

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Kansas State vs Kentucky

Sunday, March 23, 2025

Lexington, Kentucky, USA

Memorial Coliseum

Kentucky Wildcats

Kenny Brooks

Georgia Amoore

Dazia Lawrence

Media Conference

Kansas State - 80, Kentucky - 79 (OT)

THE MODERATOR: Thank you for joining us for the press conference for the Kentucky women's basketball team.

We're joined at the podium by Head Coach Kenny Brooks and students Georgia Amoore and Dazia Lawrence.

We'll begin with an opening statement from our head coach.

KENNY BROOKS: Congratulations to Kansas State. It was a very good basketball game. I hope everybody was entertained. It was really fun to be a part of.

It was two good basketball teams going at it. They made probably one more play than we did. So they're moving on, so congratulations to them.

Hard fought. It's an emotional time for us right now. Obviously these two young ladies beside me represent everything that we stand for. So to see this season come to an end, it's a little disappointing.

Regardless, it was a heck of a year. It was one of the more enjoyable seasons I've ever been a part of, and a large part was because of their leadership.

Q. Walk us through kind of that last possession and kind of what was running through your mind when you got free on the baseline and then saw that first bounce as you kind of watched that last shot go?

GEORGIA AMOORE: Nothing (laughter). No, we ran that play, we've run that play all year. They kind of bit when I



went off the handoff. Usually it is a handoff, so I had to reject it. As soon as I caught it, I realized how open I was, and it's up to fate at that point.

Q. Georgia, first, I want to congratulate you on an amazing season. You opted to take your fifth year of eligibility to come to Lexington. What was your favorite part about wearing blue and white, and what will you remember about this team?

GEORGIA AMOORE: That's deep. I think in the locker room we were kind of saying that it's been such a blessing for both of us to like bring Kentucky back, like obviously Kentucky is a name brand on the men's side.

I told the girls, it's up to you, whatever you decide, but hang around because it's only going to go up from here. It's an attractive style of play. Coach Brooks proves that he's a winner.

So I think it's cool to be the foundation and be the, I don't know, just project the program forward. That's been the greatest thing is seeing the crowds come back game after game. Even Memorial, like I didn't see the old one, but I heard of it, so it's been cool to play in the new one and to kind of just get things rolling back again.

Q. Georgia, I was super impressed through the handshake line at the end of the game how you kept a stiff upper lip and you weren't dragging your demeanor, like many, many players I've seen who had such a misfortune at the end of the game. How could you have such a good demeanor?

GEORGIA AMOORE: I'm not going to let one shot affect five years, like that's pretty much it.

Q. Dazia, this one's for you. Kind of the same with what they asked Georgia. For you coming into Kentucky this year and getting to experience the NCAA Tournament on this stage, what does that mean to you?

DAZIA LAWRENCE: That's why I came here. I knew that I wanted to win and go far in the tournament, and I knew



that coming here we was going to make the tournament.

This year has been so amazing. I was telling my teammates that this year I've had so much fun. It was the most fun I've ever had in my years playing college basketball.

Just how we were strangers months ago, you should have seen our first practice putting in the offense, it was horrible. Now coming back to see what we've grown into in just a short amount of time, and like Georgia said, the locker room, how we get along, how we're always there for each other, it's been so much fun.

I would never take this year for granted. I would never take playing with Georgia Amoore or being coached by Coach Brooks for granted. This year has been so fun, and it's something that I will always cherish, so yeah.

Q. More of a comment than a question, but I just want to thank both of you guys for taking a chance on Kentucky and injecting life into the Kentucky fan base and women's basketball. I think I can say this for all of Big Blue Nation, thank you.

Q. This one's for both of you. We asked you, I think, ahead of the Senior Day game what you two have learned from each other. Now that this chapter has come to a close, I want to ask you that again, knowing all that you guys were able to lead this team to accomplish?

DAZIA LAWRENCE: I'll go. I know for me that G has taught me to, no matter what, again, show up and work hard. G has had an amazing career. I followed her career since I came to college. I've always been a fan. I think, when I first committed, she texted me, and I was like, oh, Georgia is texting me?

I think always just showing up and be the best version of yourself. I don't think I've seen G have a bad day in a practice or in a game or anything like that. She's so mentally strong, and she uplifts us every day. No matter if we just turn the ball over, took a bad shot, or anything like that, she just shows up as the best version of herself no matter what she's going through at home or outside of basketball.

That's the one thing that I will forever take. And always working hard. She didn't get in this position that she's in just because she showed up. She showed up every day and worked her tail off every single day. I will always remember that and just always, because of her, show up and work no matter what.

I know that, if I do that, great things will happen.

