

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Four - Richmond vs Nebraska

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Durham, North Carolina, USA

Cameron Indoor Stadium

Richmond Spiders

Aaron Rousell

Media Conference



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AARON ROUSSELL: I think that's the hard part, right? You see some other teams in your league that you know could have this opportunity and could do well with this opportunity.

THE MODERATOR: We're now joined by the Head Coach of the Richmond Spiders. We have with us Aaron Rousell. An opening statement from you, Coach, and then we'll take questions.

AARON ROUSSELL: Obviously a quick turnaround from Sunday night when you get a lifetime memory like that on a Sunday night. Then it's a little bit of a whirlwind. We say 48 hours. I don't think it's even been 48 hours quite yet.

They say in sports, nothing like sports can take you to a higher high or the lowest of lows. Where you are fearing the lowest of lows that night, the high felt pretty good.

Just really happy for our program, administration, the resources that everybody has put behind our program over the last two-plus, really three-plus years. To see that be rewarded I think means a lot for us and for our university. Hopefully it means something for a lot of other mid-majors out there. I know there's not a lot of us that got this opportunity, especially this year.

Very grateful for that. Very grateful for everybody in our program, the ones that have not been here before and the ones that have been here for year number three. Maggie, Rachel have been a big part of this for their careers and part of the build. I don't know what it would have felt like to see them not get a chance to play in this tournament, so very happy that they're here with me.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. You just talked about it a little bit, but I got to imagine it was pretty gratifying. The investment in your program and the way that you scheduled in the nonconference slate to get that at-large bid for the second straight year, what does that I guess say about not only your team, but how good of a league you play

For us, taking the approach that we did with the nonconference schedule, I know everybody sees that Maggie came back and Rachel is here and thinks that we have so much experience, and we do with those three. It's tremendous, but there was a lot of newness to this team.

I think the easier approach and maybe, to be honest with you, the smarter approach in my mind throughout the year would have been to kind of build that, get your wins, focus on the season. Hey, an at-large is so hard anyway, so why are we going to beat our heads against the wall just to get that?

There was we felt a small little window. I think we attacked the nonconference with, hey, man, just in case it doesn't go well, let's give ourselves a chance, give ourselves a chance. In October that was daunting, right? You are, like, whoa, we could bury ourselves, be 3-10, 3-11, still be a good team, and then have to approach this with some inexperienced kids going into the conference season.

We played well enough through some of those games. We had to be taught some tough lessons. Some of those games did not go very well. The first A-10 -- or second A-10 conference game did not go very well at Rhode Island. So we had to learn some of those lessons. Had to learn a lesson against Fairfield.

I think it helped us get in, but I think it's helping us to be the program and be the team that we are right now, no question.

Q. Aaron, for you the way that you popped up during the Selection Sunday show and was able to hug your son really quick and then just sharing that moment with your team, I mean, what did that pop-up contain for you?



AARON ROUSSELL: Yeah, I've gotten plenty of texts and plenty of comments on that. Probably not the normal emotion that I'm probably sharing all the time.

Again, probably wound tight, man. You're just constantly thinking about how badly you want to get in, how badly you want your players to get in. Yes, it's to have an opportunity for them to see some shine like this, right, for Maggie to get the credit she deserves, to kind of get this experience. It just would have been a hard thing, not for our relationship, but it just changes things.

I think as an older coach who has been through this, you know the memories that this creates. You know what it means to these kids. That's why it's not so much for the freshmen and everything. You want this for yourself. I know how much this is going to mean to you. I know the memories, the things you're going to talk about at weddings and reunions and all that sort of thing. You just wanted that so badly for this group that it was a relief.

I feel like it looked like I jumped up pretty quick. I swear I felt like I saw it and heard it. I was, like, wait, was that really it? Then I quickly saw it again. I was, like, maybe I was the first one up. Maybe there was a delayed reaction from the others, too. Maybe I just have some still quick reflexes in my older age right now.

