

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Four - Princeton vs Iowa State

Tuesday, March 18, 2025

South Bend, Indiana, USA

Purcell Pavilion

Iowa State Cyclones

Audi Crooks

Addy Brown

Media Conference

MODERATOR: Okay. I want to say welcome, everybody, to South Bend. Nothing against Christmas but this is the most wonderful time of the year as we get forward the mid and late portion of March. Few housekeeping notes before we get started. First of all, my name is Max. As a courtesy to all our fellow media members as well as the coaches and student-athletes we have up here, please silence your phones throughout the press conference here. Also before you ask a question, please provide your name and media affiliation. That's each time you ask a question, whether you're here on person or on Zoom as well. If you're joining us on Zoom. Please use the raise your hand function for your question. We will address questions in the room first and then we'll get to everybody on the Zoom as well.

Lastly, recording press conferences via your cell phone or camera is prohibited as well. So with that said, we got Audi Crooks and Addy Brown here from the Iowa State Cyclones. It is time to open up the floor to some questions.

Q. Tommy Birch, Des Moines Register. Audi, Addy, what have you guys seen on film so far from Princeton?

AUDI CROOKS: Well, I think they're a team that does a lot of things based on technique. They're pretty sound offensively. I think they take their time also getting some plays. I know they rank among the lowest in possessions per game, so just taking that in account and making sure we really pay attention to the little things that they run in their offense because it's nothing dramatic but it works. It's simple basketball and that's how they play the game.

ADDY BROWN: Yeah, they're a very fundamental team. They all play their role very well so just got to make sure we're paying attention to personnel and do what we do



best.

Q. I think they kind of have three elite scorers kind of like you guys do. Is there some resemblance to how you both are built maybe?

AUDI CROOKS: I don't know if I'd go that far. No, they definitely are great scorers, not discrediting them in any way, I just think that our team plays a lot faster and we play a different, I think, kind of form of the game even though you could say we have three scorers, they have three scorers, that does probably resemble a little bit, but we're all, I think, unique in our own way.

Q. Connor Ferguson. For both you guys and sorry if you were asked this at the last presser but now that we're a bit closer to it, kicking off Emily Ryan's last tournament run, what's the motivation to have success this week for her?

ADDY BROWN: I mean, we all love playing under Emily Ryan and for Emily Ryan. She's been a Cyclone here for five years. She's been through it all so just to kind of see the work she puts in every single day. She doesn't take a day off which is really inspiring for all of us. She's just one of the best leaders. I've ever been around. One of the best teammates I've ever been around so you always want to finish thing it is right way when you have teammates like that and that's just kind of our focus, just one game at a time but make sure we're leaving it all out there, not only for her but for each other as well.

AUDI CROOKS: I agree.

Q. And another one for both of guys, coming off near record-setting performances in big single game outbursts from both of you in the Big 12 Tournament, how much does that raise your confidence level and get the momentum swinging the right direction for each of you individually but also with the rest of the team and how they were able to help you get those points?

AUDI CROOKS: Yeah, I think it definitely feels good when you're able to contribute in a significant way, especially at



the Big 12 Tournament and heading into post-season. It just kind of gives you a little bit more motivation, a little bit of a bigger chip on your shoulder to prove the point that you are an elite scorer and elite player and that we are an elite team and that we belong in this tournament and, yeah.

Q. Audi, you talked a little bit the other night, too, about that chip on your shoulder heading into the post-season. What kind of created it? What motivates you guys? What is it you're trying to prove or show people?

AUDI CROOKS: Well, um, to put it simply I would just say that I feel like... I got to be real careful hear with my wording. I do sound like Coach Fenn. I just think we have a lot to prove and sometimes we fly a little bit under the radar. We played probably the toughest schedule in the country and our record reflects that and I think that that kind of allowed people to write us off a little bit but I just think that we're, like I said before, not a team to be messed with and we need to be taken seriously and that's just kind of the chip on the shoulder is to show that and prove that individually and collectively.

Q. Do you want to chime in, Addy?

ADDY BROWN: I think she covered it all, I think. (Laughter) We definitely play with a little bit of that underdog mentality. I personally feed off of that. I feel like we're definitely overlooked, but at the end of the day, like you just got to go out there and do you and prove yourself right. It's not about proving others wrong or anything like that, it's just about proving yourself right.

Q. Audi, last year in the tournament you had that big breakout game and it seemed like that kind of put you on a bigger platform. Just, what did that do for you and, you know, can you have that type of performance again this week?

AUDI CROOKS: Yeah, it's definitely possible. For me, I think, it kind of amplified me personally and us as a team. Any team that I have is the team's success, not necessarily about individual things. When you have an opportunity to bring attention and awareness to women's basketball and to Iowa State women's basketball, that's a really big thing I take a lot of pride in so, yeah, definitely hope to do that again this week.

Q. How do you guys mentally and physically, I guess, prepare for what could be a pretty daunting week of possibly three games?

ADDY BROWN: I think for us, it's just take it one game at a time. A lot of teams get here and overlook what's in front

of them. For us, our focus is all in on Princeton right now. Once we get through that game, we can think about what's ahead but right now that's where our mind is and where our energy and everything is going to go. We have to take care of that game first.

