

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Florida State vs LSU

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Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA

Pete Maravich Assembly Center

Florida State Seminoles Coach Brooke Wyckoff

Media Conference



BROOKE WYCKOFF: I want to see Ta'Niya be Ta'Niya, just be herself. She's such a phenomenal player and can do so many things. Just when she's attacking with pace and just really focused on getting to the basket and shooting 3s with confidence and getting the free-throw line, she's got it under control. I know she's used to these big games.

Really looking to do whatever it takes. That's what she's great at, doing whatever it takes to get her team a win. And she's locked in on the defensive end as well, I know. Just want Ta'Niya to be Ta'Niya.

Q. Two teams that play a very similar brand of basketball, like to score the ball. What do you expect to see from LSU tomorrow night?

BROOKE WYCKOFF: I expect it to be an exciting game, just because of what you just mentioned, that we've got two teams that are loaded with talent, individual talent and play really well together as a team.

On the offensive and defensive end, for both teams, they do exciting things. These are really fun players to watch. So I'm expecting a great game from both teams, as it should be at this point in the tournament.

Q. Florida State beat LSU the last time they played here, in 2019. The attendance for that game was 647. Obviously quite different now. What are you looking forward to this time around?

BROOKE WYCKOFF: Coach Mulkey has done a fantastic job since she's been here, just getting the community and the fans back involved. So it's always fun to play in front of a crowd. Obviously it will be probably somewhat of a hostile environment, but that's what LSU has earned, as a top-four seed, with their 3 seed, being able playing in front of their fans.

We're used to that. We've played in front of a lot of great crowds this season on the road and had some success.

It just makes it exciting. I'm really, really glad for the game and for LSU's program that there's such a great following and excitement.

Q. What do you think you need to see from Ta'Niya and the offense tomorrow in order to come out with the win?

Q. When you look at the amount of points that you and LSU scored last night and the margin of victories in both games, what do you make of that? How do you think that sets the stage for the character of a game that people might watch tomorrow?

BROOKE WYCKOFF: I think people like to see scoring. I mean, it's fun to watch the ball go in the basket and for players to score points in all the different ways that they're able to do.

That's what I said, we've got a lot of individual talent in this game tomorrow, just players that are so dynamic and skilled and able to put the ball in the basket. I think it set the stage really, really well.

You see the scores from yesterday, and so you're excited knowing that there does have to be some defense played tomorrow too. That's going to be a huge key.

LSU is a fantastic defensive team, fantastic rebounding team. And we are really locked in on the defensive end as well. We have to get stops in order to have a chance to win this game so we can get out in transition. I think it just sets the stage for what's going to be a really fun basketball game.

Q. I was talking to Coach Starkey a while ago and was talking about applying for a job with Coach Sue and somebody else got it. That was you. He spoke very highly of you and said obviously it was the right choice; you're the head coach now. Do you have any



memories of that? And how well do you know Coach Starkey?

BROOKE WYCKOFF: I know him pretty well. I've seen him on the road obviously, talked to him many times. Coach Mulkey said it recently -- he deserves to be in the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame. He's just one of the stars in the coaching profession on the women's side for sure and has had such a great history.

I've obviously always looked up to him, who he is as a coach and what he knows. He's just a great person.

So yes, I had nothing to do with any of that. I was just a kid out there that happened to be a former FSU player. I think that's what pushed me over the edge. It certainly wasn't my coaching pedigree that helped me win that job over him.

Everything works out the way it should. He's had a phenomenal career and will I'm sure for many, many years, as long as he wants to.

Q. Both teams are really talented at rebounding. How much do you think that's going to play into a game that is going to have a lot of offense tomorrow?

BROOKE WYCKOFF: It's going to be a huge piece. For us, it's trying to do our very best on the defensive end of the floor against the best offensive rebounding team in the country and the best offensive rebounder in the country tomorrow in Aneesah Morrow. So we have our work cut out for us.

We're going to get a lot of shots up, as you're saying. These are two teams that want to get shots up and score points. So that means probably a lot of rebounds.

It's a huge key for us. And, again, we're not going to be able to get every single defensive rebound. But if we don't, we've just got to keep playing and make shots tough. It's just keep going, keep going, knowing they're a phenomenal offensive rebounding team.

Q. I wanted to ask about your offense. What sets it apart? What has allowed it to become so productive this season?

BROOKE WYCKOFF: I've got to credit our players. We have the talent on this team to score a lot of points, first and foremost. You need that. You need players that are capable.

We want to play with pace and space. We want to be the fastest team in the country, not just score the most points.

Really that comes down to players that are able to take the ball and go get a layup, first and foremost. And then players that can also shoot the 3.

When we're going to attack for a layup and we draw multiple defenders, we have people on the perimeter ready to score. You just need players that can do that, honestly.

The second thing that leads to our ability to score is our defense. We're best when we're in transition offense, and that means we're not taking the ball out of the basket and inbounding it; we're getting stops, we're getting steals, getting rebounds and getting out and running.

Those are the things that we key in on to really try to score that amount of points. But it comes down to the players' talent and their ability to just lock into and buy into our system.

Q. You've talked all season about your team's ability to respond going off two losses in a two-week break. What went into getting that response you were looking for yesterday?

