

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Second Round - San Diego State vs LSU

Monday, March 24, 2025

Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA

Pete Maravich Assembly Center

## LSU Tigers

## Coach Kim Mulkey

## Shayeann Day-Wilson

## Last-Tear Poa

## Jada Richard

Media Conference

LSU - 101, Florida State - 71

**Q. Poa, you were one of three that were on that national championship team. To have a game like Sa'Myah Smith had tonight, what does it mean to see her success this season especially with what she's been through?**

LAST-TEAR POA: I mean, seeing her grow from then to now, obviously she's been through a lot last year, she went through an ACL. But coming back I know during the summer she worked hard obviously to get her knees back and be ready for the season.

Tonight she performed excellent. She knew her scouting report. She dominated inside the paint. She gave us rebounds, that Coach has been asking for. Obviously she was scoring the ball.

Making the easy layups we've been asking her. So she did amazing.

**Q. That third quarter, what was the messaging that Coach gave you guys in the locker room at halftime to have that third quarter, especially defensively, holding them just to six points?**

LAST-TEAR POA: I think just execution and just really like knowing our scout. Obviously coming to -- what's her name -- No. 0, she obviously is the best scorer in the country. So just to shut her down, I think Shayeann did an amazing job just really the whole third quarter shutting her



down.

SHAYEANN DAY-WILSON: We went into the locker room and we were like, all right -- she had a spectacular first half, so just us defensively just locking in and me just taking it real personal. And just doing my job on defense.

JADA RICHARD: Just to piggyback off what they said we got in the locker room and we were, like, somebody has to take it personal. She scored, I think, outscored the team in the first quarter.

We just got in the locker room as a team and just said somebody has to take it personal. We know we can score, we know we can rebound, but we have to defend.

**Q. What's it mean to get back in the Sweet 16 three years in a row now? And just the way you did it with some high-scoring affairs here recently?**

LAST-TEAR POA: Preparation and execution. Obviously that first year coming in we prepared and obviously executed to the best that we could. So I think those two and discipline is the last one. I feel like ball reversals helped us a lot as well. Just playing within each other.

SHAYEANN DAY-WILSON: Every game is just a step closer to our end goal. So us just really keeping that mindset, that one game at a time. Just not worrying and looking ahead.

JADA RICHARD: Yeah, really just taking it one game at a time. We wanted to focus on, at first, San Diego and then Florida State. We didn't want to look ahead to the UCLAs, people further in the bracket. We just wanted to focus on the opponent in front of us.

**Q. Jada, that second quarter, especially with Flau'Jae and Mikaylah in foul trouble, what was it like for you to step in and with Latson scoring score and you going back and forth?**

JADA RICHARD: My mindset was really to be fearless in whatever way I could impact the game, whether defense, scoring. And when I saw opportunities to score, I just took



it and the ball went in.

Just honestly contributions to just my work ethic. I stay in the gym. Whenever I'm out there, I just try to produce in any way possible.

**Q. Shayeann, season high assists for you all as a team. What was going into that? How were you able to generate that many assists?**

SHAYEANN DAY-WILSON: Moving the ball. Playing as a team. I feel like that's going to get us far.

**Q. The most assists you guys have had all season. What's working so well offensively?**

SHAYEANN DAY-WILSON: I just feel like us just having two weeks to really just come together. It's just knowing where your teammate wants the ball or needs the ball. That's just execution, just executing, who needs the ball at the right times. Just the little stuff. I feel like we're all coming together as a collective.

JADA RICHARD: I think with Flau'Jae and Mikaylah and Aneesah on the court, it opens up the court for literally everybody else. You just have to be really in that moment and ready to hit the open shot because they demand so much attention. People are doubling them and we get wide open. Yeah, you've got to give credit to them.

LAST-TEAR POA: Ball reversals. Obviously the last two games we've seen that every time we reverse the ball, we score. And I think just understanding how each other play.

Like Shay said, we have two weeks to knuckle down on the things that we need to work on, and ball reversals was really one of the main things.

