

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

Saturday, March 23, 2024

South Bend, Indiana, USA

Purcell Pavilion

**Marquette Golden Eagles**

**Coach Megan Duffy**

**Rose Nkumu**

**Liza Karlen**

Media Conference

Ole Miss - 67, Marquette - 55

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with an opening statement by Coach Duffy followed by questions for the student-athletes.

MEGAN DUFFY: Congratulations to Ole Miss. I thought they were tremendous in that fourth quarter, just relentless on their rebounding. And obviously Madison Scott got going pretty well in those first five minutes, and I thought was the difference in the game.

But I can't say enough about my team and their effort and their grit today and really across the whole season.

I feel for our seniors right now who won't get another shot to play a game. But just overall just so proud of our young women and what they've accomplished this season.

**Q. Rose, Liza, you were the offensive bright spots for you guys. How were you able to create looks for yourselves tonight?**

ROSE NKUMU: I think just playing well off our teammates. We knew they were going to come out aggressive and being physical with us. We tried to use that to our advantage with our cuts, with our movements.

I think just taking advantage when we could get downhill. And I know Liza was battling in the paint, trying to get those paint touches for us.

I think just good ball movement and trusting our teammates.



LIZA KARLEN: Yeah, I would say one of our strengths, especially in the tournament now, is our versatility as a team so we can get to a lot of different things in our game.

So I think that just being able to, like Rose said, go inside/outside, do what we do a little bit and move the ball, that really helped us today.

**Q. You mentioned how physical the game was. Can you talk about that a little bit. It was obviously very back and forth. What adjustments did you have to make on the floor in order to keep up that physicality?**

ROSE NKUMU: I think just meeting them early. As Coach was saying, they were relentless on the rebounding battle. So trying to get our guards to come in, help our posts out. I know they were battling the entire game just trying to put a body on their bigs.

And then obviously with their guards, they're athletic, crafty. Trying to put a body on them early so we could get the advantage, trying to get the rebounds.

LIZA KARLEN: Yeah, not much to add to that. When you're undersized you've got to do your work early, like Rose said, carve out space early. Because if we start at a disadvantage, it's going to be really, really tough to try and get that back.

**Q. And then tough fourth quarter, a couple of scoring droughts in that final frame. What do you look at as a factor to why those happened, and what can change to make the offense more efficient in the final quarter?**

ROSE NKUMU: I think just trying to execute a little bit better. We had our reads, we had open looks. But I think at times we were a little rushed in our passes. And I think that's what Ole Miss was really good at, was getting us to be a little sped up in our offense.

And just their athleticism and their length made things that were open look not open or vice versa. And I think just kind of trying to stay composed through any scoring drought that we have and just trying to continue to push



through and execute.

LIZA KARLEN: Yeah, not much to add. The first thing that came to mind for me too was pace. We knew they were going to try and speed us up coming into this game. And we handled it pretty well three out of four quarters. Got a little sped up the last quarter, like Rose said. So pace is a huge, huge piece to our offense.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much for joining us. You're welcome to rejoin your teammates.

We'll now open up to questions for Coach Duffy.

**Q. Coach, same question to you. The scoring drought has been a reoccurring theme. What has to change there in order to keep the offense efficient in the fourth quarter?**

MEGAN DUFFY: That first five minutes of the fourth quarter was critical, and it was a combination of Maddie Scott just got extremely hot. We tried to jump on her right hand and put bodies around her. And she just got a little bit into the zone. So it put more pressure on your offense to score in that time.

And I thought earlier in the game we could give up an offensive rebound and still defend again and you didn't feel like you had to score every possession.

But once she got going, and whether that was a dump-off pass she made to her bigs or she got it on the rim, that got them their momentum going with their defense. I thought when she got hot, they turned up their pressure.

We made a few mental mistakes, I thought, in that little stretch of that beginning of that fourth quarter on just some small things, whether we missed an open teammate, we had an opportunity to score in transition and didn't execute.

And interesting enough, it became really magnified in that five minutes. And then obviously the end of the game we didn't have too many team fouls so we had to foul to kind of get just a couple extra possessions.

You know, every game is a little different with why you can't score or why there's some reasons where you have really good looks and they don't go in and that's the game of basketball, and then sometimes you have to really look yourself in the mirror and say, hey, we could have done better to execute.

But give Ole Miss a lot of credit, just the way their intensity changed in that fourth quarter.

**Q. Can you just talk about Karlen's 19-14 game?**

MEGAN DUFFY: Liza, I mean, she was double-double today, but I just am so proud of her through this entire year. She's been one of the most improved players in the country.

Coming in this year, I kind of joked because she didn't really want to be labeled a go-to player, and then we couldn't help but call a go-to player because of how much she improved and how much she wanted to put the team on her back.

And she just fit so well into our system the way she can score inside and out. And then she really just matured with having that target on her back and having the best defender guard her.

And so just overall the way she could have a 30-point game, she could guard another team's best post defender, she could guard on the perimeter is just a phenomenal story of just how great she was this year.

And I think the neat thing is I think she has another level to get to. And I know you guys heard from her yesterday too of just she's a civil engineer, she's working around the clock, whether that's on her basketball game, on her academic side. She's a great leader for us.

It's really just a story of if you kind of stay in the fight, you stay in the process, you're patient with development, how she turns into a star player for us.

And she'll also be the kid that you could see her a little bit right now how she wants a couple of those shots back, she thinks she could play better defense. And that's why she's been really good.

But just a phenomenal epitome of a student-athlete right now in a good way.

**Q. How did you adjust to Frannie and Jordan dealing with foul trouble, and how did that disrupt your team's flow, especially early on with Jordan picking up three fouls quick?**

MEGAN DUFFY: That was tough. One of your -- your fifth-year senior, one of your best players, we had to sit her. And then when you're in this juncture of the season, usually if a kid has two fouls, you can -- you might be able to get to the half. But it was like I got to put her back in. We don't have a tomorrow if we don't win this game.

And then we executed a set really, really well, and they called an illegal screen on it, which happens. I thought

that's a little bit of Ole Miss's athleticism and physicality through it. That was her third, which was hard.

And then it's hard to get in a rhythm sometimes. I think she tried, but it wasn't really her night.

I thought Frannie got a couple cheap ones, but I thought she overall had a really nice game for us when she was in.

And we're nowhere without those two players. So I just really feel like one game doesn't define what they've done for us. Frannie in her fifth year here, and then obviously Jordan, what she's meant to this program and just her durability for us. She struggled through injury all year this year, and the fact that she's playing and had a shot to play in the Big Dance is something we're just so grateful for.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much, and congratulations on the great season.

MEGAN DUFFY: Thank you.

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