BROOKE WYCKOFF: I think we had a great time to reflect and disconnect a little bit. This is a long season. These athletes -- basketball season is the longest season in college athletics. And it's hard when you're playing in conferences that have so many strong teams and you're playing two conference games a week. You're traveling. They have schoolwork. All the things that pull at the mental, the physical, the emotional.

Being able to have that break between the conference tournament and our game yesterday was huge for us, for our players. And they're just a veteran group that they have a big goal in mind. So being able to refresh and come back focused, ready to make this run, they knew -- it's them. They came back with that focus and ready to respond.

Q. Now that you've gotten the opportunity to scout LSU from their win last night, is there anything that stood out to you?

BROOKE WYCKOFF: Well, that was a great game they played last night. It was fun to watch. But, no, they look really, really good. They look like they're together. They look focused. They were just really keyed in on rebounding and getting great shots. I thought they got really, really good shots inside and outside.

So they looked like a team that's ready to go. So I didn't expect anything less. So we knew that and we know that. We're preparing to see a team like that tomorrow.

Q. Flau'Jae and Ta'Niya have both played against each other in high school previously. What are you expecting to see from both of them tomorrow night? When it comes to matching up, how Ta'Niya will defend her if she will?

BROOKE WYCKOFF: They've had battles over the years. I know they know each other and they go way back. So they're two great competitors. I think they're two of the most highly competitive people in the game, the college game right now.

I'm excited for a great match-up. They're two players that neither are going to back down. But they're just going to play within themselves. I think, that's what you see from kids that are in their third year of college. They understand what this is. They understand who they are as a basketball player. They understand their team and what this is, the NCAA Tournament stage.

I think you're going to see two leaders that are going to do what they need to do to win for their team. So I'm sure we'll see some great one-on-one battles there, yeah, it will be fun.

Q. LSU moved the ball around really well last night and penetrated through the zone. What's your defensive scheme going to be to just try to reduce their impact and keep the ball in one side of the court, really?

BROOKE WYCKOFF: I mean, we've got our work cut out for us. In terms of I think the biggest thing will be our transition defense and then our physicality. They're athletic, they're strong and they did share the ball well. But we've got a couple different game plans that we'll show. You can't do the same thing the whole game, definitely.

But we'll be just ready to protect and give it our best shot. But definitely transition defense and being physical, finishing with a rebound.

Q. Want to get your thoughts on Morrow and the way she plays as an undersized player.

BROOKE WYCKOFF: She's phenomenal. I love watching her. Obviously she's so talented, but you just see the joy that she has in playing. You see the hunger. You see just the passion that she plays with. It's really fun to watch and to see what she's able to do, just rebounding-wise, scoring-wise and doing it for her team and within herself.

Yeah, I've loved watching her career. She's got a great future ahead of her, too. Just really love -- just her passion

really stands out to me.

Q. You have the word "one" written on the practice shirts. How important is it to have a motto like that, just through the long stretch of the season into this postseason?

BROOKE WYCKOFF: I think it's huge. Our players came up with that. That was their idea. They came together to figure out what they wanted our team motto to be this year and what we wanted to see posted all over the place on our shirts, just throughout, to say in the huddles.

"One" for them, it means togetherness, first and foremost. They're a team that's so united and together for each other.

And you can use it for lots of different things -- hashtag one, one play, one game, one possession, one season. It kind of works for a lot of different things. I just love that it came from them and it was about being a great team.

Q. Want to ask about your thoughts on the growth of the game and the opportunities for the athletes now that they didn't have before. LSU has a rapper on their team and all these different things that are happening.

BROOKE WYCKOFF: It's so exciting. As a former player who has been in the shoes of these young women, as a college athlete, it's really fun to see what the attention to the game and women's sports in general and college sports has brought, just the opportunities for these players, these young people that put so much into this.

The level of athlete that they are and how good they are, how talented they are, it comes from working. It comes from putting in the time. And they've been putting in the time for years and years before they've even gotten to college.

The other thing I love about the opportunities they're getting to capitalize on NIL is that it gets the word out about women's basketball and these athletes. So now you're inspiring more young people and more young girls and even young boys to do these things, to achieve whatever they put their mind to. That's what I've loved to see and I'm excited to see it continue to grow.

Q. Does it seem weird that a team with "One" as a motto scores 90 points a game -- that's the first question, if you want to address it. It was kind of a joke. But the other thing is, in terms of sports psychology, you can rationalize anything. You will hear some coaches say I'm glad we were tested and survived the first round. Neither of these teams were, at least not in the fourth quarter, it was wide. What is

good about rolling to a convincing first-round victory before going into maybe a tougher...

BROOKE WYCKOFF: I think it gives you confidence. It's not you don't have to play the day after, but it's a pretty quick turnaround. So when you can win convincing like that, it gives you confidence. Again, we haven't played in two weeks. So to be able to come out, shake the rust off a little bit and then to figure things out, especially in that fourth quarter, going into this next game, I think it's a good feeling.

We're all, yes, we don't want to just be about emotion and feeling, but it does help. We've got to really lock into the details and game plan, but also you want to feel good. You want to feel confident going into the second-round game. So I think that's what it does.

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