

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Jacksonville vs LSU

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Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA

Pete Maravich Assembly Center

Jacksonville Dolphins

Coach Special Jennings

Priscilla Williams

Makiya Miller

Media Conference



get past this spot?

PRISCILLA WILLIAMS: I think, like she said, we come together. We play for the person next to us and our coaches. It's not easy, but they hold us to a standard, and they help us reach the goals we said we wanted to. So yeah.

MAKIYA MILLER: What Priscilla said, and then consistency.

Q. Is there a style to your game that is more consistent than the next, I guess? I asked this of Texas Tech, and they said defense has gotten them here. We haven't seen you all play so give us a feel for kind of what your team does well.

MAKIYA MILLER: I think a big emphasis for us is our transition offense. We like getting the ball up fast, scoring fast before the defense can know what we're doing or setting up a play. That's a good part of it.

Q. You've seen LSU. They love to do the same thing, right?

MAKIYA MILLER: Yeah, they do.

Q. This match-up, do you like that style of play?

MAKIYA MILLER: I love that style of play, getting out fast. It challenges the defense to match up. It's hard to match up when they're running at you full speed and you just shot a shot, good or bad.

Q. Priscilla, I'm assuming that means you have to run the floor a lot?

PRISCILLA WILLIAMS: For sure.

Q. You look like you're built for it. Do you like that style of play?

PRISCILLA WILLIAMS: I do. Very fast, fast-paced. I feel like we get out and go. Pretty much anybody can handle the ball. So if anybody gets a rebound, we all five go. So

THE MODERATOR: Welcome back to the Baton Rouge regional for the women's NCAA Tournament. Pleased to be joined by Jacksonville, two players, Makiya Miller and Priscilla Williams.

Welcome to Baton Rouge. Congratulations. Makiya, to start off, since January 24th, 13-1 for your team. What's been the special sauce that has gotten you here to Baton Rouge?

MAKIYA MILLER: I think we just challenge each other every day to be better in practice. That's a big part of it. Our coaches hold us to a very high standard, and we do everything we can to compete to that standard.

THE MODERATOR: Priscilla, what was it like in the championship game? I was close. To earn it for the second trip in school history to get here. Take us through the championship game and what it means to be tipping off in Baton Rouge tomorrow night.

PRISCILLA WILLIAMS: It was up and down. It was all around. We came together. Like she said, we had a common goal so we came and got it done. Emotions were high. I was definitely crying. But, yeah, so it was pretty surreal. This is a really good experience to be here.

THE MODERATOR: Happy tears in March are always a good thing. Welcome to Baton Rouge.

Questions for the players?

Q. What are you doing well? What's gotten you to this spot and what do you need to continue to do well to



also we're pretty versatile I feel like. So, yeah, it's going to be a fun, fast-paced game.

Q. What do you think about matching up against LSU. Their brand, they call it show time. They've got some personalities, have had some personalities in this game for a couple of years now. It's going to be Flau'jae's last run here. Are you preparing for that crowd and what this place could be?

PRISCILLA WILLIAMS: I think we've been in environments like this before. We played TCU. We've played Texas Tech. We've played a bunch -- Georgia Tech. We've played high major teams before. We're coming into the game as just another game to us. We're not about the names. LSU is a great program, but we're here for a reason so we're going to show what we've got.

Q. One of your teammates is from Zachary, I understand. Tell me about this. Her family cooked for you all?

MAKIYA MILLER: Yeah, it was good. She made us seafood boil. There was a wide variety of seafood there. It was really good.

PRISCILLA WILLIAMS: Like straight, straight, like live crawfish. It was real New Orleans. It felt good. It was like a family atmosphere. The whole team was there. We had a karaoke night. It was good vibes.

THE MODERATOR: How is the nerves level versus the excitement level?

PRISCILLA WILLIAMS: I don't think we're too nervous. I think we're excited. It's a lot of people's first time being here, and it's an experience. So I think kind of being where our feet are. Being present with our feet are and take it day by day.

THE MODERATOR: It's been a decade since the last time the program made it to the tournament. Have you heard from anybody in the program that was with it then when they made the tournament, talking about you making it now?

PRISCILLA WILLIAMS: Our fans support us regardless. So they paved the way. We're happy.

THE MODERATOR: Good to have you in Baton Rouge.

PRISCILLA WILLIAMS: Thank you.

Q. Ky, both of you said your coaches hold you accountable to a high standard. She looks like an

awfully young lady. Does that help? Is there a relatability there that you guys can feel and get the message a little bit better?

MAKIYA MILLER: Yeah. She played at Xavier for a year. She also coached at Wright State, which is I where came from. It helps she played basketball and knows how we feel in tough, pressure moments. We can trust her word.

