

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Oregon vs Duke

Saturday, March 22, 2025

Durham, North Carolina, USA

Cameron Indoor Stadium

Duke Blue Devils

Coach Kara Lawson

Jaydn Donovan

Reigan Richardson

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by the Duke Blue Devils. We have with us student-athletes Reigan Richardson along with Jadyn Donovan.

Questions?

Q. I assume you guys watched some Oregon film this morning. What stood out to you on film about them and, I guess, what are your expectations for what they do well and what you have to be aware of?

REIGAN RICHARDSON: Oregon is a great team. They play really well inside and outside, both ends of the floor. The main thing for us to do is to trust the coaches' game plan they have for us.

Q. Reigan, this is going to be your last game in Cameron, really no matter what. Has that set in at all, and just give me your thoughts on the last game in Cameron.

REIGAN RICHARDSON: Really hasn't set in until you just said it. It's definitely bittersweet moment just being able to play my last game here in front of, you know, the fans, my family. Just to be in this environment for the last time is going to be a bit of an emotional, but an excitement because I know whatever it takes, I'm going to leave it all out there on the floor.

Q. Jadyn, I was just curious from your perspective, ya'll and Oregon are both two defensive first teams. I think defensive minded, really emphasized that on the floor. What did you notice about the way Oregon defends and what makes it tough to penetrate that



defense?

JADYN DONOVAN: We kind of had two different defensive styles. They're very defensive focused. We have a game plan to kind of combat that with our offense, and I know they have a big presence in size. We manipulate our offense the way we can to get buckets.

Q. Obviously there were very few problems on defense with the game last night, second fewest points allowed in an NCAA Tournament women's games. Talking to Kara Lawson, she felt the offense didn't start clicking until the fourth quarter. What do you think the shift was to get things rolling by her standards in the fourth quarter?

JADYN DONOVAN: Yeah. I think we were just pushing the tempo a bit more in the fourth quarter. We kind of were just playing with the flow, not really thinking much in transition and I feel like we had a lot of early threes going into the fourth quarter. I think we had back to back to back threes. So just kind of pushing the pace and assisting each other and looking for the open shots.

REIGAN RICHARDSON: We were really locked in on defense. We were playing a little hectic on offensive end, forcing things we shouldn't have. I feel like once we kind of calmed down our offense kept flowing.

Q. Obviously both of you have played against Deja Kelly when she was a Tar Heel. Does your familiarity with her, I guess, help in preparation at all?

REIGAN RICHARDSON: Deja is a phenomenal player on both the offense and defensive end. She's definitely grown since we played her. We're just going to have to, you know, stick to the game plan and do whatever it takes to stop her.

JADYN DONOVAN: I've only played her once, but she's a great player. We have a scheme that we're going to try to execute defensively, but yeah...

Q. Reigan, two years ago, you guys hosted, ended up losing in the second round to Colorado. It's been a



minute since you guys have been able to get out of your pod in Durham. You did last year, obviously, but not here. What do you remember from that, Reigan, and is there any kind of lesson you can take from that?

REIGAN RICHARDSON: During that moment in time I know it's something that I've always remembered just being able to take in that loss here and, you know, just take in those emotions. So I know going into the game on Sunday, I'm just going to try and leave it all out there on the floor. I know even last year, we did whatever it took to win, especially against Ohio State. So we're going to take that kind of mindset and do whatever it takes to win here.

Q. I was just curious for you guys, what is it about this team, whether it's the culture, the coaching, that allows you to just keep your foot on opponents' necks, even when you guys are up 40 points, even more? For example, like last night?

JADYN DONOVAN: I think it's just the standard that the coaches have placed in us. We have practices, you know, we might have a late game the night before or things like that. Every practice we come with the same effort and energy and focus. We treated every game no matter the opponent and that was on display last night.

REIGAN RICHARDSON: It's March. So regardless if you're up by 20, down by 20, anybody can come back at any time. So keeping that energy the whole game is what we need?

Q. Jadyn, we were talking with Coach Kara yesterday and she talked about, you're kind of known for your athletic ability, but she said you're one of the smartest defensive players she's ever coached.