But just, again, like I said, the fear of the lowest of lows and then just the exhilaration of the highest of highs, I really don't remember it, if I'm being honest, but there was some emotion there, no doubt.

Q. When you watch Nebraska -- I assume you've watched plenty of tape over the last 48 hours or whatever -- what kind of stands out about them? I imagine Britt Prince is pretty high on the scouting report?

AARON ROUSSELL: I feel like that was a nice way of saying, you look really tired, Coach. Yeah, I mean, obviously you're trying to watch a lot of film in a short amount of time.

It's one of those things, right, that Georgia Tech was such a good team last year, but they were different than us. That was daunting going into it, because you're, like, oh, I don't know how to guard this. We were different, right?

I think sometimes you go into it being, like, God, let's just find somebody that's different than us, that maybe isn't used to guarding some of our stuff, and maybe we'll still get some bounce from that. You watch Nebraska, and it's, like, oh, that's what we used to look like. That's how we were constructed last year, a little bit this year.

It's a style of play that I really enjoy watching. I watched them a couple of years ago, a little bit deeper dive. I think Amy is a tremendous coach, but you look at the makeup of everybody on that team can shoot, everybody is a high IQ, can move. They're athletic. They push the pace.

It's a really enjoyable style to watch. Maybe not the most enjoyable to prepare for on a short notice, but it's been great to watch them. It's definitely going to be a daunting task for us, but it's probably a program, to be honest with you, I've seen enough to know that I probably want to come back to in the spring and summer and hopefully learn some things as well.

Q. With the structure of your team right now and you have a lot of people that haven't experienced March Madness, like you had last year, how do you relay that and make sure that the moment isn't too big for everybody?

AARON ROUSSELL: Yeah, I don't know if I'm worried about the moment being too big. I think they've put up with me and they've put up with the pressure of the season a lot this year.

They all knew, right? There was some relief Sunday night, no question. You're living in a program at a level that you know one mix-up, one slip-up is probably going to change your season. So I think they've been living on the pressure. It's almost a little bit of relief, and maybe we felt that last year, too. It was just a breath of fresh air, we can just play freely.

I think our last two practices have been some of our best offensive practices that we've had in a long time, so I like the approach that our kids have had. We still have Maggie Doogan and Rachel that have been here for a while. So I think if we can follow those guys, they can follow them, and I'm not worried about our young kids. They have been built for this.

Q. I'll cheat and ask two questions. How did you handle logistically the week of the unknown? Did you give them time off? Did you practice? How did you kind of handle that part of it? Then coming back here, several of your players have played here a couple of years ago. Thoughts on the building that you are going to be playing in?

AARON ROUSSELL: Yeah, I mean, the first part, you're playing for -- hopefully you're playing on Sunday and celebrating, so you plan through Monday. Then you're, like, hey, we're going to have this celebration. We're going to do this. It's spring break. We'll give you a few days.

We'll come back on the weekend.

When you lose on Saturday in the A-10 Championships, ain't nobody want to practice Sunday. We don't want to practice on Monday. So we kind of took the approach of get out of here. Some of them did stay and did some workouts. Some of them kind of gave them the free to go. Then we came back at the end of the week really kind of Thursday. We came back Wednesday night, but really Thursday, practiced.

It's a tough motivation when you don't know who you are playing for, and everybody else is on spring break. It's probably a tough motivation. I felt like we got better, and then really I thought Sunday's practice was really, really strong. I thought yesterday's practice, again, you know who you are prepping for. I expect today to be the same.

You know, getting to practice here at Cameron Indoor, I never thought I was going into this. I was just a fan. Like Maggie said, I was a Duke fan growing up. I never thought I would get to go to Cameron Indoor, and then we played here three years ago. That was a thrill.

I think you mentioned it earlier. Last year in this tournament we played in Westwood, Pauley Pavilion. Then you get to play at Cameron Indoor? That's pretty cool. One, to be a mid-major and get two at-larges back-to-back is incredible. To be able to play in these two venues, that's something you pinch yourself after the fact. I think right now trying to focus on playing well and hopefully continuing on.

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