

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Marquette vs Ole Miss

Friday, March 22, 2024

South Bend, Indiana, USA

Purcell Pavilion

Marquette Golden Eagles

Megan Duffy

Media Conference

Q. Can you talk about the challenge Mississippi presents with its physical style of play, the defense?

MEGAN DUFFY: We have a huge challenge ahead of us facing Ole Miss. I mean, Coach Yo has done a phenomenal job with building her program, and you hit it on the head. They are athletic; they are long; they are physical. They are just as tough as any team we've faced with just their relentless pressure in different ways.

You know, one of the things I think digging into them this week through film was just their discipline with it, too. You know, just being in the right spots and helping each other out, so they just have a whole tree of long, talented athletes who can be disruptive. I think that's what our girls were trying to kind of explain but we've tried our best this week to obviously prepare in every way we can to handle their pressure, kind of stay in the fight with it. You're going to have some turnovers. You're going to make some mistakes but not let that take you out of what you're trying to do. I'm really proud of just our prep this week to try and prepare for them.

Q. I asked yesterday about being back in South Bend, and now you're back and went on a tour today. What's the feeling like being back on campus?

MEGAN DUFFY: I made them take a tour, by the way. It's awesome. It's such a familiar place and faces to me. I'm just very grateful that I had the opportunity to come to a school like this, and then, you heard from my young women just what they are into on and off the court. It's a very similar path when I was at Notre Dame as they are at Marquette now.

We had a little bit of a wait before practice, so we just went on a little tour and got to light a candle at the Grato and be very grateful and appreciative of this opportunity to dance.



It's interesting, when you see your name, you're so excited. We were extremely ecstatic to see that. And okay, we're playing Ole Miss, and you kind of forget where you're going.

And you kind of have to ask, okay, where are we being sent to. And it was pretty nice to hear, at least for me personally, a place that I'm familiar with and a place that our fans can come over to for the game tomorrow, and hopefully we can maybe steal a couple Notre Dame fans to root for us in the game versus Ole Miss as well.

Q. How do you plan on attacking the perimeter offensively?

MEGAN DUFFY: Yeah, they are going to try to take us out of our rhythm, out of our offense. Our offense I think unique, a little different than the SEC where we try and spread you out. We try and cut. We are trying to create disadvantages with different things we do. I think one of the things when you have a team like them that can disrupt you is how are you going to counter that. How do you play out of things when maybe your first and second options aren't there, and so we've tried to work as much as we can this week to do that.

It might look a little ugly at times and might not be as free flowing as we want it to be, but how do you still make successful basketball plays against them and that will be our goal tomorrow.

Q. You covered it coming back, but reflecting on your time here when you were a player, what are your most powerful sentiments or memories from that time?

MEGAN DUFFY: I think when I look back at my experience, I sit here as a head coach at Marquette playing in the NCAA Tournament, and we've been here a few times now. I don't know if I would be here if it wasn't for my experience playing for Coach McGraw and being at this institution. I had such a positive experience. It really propelled me into wanting to coach and teach and mentor.

So just being able to play for her and share in those experiences of playing at a really high level. You had to do



it on the academic side at a really high level and I know it's been very influential in my time. Coach Owens was on staff, as well, when I was here. So it's just a really nice, just moment for me to kind of reflect for a couple minutes outside of all the film study and competitiveness of the game tomorrow just to know, like you're here for a purpose and a lot of my purpose stems from just the opportunity that I had to play and go to school here.

Q. And just as a matter of record, this is where you got married; correct?

MEGAN DUFFY: I did. How did you know that? Yeah, we got married -- I was actually a COVID wedding and we got into a little bit of a pickle of just when things were shutting down, and we were supposed to get married back in the Dayton, Ohio where my husband, Kevin, and I are both from.

You guys remember that back in 2020 it was like things are open or closed or, you know, and are -- just we have to find a place. We're a little bit older. Like we have to get this done somehow. I ended up calling Coach and (she) gave me a contact at Basilica. People were canceling their weddings. They waited years obviously to get married in the Basilica where you fill the place up, and people are like, we'll push it back a year. A couple of these cancellations happened, and I looked at my husband and I'm like, do you want to do it?