Two part question, what makes you known for your athletic ability? Give me the craziest thing you can do athletically, whether it's hanging on the rim or whatever, and where do you think that defensive IQ comes from for you?

JADYN DONOVAN: I don't know. Maybe like two hand grab on the rim, probably.

Thank you, thank you.

Secondly, you said -- what was the second part?

Q. Defensive IQ.

REIGAN RICHARDSON: It's grown here a lot. My freshman year, I was a hacker. I fouled a lot. Just watching a bunch of film and kind of understanding the schemes, I keep saying schemes, but in practice we

practice schemes a lot, reading defense, their body language and things like that. I feel like it's grown a lot since being here at Duke. But I have to credit the great coaches here, really.

THE MODERATOR: Any other questions?

Q. Question for just both of you guys. Your coach claims to have saw the eighth wonder of the world when Oluchi took that charge in the game last night. First off, have you seen her take a charge before and, two, how you've seen her in a more serious sense grow in the past few months?

REIGAN RICHARDSON: I feel like Oluchi is definitely our energy boost off the bench. When she comes into the game, she's going a thousand miles per hour, high motor and it never ends. When she steps on the floor she gives us all that confidence that we need just going into the game.

I feel like from the charge standpoint, I think she's taken one before, but I think it was unintentional. I think sometimes she's in the right place at the right time.

JADYN DONOVAN: I definitely seen her take a couple charges. That actually inspired me. Maybe I'll take one one day. She's grown a lot. Seeing her from freshman year, she was a great player last year. Now I feel like she's way more confident, very consistent. Every day she gives us the same energy and same boost. As Reigan said, leading us in confidence and energy. So it's been great to watch.

REIGAN RICHARDSON: If we see Jadyn take a charge, it will be a surprise to all of us (laughter).

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much for your time. Good luck tomorrow.

We're now joined by the head coach of the Duke Blue Devils, Kara Lawson. We'll have an opening statement from Coach.

KARA LAWSON: Happy to still be playing. Quick turnaround for both teams with a noon tip on Sunday. Trying to give our players kind of a crash course into Oregon and get us as prepared as possible before the ball goes up.

You know, a lot of things that stand out about them, great experience, fifth year point guard, sixth year two guard, fourth year, fourth year, third year in the starting lineup. So just a lot of games played in their careers.

So we've faced some teams similar to that in terms of the experience level this year, so hopefully we can combat some of that, and certainly the size in the paint gives them a great presence offensively and defensively and great scoring guards, as well. Definitely a team that can cause us a lot of problems to both ends. We'll have to play well, really disciplined and we'll have to give our best.

THE MODERATOR: Questions from the room?

Q. Oregon for the first three-quarters yesterday felt like really sort of imposed (indiscernible) in the game, especially on the defensive end. What about their defense when you watched them on film this morning or late last night?

KARA LAWSON: Well, they have the great size in the paint. So, you know, I can kind of keep her there. So it's hard to get to the rim. With a defensive player like Chay (phonetic), I thought they were really active defensively. They forced, I think it was 18 turnovers a game. So they're active. It's not like they sit back and let you do stuff. They have activity and length and intelligent players. They force you into the shots that they want you to take consistently over the course of a game and they do that over and over and over. They're really smart on the offensive end, as well.

Q. Obviously you've had to prepare for teams with Deja Kelly on them before in the past couple years when she was at Carolina. Has her game evolved at all you think or changed in any way, and what still makes her a tough match-up?

KARA LAWSON: I think she's always been one of the top guards in the country so I don't think it's anything different. Can make big plays, unafraid in the moment. You know, used to being in high pressure situations.

They can probably speak to terms of her evolution more. I haven't watched her all year. Obviously just started watching them last night. But really good player.

