

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Indiana vs Utah

Thursday, March 20, 2025
Columbia, South Carolina, USA
Colonial Life Arena

Indiana Hoosiers
Coach Teri Moren
Yarden Garzon

Shay Ciezki
Media Conference

TERI MOREN: Well, it's the greatest time the year if you're passionate about this game the way we are, and so we are grateful to not just be in the field, but grateful to be in Columbia, South Carolina.

Just look forward to what's next tomorrow inside of our game. You know, want to give a shoutout to the Big10 Conference as a whole for preparing us for this moment.

Again, Hoosiers are grateful to be here and really look forward to tomorrow.

Q. This year has been streaky for you guys as you got on some win streaks, losing streaks. Coming off the loss to USC in the Big10 tournament, how do you just get your mind right and just focus on Utah tomorrow?

YARDEN GARZON: Yeah, I feel like this year we had a lot of ups and downs. We learned to know each other. I feel like we come tomorrow very confident. We have great game plan and I feel like our preparation was great.

We really want to go out there and play and I think that's the main thing.

Q. Shay, obviously you transferred from Penn State. How have you meshed with some of the veteran forwards and guards on the team and established yourself with the players?

SHAY CIEZKI: Yeah, I think I meshed really well with them. When I first got here they kind of taught me the culture and what it means to be a Hoosier. Very grateful for that.



They're great players, so it's easy to play with great players, especially this one up here. Kind of showed me the ropes.

Yeah, so I'm just grateful to be here with them and especially with Syd and Chloe, with their last years here, you know, it's a cool moment for all of us.

Q. Yarden, first time you've gone on the road in a couple years on the first weekend. Does that change your approach going into the first round?

YARDEN GARZON: I don't think it really change our approach. Every game we go to the game and we want to win the game. I feel like we're ready.

And March is different. Every game is one and done, and we come in to win the game, no matter where we are.

Q. Shay, I have a question. First NCAA tournament appearance.

SHAY CIEZKI: Yeah.

Q. How are you feeling before obviously it's less than 24 hours now. Are you nervous?

SHAY CIEZKI: Yeah, I would say more grateful and blessed to be here. Such a surreal moment. When you're a kid you dream of playing in March, and the last two seasons I wasn't able to get there.

So with this group, just forever grateful that we made it here, and we're going to keep on winning and shock the world.

Q. Shay, you touched on it earlier about learning to be a Hoosier. What have you learned about Indiana, about Bloomington?

SHAY CIEZKI: I would just say the culture here is amazing. Everyone's family. That comes down to the players, coaches, the fans, the environment. They really make you feel like you're meant to be here. It's such a cool

feeling coming in. We have so many great fans and people that support us. You don't see that everywhere else.

So I think that's really a cool thing about Bloomington and this program in general.

Q. Yarden, have you talked to your sister at all about playing against Utah in her career and any advice?

YARDEN GARZON: I did talk with her a little bit. I will keep that advice between us. (Smiling.) But, yeah, I did talk with her a little bit.

I talk with her a lot all the time, so I feel like she gave me really good insight how to approach this game.

Q. Couple of other players have expressed that it's just really exciting and interesting to be in an environment like this. Has it been that way for you guys, or just another place to play at?

SHAY CIEZKI: South Carolina is a great program. Great players have come in and out of this school. To us, it's just another game, right? It's a basketball floor and we're here to win. But it is awesome to see all the greats that came out of here.

So it's cool both ways.

Q. Shay, you're one of a long list of transfers that have really worked out at Indiana. What about the culture that Coach Moren has established and the team allows transfers to come in and be so successful?

SHAY CIEZKI: Comes down to the work we put in every day. We want to work hard. That comes from the players, and the coaches help us with that. You can't force us to get in the gym. We're there before practice, after practice. It shows when we play.

That just speaks volumes of the people that Coach Moren brings in and the staff that she surround herself with.

