. It's March, and anything can happen. That means anything can happen in five games and anything could happen in this first one, if you're getting too chippy about where you ended up.

I think they just had a confidence that they knew that they could have been up there, but we also realized we didn't do quite enough to get there. So now we just have to show it.

Q. Just out of curiosity without getting too much into the technical aspect of things, last time you guys went up against Michigan State, it was about as close as it could get, lost by two. You're playing them tomorrow for a shot at Ohio State, one of the top four. What do you think is something your team is going to be looking to do to get a different outcome from last time?

JAN JENSEN: I'm a big fan of Michigan State. Robyn Fralick does an awesome job. She's a really good coach, their whole staff. They press. They have a really nice full court press, but their defensive presence is really impressive.

One of my all time favorite players is Ayrault, their power forward. I was really hoping she wasn't going to come

back, but she did. She's really hard to guard. She shoots the three, posts, handles it.

VanSlooten is a post player that is kind of a dream. She can post-up, but she's long and lanky. She drives it, she snatches rebound. Their point guard is just a little pitbull. They've got all the pieces, and they put a press with it.

It's going to be a lot different feel than tonight was. The defense is going to be in your face. They press after makes. They got different looks. So they're just a really good basketball team. They took UCLA to the wire at UCLA. They were tied or something with a minute and a half left.

Again, it goes back to the strength of this league.

Q. Jan, I asked you about the three ball a couple times in November when you guys were going through a little bit of a slump. Up 10 percent since the first 19 games of the season. You said the team is going to need the three. How dangerous is this team when they're hitting the three like tonight, where they're 65 percent, six different players hitting threes. How important is that to what you're doing?

JAN JENSEN: Any coach would say, I like my chances in March if we're going to do this all the time, 57 and 55. I just hope you can stay above 33 percent, right? We weren't even getting close some games, right?

I think we've just hit -- I said in our last press conference at Iowa, this offense takes a little time to read people, and they just got a little bit of confidence.

But our defense has kept us there a lot. We're going to need our defense tomorrow night. I'd love to dream and think we could do this again, but I just think we're starting to know each other. We're starting to make reads of when to hit Taylor McCabe, really when to look at her. It's helpful that Lucy has kind of hit her stride with that.

I think it's confidence. I think we flipped it a little bit, and they worked really hard. That's the thing. When I was watching them in practice, I was like, my goodness. That's why I kept telling them, we're closer than we're farther. They worked so hard, and every single one of them are in there so much extra. I just think it was bound to turn. Now I just hope we stay.

Q. Getting back to the freshmen, obviously a nice moment that they could be out there, but specifically of the four that play a lot, what do you need from them this postseason? You're here now. You actually need them to do more than just have nice moments or

happy moments. What do you need from them this postseason?

JAN JENSEN: I just think we need a little bit more just the consistency. I think freshmen always want to score. When they come in, they just want to score it. That's how they feel that they've satisfied themselves. They usually satisfy their circle. They just feel like, if they score, they've done it when I'm trying to convince them just hold serve.

I do not care if you do not score. I just want you in the game, and you can rebound, and you can make the offense flow. That's what we're going to need from them. We don't need them to come necessarily in and take their first shot.

So I need consistency of offensive flow, number one. If they are going to shoot it, I need them to make it more than miss it, right?

We just need -- I like Ava's matchup, different times at different people. So she has to stay ready. Sometimes it's hard for a freshman to stay ready because we have three different looks, right? You have Hannah Stuelke look, you have the Addy O'Grady look, and you have Ava Heiden. Ava is just a freshman, and sometimes it's just that inconsistency with how you respond.

So I just need them to be consistent and lean into the moment. That's what I talked to them all about tonight. I said before I don't know if it's going to work out and get everybody in. Just be ready for your moment, whether it's one minute, 30 seconds, or half the game. I thought the freshmen showed tonight that they were ready.

We got a little rushed when we left them in there. I told them, do not take fast shots, and we took fast shots, but it's also fun to play here.

Q. You guys only shot one free-throw all game. That Sydney Affolter free-throw in the first quarter, and you guys put up 81 with only one player putting up double digits. How important is it to have that scoring variety, especially at a time like this when it's game for game and if you guys lose, you guys are done? How important is it to have that scoring variety?

JAN JENSEN: That gives me so much hope for the future of tomorrow night, but the future for the rest of the tournament, into the postseason, and into next season is you see the maturity kind of happening.

I think that's what I think. Just really hopeful that it's coming together. So I think we can be dangerous. We just have to stay level headed, and I think the steadiness of this



team, if they can just continue to like do what you need to do.

I love the fact, as I told them in the locker room, what I loved about this, every single one of them made a difference tonight. They did something well tonight. I don't know any coach can say that every time. You might put some kids in, and it's like, oh, man, plus-minus was just negative for a couple, but I think it's hope. I think it's hope we can have some fun.

I'd love it to be another one tomorrow night, but I'm sure glad they got this one tonight.

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