GEORGIA AMOORE: That's sweet.

Dazia, I mean, she makes the most out of every single situation she's put in, on the court, off the court, whatever it is. She might not be seen to be the go to, but she makes the clutch plays. She makes the clutch defensive plays. She's intelligent.

People gravitate towards her, and I think that's her nature, but she's not fake. People don't gravitate towards her because she's this lovely person. She is, but she's going to be real with you. She's going to tell you what she needs from you. I think that transparency and honesty and the way that she's able to communicate is really, really impressive.

She's a great leader, and the girls love her. I've never seen someone in one year come into a space and everyone -- no one has a bad thing to say about D. I think it's just so impressive. Her move from Charlotte to here, maybe it was a different role on the court, but she's taken it with stride. She's made the absolute most out of her last year.

She probably dreamed of being in this position, and she's made the most out of it, so it's really inspiring.

Q. You were up five, and they were able to find success on the perimeter both at the end of regulation and the beginning of overtime. Is there anything you could have done a little bit differently to make sure maybe those were tougher looks or things of that nature?

DAZIA LAWRENCE: Obviously we just had a lapse. Just being more aware of who was on the perimeter and things like that. So just being more aware, more locked in in those final possessions.

Q. Georgia, you have a really special relationship with Coach Brooks. Can you just kind of talk about that? I'm sure you will, but will you be staying in touch with him moving forward?

GEORGIA AMOORE: No, actually we're cutting off contact, like as of right now.

(Laughter).

The coolest thing -- and he said it in the locker room, and I already had thoughts about it. It's not the end. Like that's the coolest thing.

But I think nothing really needs to be said. You can look at every single year, you can look at my decision to come here, like this year we probably drained ourselves in some capacity to be successful.

I think every single day we treated it as extra. We weren't supposed to have this, so like make the most out of it. I think it's going to be weird not being coached by him, but it's not like I can't just FaceTime him. I'm sure I'm going to be blowing up his phone again and probably asking for the next couple of sweatshirts that they get next year.

I told the girls I'll be coming out for practice and putting on a red jersey and being annoying. But it's not over. It's not over. That's why I'm not overly upset about it because it's not. It's not like we're parting ways and I'm moving back to Australia and using a landline phone. No, we're still going to be very much connected.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much, ladies.

We'll open it up with questions for the head coach.

Q. Coach, multiple times this season, you've mentioned that in practice and games with Georgia, sometimes you don't know who's coaching who. Looking at this season specifically, what have you learned about her and about yourself through your relationship?

KENNY BROOKS: Her growth, maturity has gone through the roof this year. You get to a point where sometimes you have special players and you kind of know that it's time for them to move on because she was -- she was just so special, she was coaching us some. She was interjecting her thoughts more.

This year probably more so than any, they became conversations. It wasn't a lecture. It wasn't, hey, you do as I say. They became conversations. When they become conversations, you're in a special situation because not every coach gets to have that relationship with a player, and I've been blessed to be able to have that to the point where she just didn't do what I said, she wanted to know why, and it became a point where it's a two-way street, and it's fun.

Some coaches don't ever get it. Sometimes you get it once. But when you have it, you learn to appreciate it. As she mentioned before, this year was very special for our relationship because it grew even more so when you didn't think it could grow.

Q. I know you all were devoting a ton of resources to Ayoka down in the paint, but as they were getting

hotter from the perimeter, how do you determine and kind of gauge whether to give back side help or just kind of leaving that open on the wing?

KENNY BROOKS: Pick your poison. With Ayoka Lee in the lineup, they're a different basketball team. I had to go back and watch film from early January to see how they were and how they were doing things.

Last year we lost an All-American right before the tournament started, and we had to change everything that we were. This year they gained an All-American, and that's going to bode well for them as she continued to get in shape and be able to get in game shape because they're not a 5 seed team, the way they're constructed right now. They're a 2 or a 3.

I don't know who they play -- I think, if USC wins, that's going to be a tough matchup because they would have been a top 10 team if Ayoka had been there the whole season.

So we ran into a situation where they benefited from adding an All-American. So we had to look at it, it was almost like, okay, give up an easy 2 or try to contest a 3 on the perimeter and hope that they missed. In the beginning they did, and we were able to build a little bit of momentum.

Then Poindexter, give her credit, she knocked down some very tough shots. We had a couple of situations where we had miscommunication and she got free and we didn't contest her shot, but you give her credit, she stepped up and knocked them down. I think she made eight of them.

Q. I know the first season didn't end the way you wanted to, but what do you think about your first overall season here in Lexington at Kentucky?