Q. Yarden, you spoke last year about this time about the difficulties of playing in America during the conflict in your home of Israel is going on. About a year has passed. I'm sure you still have a lot of emotions. How are you feeling going into this year's tournament?

YARDEN GARZON: I feel like I'm trying to use my platform to raise the awareness about my country and the situation. I do everything I can to put it on the biggest stage possible.

I feel like basketball helped me to be there for my country, so I feel like it's great that I have this stage to do it.

Q. Shay, just with the prep going into Utah, what stands out with the matchup? What are some big keys for the game. Are there any similarities?

SHAY CIEZKI: I think the biggest similarity is honestly us. We said this before prepping for them we have to make sure we keep them off the three-point line. They're great three point shooters.

They have great players. So making sure that we win the rebound and honestly just stay on them fast and make sure we're the aggressors this game.

Q. I wanted to ask about Chloe. Obviously been with you for five years and going into her last tournament. What has she meant to the program over the last five years?

TERI MOREN: Well, she's meant so much, not just to this program, but I think the people that are inside our locker room and the people at the university. She's touched more than just her teammates and us as coaches.

But I think Shay said it: When you have three seniors in Syd and Chloe and Strip, you want them to have their moment, but you want to help them have an experience here that they're going to remember for a lifetime.

Even on Selection Sunday, you know, I reminded our players just how important it was to be grateful. Not everybody gets to play in this field and it's hard to get into.

Chloe has been in a lot of these tournaments and she's been instrumental in why we have been able to play in the last six of these, just because of her leadership on the floor, off the floor. Just she draws the toughest defensive assignment night in and night out for us.

I can tell you that we're going to miss that when she's gone.

Q. Been a lot of talk over the last few years about how the women's tournament is different than the men's tournament. This format, first two rounds, it's kind of a unique situation. Seems like a great reward for teams that can have one of the top 16 seeds and get to host for a couple of days. Would you be open to a discussion of a neutral site throughout the tournament, or do you like this format we have?

TERI MOREN: Yeah, that's a great question. We been so fortunate the last couple years, right? We've been at home

and been able to host.

You know, I didn't like having to pack, right, the other day, because like I said, we've had the luxury. But I do think it would be worth having a conversation because there is -- we felt it. There is such a thing as a home environment where your fans can get you to the finish line. I do think that rings true for the top 16 seeds. There is no doubt that there is an advantage.

And so I would be open to having that discuss. I think it probably needs to be -- we're in a different time with our game, the popularity and the players that are playing it at such a high level. And so for it to be on neutral sites feels a little bit probably more fair.

And so I do think that it's probably going to happen, whether it's next year, in the next couple years. I do think it's something that will change.

And the parity, too, is incredible in our game right now as well. So to answer your question, yes, I think it's probably due time that we have that conversation.

Q. A win tomorrow means it's ten straight 20-win seasons for you. What have you brought to this program to install such a culture and such a winning mentality? What could you say is the main thing that you brought to Indiana to lead to such winning?

TERI MOREN: That's easy. It's the players. You can only win with high level, skilled players that really understand that it's more about we than me. In order to be able to have the success we've had, we have to do it together. Nobody is bigger than this program including myself.

So it's always just been about bringing in the right players and protecting the locker room and making sure that we are living up to the standards in which we hold ourselves up to every single day.

We do pride ourselves on the work piece, but you have to have interested players that want -- that believe in that. As Shay mentioned, it's not like we have to twist their arm to get into the gym. They do that on their own.

We've been able to do it because of the special players inside that locker room. I think there is a love. They want to see each other be successful.

Q. You did mention the parity in this game. Couple years ago, two, three years ago, Utah-Indiana might have been a round of 16 or Elite 8 game.

TERI MOREN: Yeah.

Q. Because of all the parity, this is where you are. Is that good for the game? Just force everybody, hey, we have to take the next step forward in order to keep building.

TERI MOREN: I think it's great. For the longest time we've seen the same teams, right, year in and year out. Probably in the last, what, probably three or for years that's changed and continues to change.