Q. What went into the decision to start Toby in the second half against Lehigh and trying to get her going?

KARA LAWSON: Toby and Vanessa, I was trying to just even out minutes. I wish it was something really smart. Fournier picked up two fouls in that first half and Thomas had played 14 of the 20 minutes. Felt comfortable with the margin and I felt was more important to kind of get all of our ten plays in the rotation, stretches of minutes more than a minute-and-a-half, meaning a stretch of minutes where they would get tired. We hadn't played in two

weeks. So I was trying to get then chunk minutes, like four or five minute stretches so they could kind of feel that fatigue and kind of get it out of it.

Mair was at a higher number of minutes, too. I think De Jesus was maybe at like 6:56 after the first half and Toby was like around there, too. So I didn't want her first time getting tired to be the second round. Just trying to even them all out. I think Wood had 24, which was the most of our team last night. Wood wouldn't have been that high, it was just Donovan was in foul trouble in the first and second half, so I went with Wood. Wasn't anything at all really.

We've done that through the year, changed the starting lineup for one reason or another. It's not always performance based. It's sometimes minutes, balance. I thought both V and Toby started the third quarter well for us. So that was good. I thought Thomas was terrific yesterday. If I had played her more minutes, she might have had 20 and 10. I said that to T and Delaney. We've done that before. I said, you didn't do anything wrong. Don't stress about this. I'm just trying to balance your minutes because we might need you the whole time on Sunday.

You don't know what Sunday presents. You want to make sure they've gotten up and down but there's not much fatigue if you're up by that margin and you don't want to extend someone unnecessarily when you're up by 30 to 40.

Q. Delaney, she was one of your double digit scorers yesterday. How have you seen her grow and improve this season?

KARA LAWSON: Delaney is kind of one of the most under appreciated players on our team. The stuff that, she's very consistent. So there's not like a high and a low with her a ton. Some players you will have those extreme highs so when they pop like that you're like holy cow, that's unbelievable. Then when you watch players over the course of the year, they have lows, too. You just remember the high games and you remember unbelievable plays. Thomas is steady. I know actually what I'm going to get from her. She knows our coverages better than anyone, our play book better than anyone. I can play call and change in the middle of the play call something on the fly and Thomas can do it instantaneously.

So there's a lot of things that she brings that most people miss or glance over. And people aren't bad when they miss or glance over. We have a lot to look at because we play so many players. So it's kind of hard to narrow in on each kid's gifts and what each kid brings to the team, but

she brings so much to our team. She's one of our best finishers when you look at her field goal percentage. She's one of our best rebounders when you look at per 40-minute rebounding averages. She's our best screener by far, our best screener. And so a lot of the plays that, you know, Richardson getting open off an action or Jackson or De Jesus or Mair getting downhill off an action, a lot of the times it's a Thomas screen. You know, she doesn't, there's no stat for that, right?

She's really physical and strong. And so in the paint that's come in handy for us. And she's experienced. She's not as experienced, she's a sophomore, but she played in the system last year. So she played in big games last year and she played big in big games, she's always played in big games for us. In her history, she played great even as a freshman. At Stanford, at home against North Carolina, South Carolina last year, she played great against North Carolina at home. She was our lead scorer. She played great against Ohio State. There's many games this year she's played great.

She's just super consistent. She has every detail down. If you ask her any detail in a scouting report, Delaney knows it. She can remember, has great recall and she's a critical piece. Like I said, she's probably one of the more under appreciated kids because her high games aren't like, wow, look at what she's did, but there's no way we're where we are without her. I felt bad sitting her more in the second half because she came out like a lion. So hopefully she has more lion tomorrow for us.

THE MODERATOR: Being from the state of Tennessee, having watch you play and watching Coach Summit navigate March Madness, are there any aspects you experienced playing under Coach Summit that you bring to the approach here at Duke?

KARA LAWSON: I think foundationally, most of what we do comes from Coach Summit. Most of how we built our program is from that. Stylistically, how we do, there are some similarities and differences. Although this team plays defense like Tennessee more than any team I've had here.

This team does play like we played at Tennessee. They have the athleticism and the ability to over well on some possessions throughout the year and so I would say this team is closer. Not saying they are. My teammates would be mad at me if I said that.

Well, they are. I would lock them up. Come on. Come on now. But they're getting closer.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you Coach. Good luck tomorrow.