

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Rhode Island vs Alabama

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KFC YUM! Center

Alabama Crimson Tide

Kristy Curry

Karly Weathers

Jessica Timmons

Media Conference



players that are able to get to the midrange and to the rim, so also stop them from that and stop them from getting to the free-throw line.

But just playing our game, playing fast-paced, getting open threes, running in transition, getting rebounds. I think if we play the way we have to play and then play very good defense, this will be a game that we'll be able to come out with at the end.

KARLY WEATHERS: Yeah, they win a lot, too. We're playing against girls that know how to win ball games. This time of year, clearly yesterday with the men's tournament, you see that you cannot overlook nobody. So it's the same situation for us.

We've won a lot of ball games. They've won a lot of ball games. We both know how to win. So who is going to do more tomorrow? I think that they're a really great team. They're very balanced. They're a team that doesn't beat themselves. They take care of the little things. So we have to be the team tomorrow that takes care of more little things.

As Coach Curry always says, we have to make our runs just a little bit longer than theirs tomorrow.

Q. What have practices looked like this week? What are a couple of the things that you're working on going into playing against Rhode Island?

KARLY WEATHERS: They've been very energetic. I think that one point of emphasis that we've had this week is over-communicate. You can never communicate too much. I feel like we've had, like I said, a lot of energy in our practice. Our gyms have been loud.

But our coaches, the expectation has been the same. All year long we've taught principles, we've taught standards. Just when you make it to this tournament, you don't change what you do. You trust the preparation that you put in all season long. I think that our coaches have done a great job of just staying consistent and putting us in situations that are very game-like.

THE MODERATOR: Welcome Alabama to Louisville and the NCAA Tournament. We'll open it up to questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Karly, this team this year obviously looks a lot different than the team last year did, right? Just what's impressed you the most about the way you guys have been able to come together and kind of exceed expectations with the newcomers that have come in?

KARLY WEATHERS: Yeah, I think it was part of your question. The way that we've just come together has been incredible. We have a bunch of different pieces. We have a different style of play, I would say, because we have so many new pieces.

What's impressed me the most is on any given night any girl steps up. So that's what I'm looking forward to throughout this March Madness is what girls are going to step up tonight. That's been a joy to be a part of this year, because we have so much confidence in one another that we don't care who gets the job done, just as long as the job gets done. That has been so fun to be a part of with this year's team.

Q. Rhode Island is obviously a really talented team. What have you kind of learned as you've started to look into them? What do you need to do to get past them in the first round here?

JESSICA TIMMONS: I believe they average 53.8 points per game, so just knowing that each possession matters for them. If we hone in on our detail, our scout, with their players, they have a really good guard, have really good



JESSICA TIMMONS: Yeah, basically what Karly said. Our practices, there's been a lot of emphasis on communication and detail. You know, playing in March is basically one possession. Honing in our detail, you know, doing what we do best, but I think one thing that we emphasize is having bodies in the paint, touching somebody, making sure we box out, rebound, and kind of getting the shot I want.

Our coaches have been doing really good on our scout. Coach Kelly, he did our scout for Rhode Island. He just made a very big emphasis on the kind of team we're playing and just trying to make them as uncomfortable as a team that doesn't turn over the ball as well.

Q. Not directly related to tomorrow's game, but do either of you have a favorite March Madness memory from growing up?

KARLY WEATHERS: Okay, I do for sure. Do y'all remember, I think UConn was, like, 112-0, and I was at the game that Morgan William hit the shot. I was, like, right behind where she hit the shot.

At the time I'm going to be honest, I grew up loving Breanna Stewart, so I was a UConn fan. So when she hit that shot, it upset me a little bit, but to be so close to a moment like that, I will never forget that.

JESSICA TIMMONS: Me, I'm a kid from Charlotte, North Carolina. So on the men's side it's always been Duke versus Carolina. On the women's side I think Arike Ogunbowale had I believe two games where she hit two buzzer beaters back-to-back. I think that was probably my favorite moment.

Also, when Mississippi State played some team. I think it was UConn. One of the players had it midrange to beat UConn for the first time, so...

Q. Now that you've watched Rhode Island, do they remind you of any team that you've played this year, their style? How did that team that reminded you of, how did you do in that game? What did they do that might be problematic for you all?

JESSICA TIMMONS: I believe there are a lot of teams in the SEC that's kind of prepared us for a team like Rhode Island. I can say from the style of players, definitely Auburn. They're very athletic. They're able to get to the midrange and able to get to the basket.

We didn't come up with that win against Auburn, but I think that's a learning lesson to be able to win against Rhode Island tomorrow.

But, also, I think LSU, the way they get out and run and get to the rim. I think those are some things, but every team in the SEC has kind of prepared us for a team like Rhode Island.

KARLY WEATHERS: Yeah, just piggybacking off of what Jess said. I think Auburn was a great example of the way that they're going to play, the way that they're going to play defensively, the types of things they're going to look for offensively.

Like she said, we did not come out with a win in that game, but I also don't think that we played as ourselves. I don't think we played as good as we could have. That's also in the back of our head.

Yeah, we lost that game, but what did we not do well to lead to that outcome? So I think that we have a little bit of kind of revenge on our mind. Not necessarily that we're playing Auburn, but we're playing a team that plays a similar style. We did not play well, so how can we play well tomorrow?

THE MODERATOR: Appreciate your time today. Coach, start us off with an opening remark about being here Louisville for the NCAA Tournament. Coach.

KRISTY CURRY: Just excited to make another appearance, I guess, five out of the last six years. Would have been six out of seven if COVID hadn't come about, but very proud of the culture and the standard that we have established to be here this time of year.

