

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

Friday, March 21, 2025

Columbia, South Carolina, USA

Colonial Life Arena

Indiana Hoosiers

Teri Moren

Shay Ciezki

Chloe Moore-McNeil

Media Conference

Indiana 76 - Utah 68

THE MODERATOR: First up this afternoon the Indiana Hoosiers. They're represented by Head Coach Teri Moren and student-athletes Chloe Moore-McNeil and Shay Ciezki.

Coach, if you would, please make an opening statement.

TERI MOREN: First of all, I'm so proud to represent these guys. Really proud of them, how hard they played.

First of all, I want to congratulate Utah. What a great team. They are -- they pose so many challenges for you defensively. They have a bunch of experience and veteran players, and they're very, very impressive. They're impressive, and they are hard to prepare for. And we absolutely knew that this was going to be a dogfight, and just really proud of our team, how they fought defensively today.

You know, pleased with -- you know, all the kids that got in and played minutes for us, because you can look at all the kids that five of them were in double-digit scoring, but then I think about Henna coming in, and we're down a four player, and we can move her around and we can move Yarden around. And then Lilly Mesiter coming in, and she and Strip did such a great job of being there for one another. When Strip went out, Lilly impacted the game; and then when Lilly went out, Strip did the same.

So really happy with our guard play. I thought Chloe and Shay and Yarden were, once again, terrific in being able to help us play fast and play organized.



Syd Parrish finally found her shot there in the second half as well for us. And so a lot of different people, Lexi Bargesser came in, gave us great minutes, again, defensively.

So it takes everybody, and our group knows that. But I thought transition defense we were superb today. We were really worried about them in transition. Didn't want to give up any open threes. Didn't feel like we did that.

A lot of good things. Some of these things never show up in here. Our heart and our effort and our toughness won us this game today. So just, again, really proud of our staff, really proud of our players.

THE MODERATOR: Take questions just for the student-athletes at this time. If you would, raise your hand.

Q. For either of you, how big was the close in the second quarter to get it back even so you could take control in the third quarter?

SHAY CIEZKI: It was really important to us. I think there was like two minutes to go, or a minute 30, and we got together and like in a huddle and said we need to bring it back; we need to tie this game up going into halftime so we have momentum to come out. And that's what we did. So, no, it was really important to us.

CHLOE MOORE-McNEIL: I agree with Shay. (Laughs).

Q. Just following up on that, Chloe, was that the mindset in the third quarter that now that we've got it tied up, we can make our run?

CHLOE MOORE-McNEIL: Absolutely. We always make it a point of emphasis when we do have the same tied or we do have the lead to not let up and keep our foot on the gas pedal, and I think we did do a great job of that, whether it was playing fast and hit-heads and running in transition or setting those drags or executing our plays.

Q. Shay, your first NCAA tournament. How does it feel?



SHAY CIEZKI: Yeah, it feels really cool. Never been here before. So just being able to celebrate with the team was awesome, and seeing Syd Parrish put our name on the sign, it was an awesome moment. But it only lasts for a few seconds because we're already on to the next game. So that's our mindset.

Q. Chloe, in the first half it felt like it was kind of stagnant for you guys offensively?

CHLOE MOORE-McNEIL: Yeah. I think we did a great job in making adjustments in halftime. We always have a do well side and a do better side, and I thought we did better at moving the ball and being aggressive and attacking and looking for those kicks and those dropoffs.

Q. For both of you, I just wanted to ask about, Chloe, your long pass in the third quarter. What did you see with Shay running down and, Shay, were you expecting that pass?

CHLOE MOORE-McNEIL: Yeah. When I think back to that play, I think that goes to show that our chemistry has grown a lot. I think we've been through a lot of adversity with this team, a lot of ups and downs. Had some tough wins, but also had some hard losses. So seeing things like that, having that chemistry grow, it's a good thing and I'm happy it's happened.

SHAY CIEZKI: All she has to do is give me a look, and I just know to sprint my butt a little bit harder.

Q. This question is for Chloe. Chloe, Lilly Meister has gone through some times this season where she's had to fight through some things, hasn't played as well as probably she hoped. But then she kind of obviously stepped up today. How much do you respect that as a leader and a teammate that she's been able to fight through some things and be productive when it mattered most?