AUDI CROOKS: Yeah, I think it definitely helps coming off of also the Big 12 Tournament. We're kind of adapted now to go, go, go and we definitely had some space in between, but that's not something that we're going to show away from, the physicality and the frequency of play.

Q. Caitlin, ESPN. You guys had a week off, right? After the tournament. I want to know, what did that week look like for you guys? What was practice like? How do you balance rest and recovery as well as keeping intensity up for a tournament?

AUDI CROOKS: We had a few days that were completely off. I want to say was it two days maybe? Just off. To kind of rest and reset and we had practice and really just focus on the fundamentals of our team and what we do. Broke down our offense, break down our defense. How can we improve as individuals, as a collective? Where can we be stronger and also how can we build up for these match-ups and for March.

Q. You mentioned this team might fly under a lot of people's radars. So if someone is tuning in for the first time for this tournament, catches you guys on ESPN this week, what is it that you want them to know about the Cyclones and the makeup of this team?

ADDY BROWN: I think, I mean, we just do things Iowa State way, we do things the right way. Try to play the game the right way, do stuff off the court the right way. We work extremely hard, it's a special group of girls we have and we're all super close. I think we're going to come out here and just give it all we have every single game and I hope that people can see that when we play every game we step on the floor.

AUDI CROOKS: Yeah, and also I think we play the game with such an intense passion and love for each other that you can definitely tell when we're playing basketball that we're having fun. We're celebrating each other's successes. We just love this game and we put our heart and soul into it. We put a lot of time into it and so does everybody else. I mean, we just love each other. We're a really tight-knit group and I think that helps us on the floor.

Q. And you guys have played in some really close contests down the stretch this season, including in that tournament. What have you learned from those experiences that you think might help you manage

close games in this tournament?

AUDI CROOKS: I think that we have learned a lot about ourselves and about our makeup, how we react when things get tough. I think for a majority of the time when we're in those close games, we never really fall down. We always get back up and we're still in the fight so it's just finishing that fight and finding come extra gas in the Tank to be able to have those games swing our way, so we totally intend to do that here in March.

ADDY BROWN: We're always going to fight back. We get knocked down, we always get back up. I think for us just kind of limiting any slow starts. We want to come out right away and hit first, not get hit first, so that's going to be our mindset going into these games.

Q. I'll ask a question for me. You guys and Princeton are top 15 in the country in field goal percentage. I know you guys kind of talked about it, alluded to it early but how important are those five to ten minutes or so to kind of force your pace as opposed to theirs? Because it's quite a contrast there.

ADDY BROWN: Yeah, it's definitely different. I'm excited to see how it goes. But just, we're going to stick to us and play our brand of basketball. I think we're going to do that by playing fast and getting up and down the court fast and they're going to have to adjust. We're going to have to adjust to their pace. It's going to be interesting but I think we're just going to do what we usually do and yeah.

AUDI CROOKS: Setting the tone early definitely helps set up our offense and defensive flow so once we're able to get into that flow, I think we're a pretty tough team to beat so we hope to do that early on.

MODERATOR: Any others?

Q. Audi what for you... a lot has been said about this sophomore class that you're part of this year and I'm curious when you hear your name flowing around with a lot of the great sophomores that we can see at this tournament this weekend, right? What does that say about the state of college basketball and what is it like for you to have your name brought up with all this incredible talent that everyone is saying is the future of women's college basketball?

AUDI CROOKS: Yeah, it's a great honor and honestly, I love to see the game grow in any way it can and if I'm part of that, I love it even more. It's just really cool to be among those names and just for women's college basketball to finally be getting a platform and women's basketball as a whole to be put on a bigger pedestal just to have the

platform that many before us probably should have had and to have the viewership that people before us didn't get. Just to even know, like our Iowa State alumni, those women were fantastic and probably 80% less people knew about them because they weren't put on that pedestal so just using it graciously, being grateful for the moment, staying present and appreciating where I am.

Q. And you strike me as just a wee bit competitive.

AUDI CROOKS: A little bit.

Q. Do you have your eye on any of those other members of the class in trying to, you know, maybe make sure that your performance is up there and being regarded either as high as or higher in that case with some of those other members?

AUDI CROOKS: I don't know if I would go quite that far, but just excited to hopefully perform well in front of any opponent that's in front of us, but, yes, playing great competitors such as those in the sophomore class, definitely looking forward to that and it's going to be a lot of fun.

MODERATOR: Got time for one more question? Tommy, you want one?

Q. I was just kind of wondering have you guys ever thought about what things would have been like had you had Kenzie the full year. What type of impact could she have possibly had for you guys?

ADDY BROWN: Yeah, it comes across a couple times. We see her over there working really hard to get back on the court and rehab and stuff and she's a phenomenal player. We're going to be really excited to add her back to our team next season, but I think you kind of just got to, like Audi said, stay in the present and I think that's something that isn't possible for us to have her back right now so we just kind of look at the pieces we have and go from there.

AUDI CROOKS: Yeah, it's super unfortunate and prayers and thoughts of course to her when that happened but she's working really, really hard to get back. All we can do for her is be supportive during her process, but she would also hate us if we were looking back and played the game with any sort of reserve, so just marching on forward and keeping her in mind but also doing what we need to do in the present.

MODERATOR: Okay. Thank you, Audi. Thank you, Addy as well. That will do it for our student-athlete portion of the Iowa State press conference. We'll be joined by Coach

shortly.

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