Q. What is that accountability and standard they want you to play to?

PRISCILLA WILLIAMS: I think it's high. Our conversation, when I got her, she said she can get me where I want to be. So far, she's checked off all boxes so far. We play for a great coach. We have a great coach, a great coaching staff and a coach who really knows the game.

She's been to March Madness four times now. As a coach she's taken us in two and a half years. She's developed a program and turned it around. Knowing you play for somebody who really understands, like Ky said, is good for us. Our coaching staff too all have good experience so we have good people around us.

Q. LSU has a talented team. A lot of famous people on their team. Are any of you Flau'jae Johnson fans of her music?

PRISCILLA WILLIAMS: I have heard some of her music, but I don't listen to it. She does great on and off the court. I've heard nothing but good things about her. I don't know her personally. She's a good basketball player.

MAKIYA MILLER: I think she was in a commercial. I saw her in a commercial rapping. That's pretty much it. I never looked it up or anything.

Q. It's not a distraction?

MAKIYA MILLER: No.

PRISCILLA WILLIAMS: No, it's not a distraction. I think it's really cool she do basketball and hold her music career and balance that. As an athlete, that's really cool. So yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Ladies, again, welcome to Baton Rouge. Congratulations. Good luck tomorrow night.

MAKIYA MILLER: Thank you so much.

PRISCILLA WILLIAMS: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Welcome back to Baton Rouge, the



women's regional for the NCAA Tournament. Pleased to be joined by Special Jennings, head coach of Jacksonville, facing LSU tomorrow night. Welcome to Baton Rouge, Coach.

We enjoyed hearing from your players. Let me ask your thoughts on the path to get here. 13-1 since mid-January. You heard what your players were saying. Let's get your perspective on the road to get here to Baton Rouge.

SPECIAL JENNINGS: They said all the right things. We've worked extremely hard to be in this position. We've played a challenging schedule, which I believe has prepared them for this moment. I'm just proud of how consistent we've been throughout this season, how resilient we've been, and how we've played for each other.

THE MODERATOR: What consistency changed from January 24th? The one loss was a 3-point loss. You've been in a lot of close games. To go 13-1 is impressive on any level. You talk about consistency. What changed from December, January, to the road you've had from that point to here?

SPECIAL JENNINGS: I think some of our pieces. We had some young ladies out that returned. Obviously, Kali Howard goes down, which sucked for us. But from a consistency standpoint on the defensive end, we've been pretty good.

Out of those 13 games, I think we're holding teams to 60-something points. Don't quote me on it. We've been consistent on the defensive end, which has given us a chance in all the games. I've never worried about our offense. We're really good offensively, balanced scoring across the board. So we really tapped in and got buckled down on defense.

THE MODERATOR: It's great to have you here. We'll open it up for questions.

Q. You talked about the defensive pressure. You're going to have a challenge with the leading scoring team in the NCAA. What do you see in the match-up, and how do you go about attacking LSU?

SPECIAL JENNINGS: We have to figure out where our spots will be defensively. Saying it in this way, but offensively, we have to figure out who we can pick on defensively and give ourselves a chance. Defensively, we have a game plan to how we'll try to slow the ball down and just do the things we're really good at. Closing out, guarding the ball one on one.

We'll have to get on the glass tomorrow, obviously.

They're a really good rebounding team. It's no different than any other game you prepare for, right? The stage is bigger, but the game doesn't change. So we're going to come out, compete, and do the things we do that have made us good and gotten us to this point.

Q. This is an achievement to get this far. How do you emphasize or make it a point to say you don't want to be satisfied with just making it to the tournament with your players.

SPECIAL JENNINGS: It's the same thing I've been saying to everyone; players, media. We're not a Cinderella team, right? Like we're not a surprise. We didn't sneak up. This didn't happen by accident.

We've been working hard all season. We've played a tough schedule. We've competed against multiple top 25 teams. So they've put in the work. Not only have we won 13 games, but also have a Player of the Year. I have a Freshman of the Year.

So like you said, Division 1 basketball is hard at every level, and we have that. So we'll show up and compete.

Q. Tell us about the girls, if you don't mind. We haven't seen you guys play. What would be a brand of basketball that you say, look, I'm proud of this about my team.

SPECIAL JENNINGS: We really share that ball. We've had games this year where I've had four to five young ladies in double figures. So that's what I would say. It doesn't happen often. You don't see it often. They're willing passers, and so we score at all three levels, and that gives us a chance to be in any game.

Q. Tell us about your girl from Zachary. How did you find her, and what does it mean to her, all that, if you don't mind.

SPECIAL JENNINGS: She played at Cleveland State, Kali Howard. She came from Cleveland State. I'm originally from Cleveland. One of my good sisters is on staff at Cleveland State. She thought this was a great kid that needed a different environment, right. She thought I would be a great fit for her. I looked at her in the portal, looked at her at her film, and just got on the phone, kind of talked to her, see what she wanted to do, where she's coming from.