KENNY BROOKS: The season is going to end the way that somebody wants it for one program in the country. Whether it's today, whether it's next week, whether it's yesterday, whatever, you're going to have this thing. I think, in my maturity as a coach, you take the emotion out of it.

You look at the facts, and the facts are I don't know what people expected us to do this year, but we always believed in ourselves. Even though we had adversity, we stepped up, and the kids reinvented themselves, but they always believe in themselves.

The first year was I wasn't even a success. We were 23 and, I think, 8. We were one floater away from going to the Sweet 16. But more importantly, we built a foundation.

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We built a foundation. Big Blue Nation was terrific tonight. They were loud. They got to witness a great basketball game.

I think we're going to build off of that. It's been a terrific year. I love Lexington. I love what Big Blue Nation is willing to put into or pour into women's sports. So I think it's something for us to be excited about, and overall I think it was a success. It was a lot of fun.

Q. How big of an impact has this fan base and the culture here in Lexington made on you in your first season?

KENNY BROOKS: That's why I came here. Obviously when you make a major move like I did, you have to have reasons. Part of the reason was I felt like this was a sleeping giant. When you have the Kentucky brand behind you and you can bring in good players who are going to play a really good style of basketball, it's just going to energize the fan base.

I haven't been disappointed. I think Kentucky fans are very knowledgeable. They want to win, but they also want you to represent the university, the brand in a very positive way, and I think that we've done that.

The future is bright. We had a very good first year. I don't know when you guys hired me, but if you think about one year ago today and you say, okay, one year from today, you're going to be sitting there and you're a floater away from going to the Sweet 16, pretty remarkable.

Once this thing leaves and I sit down and really reflect on it -- I told the kids, this is one of the most enjoyable seasons that I've ever had in my 24 years of coaching because of the way that they came together.

Q. Coach, you mentioned all of the changes that came with taking this job. Now that the season has come to a close, will you speak to the role that your family played throughout this process?

KENNY BROOKS: Man, you just touched a nerve right there. I couldn't do it without them. The way that they support -- and it was a big reason why I came here with the administration and their support of me with my family by my side. That's the only way I could have done it.

Obviously it's well documented what my wife has gone through, what we've gone through with my wife, and we're a village. I can't -- she's the biggest fan that I have. My daughters are the biggest fans that I have.

This is an opportunity for me to be able to give some of

that time back that I missed when I was a young coach. I felt like I was so busy making a life, I wasn't living a life. And I get an opportunity now to just get bonus time.

They're so positive, just such a positive influence on my program. Gabby played four games, but she's the life of the party in the locker room. She helps humanize me. The girls would go to her and say, well, is he mad? And she can interpret all that. She can tell them what's going on. That's really what helped our locker room, other than Georgia knowing me.

Kendyl, Kendyl is a big supporter. They're basketball fans, and they have basketball minds, and they're there for the kids.

You can't forget Chloe. Chloe is in France. Chloe stays up -- I don't know what time it is now, but she watches every one of our games. She calls me, and she'll ask me, she'll preface it and say this is a coaching question, or this is a dad question. She'll say, why did you do this? Why did you do that?

But it's just the support. I couldn't do it without them, and I wouldn't want to do it without them because it gives us the opportunity to make this program a family.

So many people will look at it and say, they'll try to make the narrative that you can't intersect family and business. I learned from Vic Schaefer that you can do it. You can do it. You have to do it the proper way, but my family, they do a really good job and I couldn't do it without them.

That's why I'm here because they gave me the opportunity to inject family into a program, and that's the way that we'll operate.

Q. Down the stretch, it seemed like it was haymaker after haymaker --

KENNY BROOKS: It was.

Q. -- in the game. At the end of the game there, the last 20 seconds or so, it seemed like you guys had great effort, and several of them just laid on the rim. Just kind of walk me through that.

KENNY BROOKS: We had opportunities throughout the whole basketball game, and I think everybody will try to focus on the floater that Georgia missed at the end. Georgia had a 3 towards the end, Amelia Hassett had a wide open 3. We had opportunities.

We're going to leave, we know we went down fighting. We had the opportunities that we wanted. Yes, we wish we

could have stepped up and knocked them down, but it wasn't for lack of effort.

Some of the things that happened, you give them credit. We had a lead, and they had to make shots, and they did, and they made those big shots. We came back down, and we were countering. It was just a terrific basketball game. I think a lot of people will be able to enjoy it. There had to be a winner, there had to be a loser.

I think that's what makes March so special. But we had our opportunities. We know that. We didn't fumble it away. We didn't kick it away. We didn't make a bad decision. We had the opportunities. They stepped up and made theirs. We had the opportunity. We just didn't make ours.

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