And even in our season this year, I mean, this gentlemen talked about the ups and downs. I mean, the Big10 is so good, and some of the losses that we've had are because this league is really fricking good.

We're one of those. To be in this league night in and night out it's like you're playing in a Final Four, playing in a Sweet 16, Elite 8, which we've done all that.

So it certainly prepared us, like I said, for this moment. But it has been incredible to be a part of it. I just think it's going to continue to be what it is right now. Some would say it's -- I don't know that you can this year pick who is going to win the Final Four or the national championship just because of that.

Q. Utah shoots the three ball very well. Obviously they have Gianna averaging almost 20 points a game. How are you guys going to combat that and limit them from the perimeter?

TERI MOREN: We feel like we have great defenders. We only gave up about 64 points this year. Our offense probably gets talked about more because of our shooters and our offense, how we can spread people out and certainly move the ball and all that.

But I think sometimes what gets missed is how good our guys are on the defensive side of the ball, you know, how good our preparation is.

So we understand the assignment. She's really good. She also has -- this is an old Utah team. There is more than just No. 5 out there. There is a lot of those guys at that can shoot it.

We do feel like we have a sound scouting report, game plan, for how we have to guard them in order to give ourselves a chance to win the game.

I think it'll be a really good basketball game tomorrow.

Q. Welcome to Columbia.



TERI MOREN: Thank you.

Q. Obviously some big news out of the Indiana this week is a new basketball coach being hired. You think having a successful men's program helps generate some buzz around your program or benefits your program in any way? Any similarity between the two programs?

TERI MOREN: You know, great question. I haven't even met Coach yet, but I'll say this: We've created a lot of buzz, right? We haven't needed men's basketball for that.

And so by what we've been able to do the last few years and what we continue to do inside of this program.

But does it help? Also helps to have a good football team, right? And so there is 24 sports at Indiana. We love them all. We all want to be successful. But to have a successful football program, to have a successful men's program only helps everybody else, and so we cheer like crazy for everybody.

I'm excited for what's next for men's basketball. Indiana is such a special place and it takes somebody special to be the leader over there in men's basketball.

Like I said, I haven't met Coach yet, but just in the things I've read I'm really looking forward to not only meeting him, but watching him work and feel like he's going to do some really special things at Indiana.

Q. Hey, Teri.

TERI MOREN: Hey, Seth.

Q. This is a little off the wall. Felt like I didn't have a great chance to ask you about some of this stuff earlier in the season. Valentyna signed on really late. I think that was in August when students were already on campus. I have a two-parter. First, just how did that come together and how did you find her? Secondly, between her, Faith, Sharnecce, Lenée and Syndey Fenn in their recoveries, players we don't see much on game day. Can you just touch on the development they've made this season?

TERI MOREN: Sure. Val came late, as you mentioned. She was somebody that Coach Rhet got to see throughout his travels. Again, it always comes down to some things from an academic perspective with some of our international students.

She was a late add. We had to get some things in order, she did, academically for her to be able to come over and

become part of our program.

And then the rest, Sharnecce, Syd, Bo, all making progress. You know, especially Bo and Syd who had the knee issues and took the year off. Have been making progress with Kylie and Ben our trainer.

Then Sharnecce, Faith, got to see Faith a little bit in the Big10 tournament step up in a big way when we got into foul trouble.

Again, those guys that might not get -- we don't talk about them often, but I can't overstate enough how important they are in practice for us and the reps they get, but also being on that other team and pushing our other players.

Sometimes they're scout team; sometimes it's just five-on-five, which we played a lot of in hoping it's a competitive environment for our players to be able to play in.

And so all of them have done a great job. We missed Bo. We have missed Bo tremendously because she had a great summer and thought we were going to have her as we went into the season. Another really sound guard for us.

So she's doing terrific in her rehab and we'll look forward to getting her back here soon for the summer.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports