

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

Saturday, March 22, 2025

Durham, North Carolina, USA

Cameron Indoor Stadium

Oregon Ducks

Coach Kelly Graves

Peyton Scott

Deja Kelly

Media Conference



defensive minded, that's the common theme. Our games in the past four years have always ended in the 40's, low 50's sometimes. Our half time scores are like 15-12. Definitely slower paced. That's been common in her teams. We like to play slower too, more of a half court game. I think it will be a battle back and forth.

Q. Deja, do you expect to here some of the chirping we heard maybe a little last night with some of the Duke fans?

DEKA KELLY: Yeah. For sure. I'm used to it at this point. I'm curious to see what different signs will be in the stands this time. I'm used to it. They'll get a little taste of it too. It's a great environment, really fun to play in. I love playing in environments like this. They do too. We'll feed off of that chirping energy.

Q. Peyton, I know you guys have been here for a few days now. Is there is any challenge in playing a game that what will be 9 a.m. Pacific on Sunday?

PEYTON SCOTT: No. We've done it before with the Big Ten, those early games. It's nothing we haven't done or seen before.

Q. Peyton, is your grandpa willing to set aside the Duke fandom just for this one game tomorrow.

PEYTON SCOTT: I think he packed a Duke shirt but said he was going to set it aside and we're grateful. All Ducks.

Q. Just for both of you guys, what do you take away from last night's game in terms of things you guys did well overall and some maybe points for improvement?

DEKA KELLY: I think we're really locked into the game plan that we had. Our main focus was to play the game at our speed and control the tempo in that way. Overall, I think there were obviously moments and stretches where we got sped up and they sped us up and it led to them getting some points off of our turnovers. Defensively we were really solid, we made them take some tough shots and offensively we got the looks we wanted. Overall, just really proud of how locked in we were and the details of

THE MODERATOR: Joined by the Oregon Ducks. We're with student-athletes Peyton Scott and Deja Kelly.

Questions from the room?

Q. For both of you, just being able to watch Duke last night and then on film, what has stood out about them, obviously one of the better teams in the country this season.

PEYTON SCOTT: Yeah, I think just watching them play before and even last night, they're pretty disciplined, pretty solid on defense, hang their hat on defense. They rebound like crazy, are going to get on the offensive boards. Those are two big keys right now. Just holding them to one shot and make sure we're disciplined on both sides of the ball.

DEKA KELLY: They're a really good team. I'm very familiar with them. They're a solid, disciplined team which makes them one of the best in the country. I think for us it's going to be a really good challenge. We both like defense and I think it will be a very defensive oriented game which we're excited about.

They're a good squad, have some good players and we're going to focus on how we can defend.

Q. Deja, I'm wondering just from facing this team now for what will be the fourth year in a row if there's any traits about Kara's Dukes teams that have really stood out to you.

DEKA KELLY: All the teams I've played have always been so disciplined on both ends of the floor. Just very

our game plan.

Q. Peyton, you guys are now 6-0 in one score games after yesterday. What do you feel like has given this team the confidence to be able to win in these close games and do you guys expect that against Duke tomorrow, a similar situation you were in against Vanderbilt?

PEYTON SCOTT: I think we're able to rely a lot on our experience and leadership and allowing to help grind out those close games. Knowing that a lot of us have had to step up in those moments and lead in different ways. So we really hung our hat on that and just continue to rely on our defense knowing that we do belong and we're able to play against anyone, no matter the conference or team. Making sure we're keying in on that and locking in on our game plan.

Duke is a tough team and we're playing them in their stadium. We are going to bring our best. We know we're capable and need to rely on each other.

Q. Deja, I know you said after a close game this season, you are too old for this. Do you still feel that way after yesterday? Do you have one more close game in you? How much are you looking forward to playing the Blue Devils with this Oregon program?

DEKA KELLY: I don't think the age changes, but my body is feeling great. I don't have any other choice but to be ready for another close game or whatever the game looks like tomorrow.

I'm here for the team and excited to be back here in this area, let alone in this gym, especially with this Oregon squad. We're just a gritty team and play with so much joy. To be able to be with the team like that and bring that back here and look to get another win in this gym, I think that's super exciting and I'm really looking forward to tomorrow.

Q. Obviously you guys have faced higher seeds in this tournament just during the regular season. Is there any team that you already played this year that you feel like can sort of replicate what Duke does or is similar to them in any way?

PEYTON SCOTT: Maybe Michigan State how they get up in pressure and hang their hat on defense. They're a pretty versatile group out of our league.

DEKA KELLY: They have some smaller players play their four. I think it's a pretty similar style of play.

Q. Going back to a similar theme, but Deja you

experienced so many games here. I'm curious if any specific moments playing in this gym stand out. And for Peyton, has Deja shared anything with you about playing in Cameron and facing those Duke fans?

DEKA KELLY: Honestly, winning here. I say that in a very humble way. At UNC, that was the rivalry. To get a win on this floor against your rival was huge and that was a good moment and good feeling for the program. For us, that's the ultimate goal. But yeah, that's my favorite memory. I actually have some with Scott.

PEYTON SCOTT: We'll keep those to ourselves, you know.

Have good memories, good fun with all of it, but at the end of the day, she's with us now and we're going to have her back no matter what poster is out there or what's said. We have to make sure we keep her as present as possible and know that she's ten toes down for Oregon and this isn't about the past, it's about our game tomorrow and being with this squad. It's going to be fun. We're all competitors and know how to lock in when the time comes.

THE MODERATOR: Peyton, Deja, thank you for your time.

Joined by Coach Kelly Graves.

Coach, opening statement and we'll have questions for the room.

KELLY GRAVES: Just go right to the questions.

THE MODERATOR: Okay, questions.

Q. You and Duke lean on your defense, your defensive teams, little bit of different styles. I guess what stands out to you about them, about their defense and how do you see that kind of clashing.

KELLY GRAVES: The first thing you notice when you watch them, and I've seen them on tape a couple times, but you can't always tell the story, you know, from that. When I sat down and watched them last night, first thing I noticed was just how hard they play. Oh, my goodness. They really get after you. You know, defensively, they're just so sound. You know, they're aggressive, they're physical. They guard the ball so well and so hard. You know, different than the style we saw last night where the team was kind of random defensively. They're a good defensive team and make things happen, but they just kind of run and jump and they'll trap randomly. These guys are a lot more disciplined. Their defense is, you can tell it's a team defense. So we've got our work cut out for us.



Q. Kelly, I know that Deja was talking yesterday about a little bit of how much she wanted to face Duke. Does the team kind of feel that way? Did they want to face Duke looking into yesterday's match-up would kind of step up and face a quality opponent like that and just what does it mean to the team to face a program like that in this next round?

KELLY GRAVES: Well, we fear no opponent. We respect everybody we play, but any of our players that say they'd rather play Duke on their home floor or Lehigh on a neutral floor, I mean, come on. You know, we're happy that we're just playing, but, you know, it doesn't matter at this point. We want to play, we want to keep playing. I don't think anybody would say they'd rather play the 2 seed at home. That's just me, so...

Doesn't mean I'm fearful for tomorrow or psyched out or anything like that. It's just the reality. We know what we have ahead of us and it's just going to be -- they're a 2 seed for a reason. I think they're trending up. They could have even gone higher than that. This is a really good team.

Kara does a great job. What she's done here in her short tenure, four of five years now, not sure exactly when she got the job, but she's done a great job. She's changed the culture. They've had great history here, great tradition, but she's, I think, even up to another level and in my opinion in, she's got a chance to winning a national championship at some point here, hopefully just not this season.

Q. Kelly, just got done talking with Fiso and obviously she had a strong game last night, came out with confidence. What can you say about how she's developed and her ability to overcome what she has this season off the court?

KELLY GRAVES: Credit to her. To lose both her dad and her grandpa unexpectedly within a month of each other. You know, it's hard enough to navigate college as a student-athlete, as a freshman, but to have the weight of that on you just shows how resilient she is, how tough she is, how grounded she is. I just had a gut feeling last night she was going to play well. That's why we put her in a little earlier than we would typically do. She's been a great performer in the clutch and in big games and tournament settings. She proved that medal again last night.

I admire her a ton. I love her. That's hard for an older adult to go through, and to do that as an 18-year old, I think is, credit to her. And she had, her team backed her. Her team was with her the whole time, and thank goodness. I think that's one of the beauties of being on a team, being in

a sport. You have a lot of sisters and other family that's there outside your own.

Q. Tomorrow's game is 9 a.m. Pacific. Your players seem to think that playing in the Big Ten this year really prepared you for this type of thing. They don't seem to be really impacted by the time change or anything or the lopsidedness of that. Is that true? Do you think all the travel that you've done and playing teams on the east coast, it doesn't really matter what time you play here?

KELLY GRAVES: Well, those are two smart players you talked to because it shouldn't be an issue. We've certainly not made it an issue as a coaching staff. It's when they tell us to play, so that's when we'll play. When we're at home, obviously it's 9 a.m., we're not completely adjusted to the new time, but again, if you make excuses like that, you're already beaten.

The last time we went through this region, we had an 8 a.m. tip. Well, okay. And we did just fine and we played really well that game. I don't think it's an issue, and in some ways it's good. You just get up and get it done. You don't have to think about it all day. So there's a good side and bad side, but I think we just have veteran guards, the ones you talked to, especially.

Hey, they have to get up early, too. Maybe they stay out later as Dukies. We have a curfew in our hotel. So we know they're going to be in bed at the right time.

Q. Coach, I feel like we've talked about your team's three point shooting basically all year and they got hot at the right moment yesterday. Do you feel like that's something that they can be consistent with in taking it to this next game?

KELLY GRAVES: I sure hope so. I guess the law of averages. Keep playing, at some point you'll have one of those games. We got great looks and our players were confident. I think shooting is one of those things when others are making shots, it makes it seem like, you know, everybody is going to make them. We need that kind of a shooting effort again or we're not going to be able to beat these guys, I don't think.

But we shot well from the field, shot well from the three point line. The one area we didn't was from the free throw line. It darn near cost us, but it was nice to see.

Q. Coach, first of all, two part question, first of all, is there anyone who lives a better life during the NCAA Tournament than your son, Max? And what's this been like for your family having you and Will within a

half hour of each other?

KELLY GRAVES: They were kind of disappointed and pissed off, I know I can't say that, that we went overtime because they wanted to hurry and get up to Raleigh for the Florida game, and we held them back a little bit. But yeah, Max is living his best life.

And I know you did a piece on him in the Final Four season at Gonzaga when we ended in Indianapolis together. But yeah, this is his time of year as a great son and awesome brother to kind of be there to support his family. It's a lot of fun. It's a Graves tradition. We get together. I still remember eight years ago, this is one of our greatest family memories when we were here. They got to step foot in Cameron Indoor, something they've seen as kids growing up and wanting to be here and now we're experiencing it in a different way with the Florida run.

I'm just disappointed they have their game scheduled for the same time as ours and they did last night, so I can't go up and see him myself. But yeah, Max gets his money's worth, too. If you're near him at a game, either plug your ears or hopefully you have, you're hardened because he can get real personal and he is really loud, and I heard he was in rare form last night right across from us. Thank God I couldn't hear.

But yeah. Max is a special kid.

Q. It looks like he was in rare form. So I have to ask, what's the plan then for the family tomorrow? Who's going where?

KELLY GRAVES: Okay. Max learned a lesson. He got married in October and he and his wife committed to be at a wedding tomorrow. So he drove back to Baltimore and he will not be at either game tomorrow, and he learned a lesson. You don't commit to something other than March Madness this time of year because he's going to be at a wedding where I know he doesn't want to be, but that's what he signed up for when he got married. And she wears the pants in that relationship. No, no, she's awesome by the way. Katie is a huge sports fan.

Yeah, unfortunately, my middle son Jack, who had his own run, they lost in their Junior College championship game, undefeated until the last game. So he went back to Baltimore to hang out with him. So it's just going to be Mary and I. That's it.

Q. In regards to the team, Coach, obviously there's not a lot of players that have had this kind of experience with March Madness. I'm just wondering, how much coaching have you kind of done over the last several

weeks or days just kind of getting them prepared for how quick of a turnaround this is, and how ready do you feel like they've adjusted to this moment of how it's one day, get ready, get ready to face another opponent?

KELLY GRAVES: It's funny you say that because last night I was thinking in the Big Ten, we have the two days in between. So even on the road trips, we have two days prep. I had to switch gears and say, oh, my goodness, no, this has got to be done quick. So it's a little bit different, yeah. We've prepped the team best we can, but this is a new experience for them, as well. So we, yeah, unfortunately, we went an extra five minutes, we played our players a little bit longer than they typically are, have several that are hurt anyway.

So we're kind of playing on fumes and guts. I guess those are two nice things to have, but those are the two that we're going to rely on. We had a couple players that didn't play yesterday that typically do in every game and so we're going to rely on them, going to have to go a little bit deeper into our bench, especially in the first half to give our players some rest because I thought, actually, late in the game yesterday, you could tell we were a little bit tired. Some of our shots were short, free throws we didn't convert. I think part of that was just fatigue. So we've got to be wary of that tomorrow.

Q. It sounded like Deja was getting a little bit of heckling being back on enemy's territory, now she's going to be facing against Duke. How much do you feel your team feeds off of enemy crowds and things like that?

KELLY GRAVES: I don't know. I think if your team is paying attention to the crowd one way or another, I don't think you're prepared anyway. I mean, this is Duke. You're famous for tremendous crowds, and I know they had an active student body there last night. I'm hoping they all decide to go up to the men's game and sit this one out, but I don't think that will be the case.

We just go out and do what we do. Deja has played here before. She's probably used to it. Our other players are not going to know much difference. I don't think it will be a factor.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you for your time and good luck tomorrow.

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