CHLOE MOORE-McNEIL: Yeah. I'm so happy for Lilly. I think we all are. But I think what you've seen today was a confident Lilly. We gave her good juice, and once she got going, I mean, the rest was history for her.

Q. Chloe, everyone keeps saying that it's ten straight seasons for you guys, a program of 20 wins, but it's also now six straight post seasons with an NCAA Tournament win. You've been there for five of those runs obviously. What is it about this time of year that kind of gets this program and this team locked in?

CHLOE MOORE-McNEIL: Yeah. I think we're a great team when we want to be and when we're sharing the ball.

And we have good stops on defense, we're really hard to beat. And I think we always play our best during tournament time.

THE MODERATOR: Anything else for the student-athletes? Seeing none, you all can go back to the locker room. Now we'll open up for questions for Coach Moren.

Q. Teri, you said yesterday that it wasn't a lot of fun packing to travel, but how confident were you that this team would be able to kind of not worry about being on the road in a situation like this after having the luxury of being home the last few days?

TERI MOREN: I think tournament play for this group, and I think Chloe didn't talk about it probably as much as she should have in terms of we understand that if we don't come in and play well, this could be the last game. And so I think there's a different level of urgency, you know, when you're playing in the NCAA Tournament. And I think, again, there's excitement that surrounds it, too.

We have a veteran team led by Chloe, led by Syd. And so I think some of those other pieces, Yarden, Shay, Lilly, you know, the surrounding cast, they want those seniors to go out -- Strip -- in the right way. And so, yes, you might categorize this as a team that plays better in March, but I think the reason why we came out the way we did, the toughness that we showed today, the resilience, all of it, had more to do with the fact that the surrounding cast wanted Strip and Chloe and Syd to win this game.

Q. Just going off what Chloe mentioned with her chemistry with Shay, how have you seen Shay integrate throughout the season and be able to have the type of game she did today in her first NCAA Tournament game?

TERI MOREN: She's fit in perfectly. That's why we recruited her. That's why we brought her to Indiana, because we felt like she's a piece that we needed, we had to have. And so I think her transition to us and playing in our system, both offensively and defensively, has really been quite seamless.

Now, she might disagree, but I do think she's become a better defender for us, but we know this about Shay. She's outstanding. The great thing about Shay is she is a multi-dimensional point guard, meaning she can play off the ball; she can play with the ball in her hands. She is shifty when the ball is in her hand, has a high IQ, but also can put a lot of pressure on you behind the arc, and that's why we brought her to Indiana, because she can do all those things for us.

Q. Teri, to go off what Seth had asked over Zoom, not only make the tournament six years in a row, but to win at least one game every year, what do you think that says about the way you guys have been operating and what you've been able to accomplish with this program?

TERI MOREN: Well, I say this. It always goes back to the players, the players that are in your program, that are in your system, and then I've had fantastic staff. Some of them have moved on to become head coaches at other institutions.

But the standards never change, right? They always stay the same, what we're going to be about, what matters to us, and it's our job to find the kids that fit us, right? And fit our program, fit our culture. And then once we feel like it's a great fit, then there are standards that we have, and we never lower the standards, no matter who you are; from the best player to the last person on the bench that might not see time, they're held to the very same standard.

And so we talk a lot about that, and that's kind of who we've morphed into. As I always say, it's not easy to play at Indiana because of sort of the demands of the work piece, but also in our preparation and what it requires to be successful.

Q. Coach, the team shot just under 70 percent from the field in the second half, 14 of 17 on twos and only six three-point attempts. What did you see that led to those open looks and maybe minimized the three-point looks?

TERI MOREN: You know, again, I trust -- we trust this group to know what a good shot is for us. It's been a long season, and so we've had a lot of reps at understanding what a good shot looks like for us. And so it's trusting that they're going to make the right play, they're going to make -- take the right shot. They know what a good shot looks like for us. They take what the defense gives them.

You know, we do a lot inside of all those timeouts trying to help them with what we see in hopes that they can get on the floor and take advantage of some of those looks that may be there that maybe they're not seeing at the time.

Again, I think it just goes back to having high IQ kids that like to play fast, like to play in space, play with freedom, but also understand what a good shot looks like for us.

Q. Coach, you will likely face South Carolina on Sunday. Will you use last year's experience against them to help prepare and is there any extra motivation

to beat them because you came so close last year?