We're playing a great Rhode Island team. 28 wins, conference, regular season, tournament title. They're just very, very well-coached. So we're excited for the challenge and the opportunity.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Just considering all that you graduated last season, how impressed are you that the standard has kind of stayed the same and you're back here again?

KRISTY CURRY: You know, I think that a lot of that credit goes to the young women in that locker room. Jess Timmons and Karly Weathers have been unbelievable leaders. I always say culture doesn't graduate. They certainly have not let it graduate.

I think we've done a really good job of blending eight returnees and seven new faces. We've had some young players that have developed, and just really proud of everyone in there. I think that in this day and time that you

just -- I'm not sure reload is a good word, but you regroup and stay at it. You just go back to work. That's what this group did come June.

Q. Karly was just in here, and she's someone who has been there for four years and has improved kind of gradually every year. What's impressed you most or what's been the most enjoyable part of getting to coach her and seeing that?

KRISTY CURRY: I'm not sure I have the words to explain what kind of student-athlete she is. She's the epitome of what every little girl should want to grow up and be like as far as a student and as far as an athlete and the work that she's put in and the belief in the front of her chest has always been more important to her than what she's about.

She's got a 3.99 in nursing. She'll graduate in May in four years. She works 12-hour shifts on our day off. She's an extraordinary young lady. She will be missed, because she's just incredibly special as a person, a player, and everything that you should be about.

Q. Without giving away your game plan, what are some of the keys to the game for you tomorrow?

KRISTY CURRY: Yeah, I think it's really, really important that we understand defensively. They do an amazing job of running their set plays. They do a lot of split action. So I think discipline on defense from our close-outs to every aspect of our communication will be critical to our success.

They love to set the pace, and they do a really good job of shrinking games in possession. So we're going to have to do a really nice job of playing our style of play, but to do that, you have to get stops. I think it's going to be really important.

They're just so well-coached, and they're very disciplined. They don't beat themselves. They don't turn the ball over. So it will be a great test for us.

Q. When your players were in here, they kind of compared Rhode Island's style of play to Auburn, which you weren't able to get it done with them. They said they were kind of treating it as a revenge game in a sense. Obviously not the same team, but that style of play. What do you kind of think of when you hear that comparison? Do you agree? What are your kind of thoughts on that?

KRISTY CURRY: Well, I think they probably heard that comparison from somebody else. You know, I think the scout coach. But I also think, you know, that game we didn't have Essence Cody. That's a big deal to us. We

have to have her. That hurt us that game.

Certainly, similar as far as their discipline and shrinking possessions in that new system at Auburn, I think that's the comparison we try to use. I think it's great to have them recognize what we need to do better when you are playing a team that is that style. So we did use it as an example and a role model and so how we need to be different.

Q. Just the newcomers, obviously Ace and some people who maybe transferred in, what have you seen from them so far? I know you haven't practiced yet, I don't think, but what have you seen from them so far in this trip?

KRISTY CURRY: I know that everybody there is excited for Ace to have this experience. I've been asked that a couple of times lately. So what do you think your new faces are going to do? Is there going to be nerves or any of this? Ace has always been on a big stage in the summer and with her high school. I mean, this is why you come to Alabama is to play in March.

We've got our returning five, or our five starters, right now have played in an NCAA Tournament, so there's no better example of how to handle this time of year than how they've gone about it. So it's a great opportunity to learn and follow those around you.

Ace is going to have to have a big tournament for us to be successful. When we've been at our best, you know, Ace has really been able to impact the stat sheet with her minutes. Excited for Ace. I know she's pretty fired up about playing in the NCAA Tournament.

Q. What did you try to work on between the end of the SEC tournament and coming into the NCAA Tournament? Before you knew your opponent and then since then.

KRISTY CURRY: I think it's an interesting break. Then having done this 14 times now, I think we've tried to draw from what's worked, what hasn't worked, how experienced is your team, how inexperienced is your team. Then based off how many days we're at the SEC Tournament and how many days we aren't.

I think it's just been we've tried to maintain our pace and understand the urgency, but yet, we've needed to rest. We've had some injuries and some bumps and bruises, so I feel like we've done a really good job of finding a happy medium. I guess we're going to see tomorrow, but you know, I feel like this team and the pace that we were on a year ago, some of the things we did, some of the things after it I wish I hadn't.

So we've just tried to draw from all 14 years and try to do the best that we could to help prepare them and put them in a position to be ready to go from the tip.

Q. From the fans' perspective, what are the matchups that we might see tomorrow that might be fun to watch and challenging and exciting?

KRISTY CURRY: I just think it will be an interesting match-up at the five spot. You know, you've got some size. They've got a big 6'5" player that's good, and Essence has faced size all year and got a little size herself. Then Naomi comes in and brings size.

I think it will be an interesting game who can win the paint points, because I think both teams have really good perimeter players. So I think maybe that's the X factor a little bit that we feel like is going to have to be something that we're going to have to have us a lot of success in the paint.

On the offensive glass, getting buckets in the paint. As much as guards make the world go around this time of year, I still think the ball has to go inside. I think paint points win games. So we've got to have a presence from our post.

I'm excited to see Essence and Naomi together fully healthy. Knock on wood, everything is great right now. So we would love to have them together, and I think it's an important time of year for that.

Q. Karly said that this was a special culture or a team gelling. She thought it was special from her four years. What do you think the factors are that coming together that she feels that they're so close and so communicate with each other and that kind of thing?

KRISTY CURRY: I honestly can't take any credit. The best locker rooms that I've learned are player-led locker rooms, and she and Jess deserve so much credit. They had some really good leaders with Sarah Ashlee Barker Aaliyah Nye to follow. I think, again, culture doesn't graduate.

So Karly and Jess have taken that responsibility and have done as good a job as I've ever seen. We talk about grit every single day, love, and gratitude, and that's what we build our culture on. They've done a really good job of continuing it.

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