And at that point, we walked down that aisle and we had, I think maybe there was 25 total people, think about in the Basilica right, and they are spread out. We were at the altar, looking at the crowd and everybody is masked-up, and we're just kind of looking at each other, like, let's create the best moment we can. It was a phenomenal just afternoon, and I'm happy I got in that dress and just tried to make it as special as it could be with the circumstances.

So it's something that we'll never forget and just one more added memory about the place here.

Q. Going back to the former question, what do you feel -- what have you -- let me think about how I want to ask this. Thinking about Coach McGraw, what do you feel like you've taken from her coaching style and intertwined it with your own style?

MEGAN DUFFY: I mean, you can relate, right, what you learn from Coach Summitt.

I think the things that I remember when I played for, you obviously remember winning and losing and some of that but just she just had that perfect balance of tough love; that perfect balance of pushing you to your max and pushing

you to a level you never thought you had, but at the same time, she would have her arm around you.

You know, she just showed the love and support you needed as a young girl and a young woman to make it at this level. One of the things I've always respected about her, and when I got into coaching, I said I want to have that fight and tenacity that she had but behind the scenes, she was one of the most prepared coaches I've been around and I probably didn't realize that when I was in it, but then as I got into coaching, you know, watched her staff and asked questions to her, she's still a huge part of my journey right now.

You know, even when we got in here, you know, she's one of the first people here texting back and forth about it. But just her preparation to be ready to go and put yourself in position to win, you know, like we're a little bit of the underdog I think tomorrow and just remembering that you always have a chance, it's March Madness, if you come in prepared, you know, come in with an incredible energy and attitude about yourselves, you have a chance to maybe upset an Ole Miss.

So I think those are the things that really stick to me. She's just a tremendous human being, and somebody that I'm so appreciative of my team playing for her, but it's even been more powerful since I've gotten into coaching as an assistant coach. And now as a head coach to have somebody in your corner just to call up for literally like two minutes and if you know Coach McGraw, she's a fast mover. Just call her up quick, "Coach, what do you think about this? I'm thinking about this." And she's got an answer.

Or just like, "I think you should go for it." Just that positive little boost you need. So she's amazing. I know even just what she's done to help Niele in her journey here has been incredible to watch, as well.

Q. The NCAA has affected some changes in women's basketball, the tournament. Do you like the changes? Are there things that need to be done differently to grow the game better?

MEGAN DUFFY: I mean, referencing certain changes. I mean, host sites?

Q. The regional format.

MEGAN DUFFY: Yeah, I think it's a cool honor for you to be a Top-16 seeding and get to play in front of your home crowd. It's harder for somebody like us to come into somebody's home building.



But what's been phenomenal to watch is just the way the game has grown, whether it's the star power of, you know, a Hannah Hidalgo or Caitlin Clark or JuJu Watkins, just the way they are bringing national attention to our game. That's a couple freshmen that somebody like Caitlin Clark, who is historic in our game. There's been so many players, like a Tamika Catchings that have paved the way, the decades of them fighting to put their product out there.

I think what's nice is you're starting to see just the benefits now with more media attention, more money being pumped into our game. A few years ago when there was a lot of negative attention about the tournament and how do we get a little bit more equal to the men and all that. I think we have made some great changes to it. You.

Know, the regional is interesting. You kind of split coasts and take off, and I know that's a lot of -- just to get the fan bases and just everybody in one place.

So I think, at least from my vantage point, it's moving in the right direction. You know, I think the more that even like with the Paige Bueckers and Caitlin Clark when they move on to the WNBA, having that next group of star power to continue the tradition on, you know, just even having strong, confident coaches who are supporting our women is so important, as well.

And I think the more we can continue to pump into this amazing game, whether that on the college side or the WNBA, I just think we have a great space to continue to push forward and I'm very appreciative and blessed to be a small piece in it as well.

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