

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Kent State vs Notre Dame

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South Bend, Indiana, USA

Purcell Pavilion

Kent State Golden Flashes Todd Starkey

Media Conference



and took the lead early in the third. So our players, we do that so our players can be prepared in environments like this if we get the opportunity.

So a little different level in the NCAA Tournament, but we want to play aggressive and play -- make Notre Dame have to make some adjustments to us as well.

Q. Can you talk about Hidalgo and the challenge?

TODD STARKEY: Yeah, the more film -- I mean, I watched her play earlier in the year just as a spectator, also I'm on the WBC All-American committee. So watching her early, she stood out. She just leaps off the screen, right. The ability she has to anticipate and disrupt the game on the defensive end is rare. She's got great instincts, and I think that's what makes her so good is she's not just a scorer, third in the nation, right. Leads the nation in steals. Leads the team in assists. Second in rebounding. She just affects the game in every statistical category.

So I'm coaching against her, but I'm a fan of hers, as well. I mean, she's fun to watch. She's a very entertaining player, and we're excited with the opportunity but it's a tall task.

Q. Katie just talked about the depth that you guys have. How can you make that an advantage when you guys play tomorrow?

TODD STARKEY: Well, Katie said it perfectly. She said it's an advantage if we can actually take advantage of it. Certainly that would be a game plan of ours. We feel like we do have really good depth. It's been one of our strengths all year, and you have a game plan, the way we have to play to be able to create opportunities.

We say it a lot. We've got to make them defend us without fouling, and you only get those opportunities by playing aggressive. We want to make sure we are not playing tentative, and I think in this atmosphere, our players will have to make an adjustment. We played a pretty hostile environment at LSU earlier this year and handle that had pretty well. I was really pleased with the way we played that game in the first half. We were down one at halftime

Q. Tyler went 17 of 27 from the field in the three MAC Tournament games. You talked about her living up to what she's done all regular season, especially on a big stage. What's your expectation out of her coming into this one?

TODD STARKEY: Yeah, incredible poise for a freshman to come off the bench and have that type of performance. Per confidence has just continued to build as the season's gone on. Her teammates have a lot of confidence in her as well. But a very talented young lady, and we're going to give her the opportunity to continue that type of scoring and see what she can do.

But our post depth is great. She's been able to back up Morris all year as a fifth-year senior, and I think that type of mentoring has paid dividends for her and she just continues to grow in her confidence and her ability.

Q. Going into this game and really just thinking back from the Championship, from the MAC Championship, what has it been like, and Selection Sunday, now you have this week, you know where you're going. What do you think it will take from shifting gears from the Championship to now first game in the tournament? What do you feel like for your team it will take for them to shift gears, first time in a long time, and specifically for these players, how do you adjust them to get prepared for tomorrow?

TODD STARKEY: First, it's an honor to have you as a Hall of Famer calling our game, it really is, and that's not on me. So we appreciate you being here, and the great work that you do for women's basketball.

For our team, it's been an exciting team, right. So you talk about and prepare for moments in the tournament. Can



we play our best basketball for three straight games; and we played at Rocket Mortgage -- I think the Mid American Conference does a phenomenal job of running a tournament, and we played in an NBA arena. There's a lot of hype around it that, as well. It was so well done, and our team had the opportunity to see our fans in that environment, and really, the Kent State community is behind us, and we feel that.

What will it take for us to adjust to this atmosphere? Confidence by the coaching staff, you know, and they are going to feed off of us. The last time I was in the NCAA Tournament, I was an assistant at Indiana, and we played here at Notre Dame.

So there's some familiarity to being here for me.

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