TERI MOREN: You know, again, we're fresh off a big win today against an excellent Utah team, and so we're very familiar with South Carolina. We obviously -- we played them in the Sweet 16 a year ago, although a different team; so are we. Tremendous amount of respect for Dawn and Lisa and her entire staff and her players, and I've coached a few of them with USA Basketball.

So know a lot about South Carolina, and it's going to be a daunting task for us. They're an excellent team and have had a great year. But I will go back to what I said yesterday in terms of the Big Ten and how great of a conference it is and how well it's prepared us for a lot of different styles. And today, again, Utah, excellent; different style. It's going to be different style against South Carolina. And so we will lean on our -- not just our preparation, but our experience of playing in a really good league.

Q. Coach, going based off that, what you saw today from your team, how do you feel like you will stack up against a South Carolina or a team that's able to knock off South Carolina?

TERI MOREN: Well, you know, again, I'm going to be honest. I've watched them a little bit. I haven't really dug into them a whole lot as far as I know their pieces are a little bit different.

You know, just, again, great amount of respect for them. You know, I can tell you this from a year ago and just knowing our players. Whoever is ahead of us, we will have -- because I have a great staff, we will have a really great scouting report. We will be prepared. And then it always comes down to doing all the things. You gotta hit shots. You gotta be able to guard at a high level. You gotta be able to rebound. And then we'll see how we stack up with them.

But, you know, this team is coming off a really great win. We're going to at least enjoy it for a couple hours. We're going to go out, we're going to watch the first half, and then we'll get back to the hotel and we'll start to dig in to, I guess, South Carolina or Tennessee Tech.

Q. Teri, it was either you or Chloe that talked about sort of the up-and-downs you've had this season. Is there part of you that kind of feels happy -- or not happy -- or glad that you kind of went through that to sort of see your team kind of get to this point where it's kind of all coming together at the start of the tournament?

TERI MOREN: Well, I'm happy for our players, but I think



what gets lost sometimes is we're a different team than we were a year ago. Right? And I think so often it's like we should just roll right into the next season and be the same team. Well, you don't roll into the next season without an All American, you know. And a kid like Sara Scalia that can shoot the ball at such a high level and you think everything is going to be the same. It's not.

And so, again, there were some up-and-downs. There were some twists and turns. But I think through it all that we gained great experience.

And I've said this before, and I know you cover us. Let's don't get lost that this is a really good conference, the Big Ten in which we play in. And so the nights that we came up short it was more than likely it was because they just played better than we did that night, because when you're talking about 12 teams that get into the tournament, right? This is a really, really great conference, and maybe there were nights that we played great and won, there were nights that maybe we didn't play as well, but at the end of the day, like I said, all of those experiences we got a lot of reps throughout it, have put us in the position to win the game, and hopefully can position us come Sunday.

Q. Teri, two-part question. Similar question that I had for Chloe. Lilly Meister has gone through some challenges this year. How gratifying was it for you that she stepped up in the right moment? And then unrelated to that, Jules obviously didn't play. What's her status and what caused her to be out today?

TERI MOREN: Yeah. Jules has a foot injury that's going to keep her out of the tournament. But to say that -- you know, again, Chloe said it, I think we're all so happy for the way Lilly showed up today. And she was spot on. When Lilly is confident, Lilly is a really good basketball player, and I think throughout the season she kind of lost that throughout. But one thing I know about her teammates is they've continued to pour into her and pour into her and encourage her and give her good juice as we call it. And so I thought she and Strip played really well. Those two were coming in and out for each other, and every time either one of them got into the game tonight -- or this afternoon I thought they impacted it. So it was great to see.

Q. Teri, there have been so many games this season, even some of your bigger wins this season, where it was kind of more you guys played one really strong quarter, but then maybe didn't finish the game strong or you kind of left that game with kind of some mixed feelings, even if it was a really good result. How big is it maybe for your team's confidence going forward that you guys did finish this one strong today and put

together the second half the way you did?

TERI MOREN: I think, again, it's a great dose of confidence for our players. They say it. I don't have to tell them. Like they know when our turnovers are low and our assists are high and we're guarding at a high level, we can beat anybody. And so I believe that. I think they believe that. They know that.

And, again, happy with the way they came out today, especially in the second half, because again, I want to reiterate how impressed I am with Utah and the job Coach has done, and those players, the job that they've done for Utah. So very impressed, and again, another team that has given us another good rep to prepare us for this tournament.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

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