The coaching staff didn't say a bad thing about her. She's athletic. She's skilled. I don't know if you've seen Kali, but she's built almost like an action figure. She fit right into what we do here. Run, get out and run, finish. She can dribble. She can knock down a 15-foot jump shot. She

became comfortable at stretching the floor, hitting the 3-ball and finishing around the basket. And then defending. Very good defensively because she's physical.

Q. What does it mean for her to be here in Baton Rouge? And what was it like to go to her house?

SPECIAL JENNINGS: I didn't go to her house. She transferred. So got her off the portal.

Q. I meant for the crawfish.

SPECIAL JENNINGS: Oh, yeah. That was amazing. Kali has been -- she's been great all season. She got injured the second game in conference. Tore her ACL. She's out for the rest of the year. It's beautiful she's still both feet in with the team. It's not been woe is me. She's been involved in everything. She's continued to travel. She's been supportive.

And I thought it was great at her house yesterday. She has a beautiful home. Her family was there. They were excited for us to come. They did a phenomenal job of hosting us. So the girls have been talking about it. Some of our support staff had a chance to go, and I think everyone enjoyed themselves.

Q. Coach Yo had a lot of success at Jacksonville. I wondered if you had talked to her, if she gave you any advice. She always seems to play Kim Mulkey's teams really close.

SPECIAL JENNINGS: That's one of my girls. She's very supportive of me, as I am her. So we talk basketball. Not necessarily about LSU, but we talk basketball on a consistent basis. She may drop a few nuggets in there on what worked. That's what friends are for, right?

Q. How about that transition game? I mean, do you want to get into it? You kind of alluded to slowing the game down. I don't think a lot of people want to get up and down with LSU.

SPECIAL JENNINGS: I don't think a lot of people want to get up and down with Jacksonville either. Look at it. Like I said, we average over 70 points a game, and that gives us a chance to be in any game unless teams are just scoring 100 points every game, and I'm not aware of one that's doing that.

So we score a lot of points. So LSU is going to have to play defense as well.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, you brought Priscilla, ASUN Player of the Year. What was her year like through your

eyes?

SPECIAL JENNINGS: P has been phenomenal. We've had things happen throughout the season with injuries. We've had to adjust where she's playing. She's a guard, and I'm playing her at the 4 position because that's what's needed. She's a unicorn. She's 6'4", can shoot, dribble, pass, score, finish with both hands, knock down a 20. Defensively she's great because she's so long. She's active. She's phenomenal. I'm excited for her future.

THE MODERATOR: Ky is your tournament most outstanding player. Is she playing best basketball of the year?

SPECIAL JENNINGS: Best basketball. That kid is a Swiss Army knife. I need you to play in the post. She'll do it. I need you to knock down shot. She'll do it. I need you to be the ball handler. She'll do it.

My job as a coach is to manipulate the game to our advantage. What helps us have a chance at winning. And so, you know, whatever we ask of these young ladies, they've done, which is why we've had success.

Q. When you talked about Priscilla, reminds me on Angel. Has that changed the game? Mikaylah for them is playing out of position at 4. Do you see the game changing, you can get more out of your guards in a situation like that?

SPECIAL JENNINGS: The game is about adjustments. I didn't deal these cards. These are the ones that were dealt and injuries happen. My job is to make adjustments. We had to adjust to how we play.

I changed our offense in the middle of conference because it wasn't working with multiple forwards out for the season. Mo Brown was injured prior to the season starting. And with Kali going down, it really hurt our depth in that position so we've had to make changes throughout the season.

But that's what great coaches do. I was taught that you don't make excuses. You make adjustments. You give yourself a chance to win the game.

Q. You mentioned injuries a couple times. In this streak that y'all have had, winning 13 of your last 14, have you gotten some players back who are key? Who would those players be, if any?

SPECIAL JENNINGS: Aniah Smith, a freshman, small. We call her Mighty Mouse. Electrifying guard, right. She does some amazing things. And so having her back on both sides, guarding, pick up 94 feet, can score at all three

levels. Having her back was great because of how we play. Transition, getting out. Anybody that gets it can push. Having that extra ball handler on the floor, at any point, I can pay three or four ball handlers, point guards in a sense at a time because every one of them can score.

Bailey Burns went down with a knee injury for a little bit. Mariah Knight was out for a couple weeks. But I'm just excited that we have all of those pieces back to where we can give ourselves a chance to compete.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, pleasure to meet you. Welcome to Baton Rouge. Wish you good luck tomorrow night.

SPECIAL JENNINGS: Thank you so much.

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