**Q. I think Coach does things for a reason. Having the three of you up here obviously speaks to her confidence in you guys. What did the last games give you as a shot of confidence and your ability to continue this run here in March?**

SHAYEANN DAY-WILSON: I feel like really people don't understand that point guard play is really big especially in March. We have three great players, Nees, Flau'Jae and Mikaylah. But they can't do it all by themselves. Like Flau'Jae was saying, we need all eight.

Just the point guards do the little stuff and control the tempo, flow of the game. I feel like us three, we have a big part of that, and obviously you could see it here.

**Q. You called that timeout in the third and went and**

**grabbed Sa'Myah Smith. She looks like the Sa'Myah Smith that started last year. For her to have a game like this tonight what did you see from her?**

KIM MULKEY: Confidence. Sometimes they don't throw the ball to Sa'Myah. Whether they don't have confidence in her or just Morrow's having a great game or Flau'Jae or Mikaylah.

But everybody was dumping it off to each other. And Sa'Myah was finishing. She altered shots. She rebounded. She deserves that. She has worked extremely hard. She has been challenged extremely hard.

The double-double is great, but if you look at that stat sheet, she has guard numbers, six assists and one turnover. That's huge.

And Morrow, we expect that from her. She had seven assists and two turnovers. In fact, I didn't have enough room to bring them all up here. Those two should have been in here answering questions. But the three in here were primary point guards, and they take a lot of the criticism. But they also need to be rewarded because they have played two outstanding games.

**Q. You talked the other day about how happy you were with the unselfishness. And today at times looked like you were in basketball heaven with some of the passing. Is there a development process to get there? Is there a point maybe recently where you realized this team is really seeing the floor well and coming together?**

KIM MULKEY: We've had games through the year where I saw it, but we haven't done it consistently, because what happens is we have -- our wings are as elite, they're elite. They can come off any on ball screen after any pass. They're so confident in their ability, sometimes they just go up and shoot the ball, not realizing, hey, let's have a little ball reversal. I'll get you another shot.

I think when they see that happening, they realize, this is fun. Scoring is fun. But winning and having everybody score the ball and contribute is just a lot more fun and it takes you a long way.

I said this in the playoffs: Everybody has got to be on the same page. And I feel like two games we've proven we're on the same page. Everybody's got to be healthy.

I felt Flau'Jae might have hurt herself, but what she said happened when I took her out early, she bumped knees. She bumped knees with somebody.

For those two to get in foul trouble and Shay to get in foul trouble and our players on the floor, our bench players to really just keep competing and to go in at halftime up one, that was big for us. That was big for us. That was big for their confidence.

**Q. You hinted at it there, but a lot of people are going to talk about that third quarter, but can you go back to the second quarter and just the minutes that you got when you had to sit Flau'Jae and obviously Mikaylah, what that does for you going forward?**

KIM MULKEY: It brings confidence to those that were on that floor. This game moves quickly. There were many times where I thought, am I fixing to have to play these two with two fouls? And I never had to do that because of what they were doing on the floor -- just stay in the ball game, keep it close. They'll be good and rested.

Jada, especially, freshman there coming in, confident, shooting the ball, defending those older players for Florida State. That was big for us.

**Q. The third quarter, 31-6, what went into that? What especially defensively to hold them to six points after (indiscernible).**

KIM MULKEY: Just made a slight change on guarding Latson. Instead of fighting to get over the screen that they were setting at the top, go under. She makes 3s, we live with it. I don't know that she made a lot.

We just couldn't keep her out of the paint and got in foul trouble because we couldn't keep her in front of us and gave up the right-hand drive in the first half.

So just completely get on her right hand. When she uses the screen, go under it and take your chances that she's going to miss more 3s than she does free throws.

**Q. The job overall defensively outside of Latson, their two wings were something I thought you would all have to contend with. You did a pretty good job with both of them.**

KIM MULKEY: If you like offense, you got watching that game today because you had the No. 3 team in the country scoring, I don't know what we are, sixth or something, so you saw a lot of offense. You just needed to play a little defense, I felt like, to win it.

You're not going for a shutout when you have Latson. But I did think, in the second half, I felt our conditioning was big because Flau'Jae and Mikaylah and Shayeann were rested. They played very little in that first half. So they had

a little more juice toward the end and were able to do things in the second half.

**Q. Earlier Poa mentioned in your message to them at halftime was execution. Could you expand what you said to them in the locker room?**

KIM MULKEY: The first message was to thank the team that was on the floor that kept us in the ball game and to tell them what a good job they had done. That was the first message.

And then the second message was make a few changes on how you're going to guard Latson and the screen at the top, and then just keep telling them things they did good in that first half, things you've got to do better in the second half. And you're in front of me now in the second half, so I'm going to call a lot of quick hitters. And get the ball where I tell you to get it at the right time. I thought we did it. I don't think we had more than 11 turnovers.

That team doesn't turn the ball over a lot, but we did in the first half -- we had some bad turnovers that they capitalized on. In the second half, we didn't do that.

**Q. Did you think Sa'Myah had this game in her? Did you see this coming in the last few weeks, how in practice and the way, the chemistry she had with Morrow?**

KIM MULKEY: No, I can't tell you that I expected this, but when you recruit young people and you keep them healthy and they just keep plugging away, they keep just trying to get better, she's had knee surgery. So she's just trying to get back in the flow -- in fact, she kind of grabbed herself a couple times. I thought maybe -- I think it was cramps in her calves because she didn't say anything like she was injured and the trainer didn't tap me on the shoulder to take her out.

Sa'Myah has -- she's a quick jumper. She can really, really get up and alter your shot. What she can't do right now -- I don't know that we ever expect her to ever do it -- she can't just bang with you. She's not one of those kind of post players. So do your work early. Get deflections, front, move. Be physical. Be tough. That young lady deserves a lot of credit today.

**Q. You guys have been saying it takes everybody, and that's what the message has been this weekend, when you have multiple players putting out full performances, how important is that as the tournament continues?**

KIM MULKEY: I think Flau'Jae said it in the press

conference: We talk about the big 3 at LSU and they deserve every bit of it. But I think they'll quickly tell you, what else can you write about them? Start writing about the other five, the other six, because this weekend they were special. Our bench was special. Our entire team was special. It was electric in there for two days. I can't tell you how important our crowd is, our students. 9:15 at night. You don't get to bed until midnight on a Saturday.

I know the students, that's early for them. But for our season ticket holders, it's not. And then today a lot of people had to get off work early and you've got to fight traffic to get over here. It was electric.

And I talked to them after the game. You don't take Sweet 16s for granted. There are many people that never get there. In fact, in our locker room there's five that have never been there. There are five players on this team that have never been to a Sweet 16. Five players that contribute.

I explained to them, this is why you came here. We don't play to just get to a Sweet 16 at LSU women's basketball anymore. Not that we take it for granted, but our goal every year is just to make a run and see if you can get to another Final Four and see if you can upset somebody you're not supposed to upset.

We weren't talked about at all when we won it two years ago. So let's go see what we can do.

**Q. NC State, (indiscernible) your opponent. What do you recall from that match-up in the Bahamas? Quick turnaround for you as you head out tomorrow.**

KIM MULKEY: I recall that I love Wes, their coach, Moore. Great guard play. Great guard play. We were able to beat them, and Wes was very complimentary of our team after the game.

So you'll see outstanding guard play. I think it will be two well-coached teams. And we're vying to win one more game to get to an Elite Eight.

They beat some good teams in the ACC. So they're probably much better today than they were when we played them, and I hope and think that we're much better.

**Q. Aneesah and Sa'Myah played well off each other. Do you think that chemistry has been growing throughout the season?**

KIM MULKEY: I think all of them are playing well together. I think they're sharing the basketball. They're getting excited when there are extra passes being made and

people are finishing. It's not just the two of them.

But, yes, it helps when those two kind of know each other's tendencies. I thought we delivered passes into the post all night long that were not easy passes but they caught and they finished. That's what you have to do this time of year.

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