

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Four - Holy Cross vs UT Martin

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Iowa City, Iowa, USA

Carver-Hawkeye Arena

UT Martin Skyhawks

Kevin McMillan

Kenley McCarn

Anaya Brown

Media Conference



KENLEY McCARN: It's been an experience. It's been pretty cool. We are freshmen and sophomores, so we didn't really know what we were getting ourselves into. But to get to go through all this and it's just a really good experience. Lots of fun.

Q. Anaya, your team has fought through injuries this year, how has that been for you personally or your whole team kind of rallying together?

ANAYA BROWN: The injuries were very disheartening, but overall we overcame them and we just wanted to fight through.

Q. Kenley, we couldn't help but notice your walking boot. Is that preventative or is that something that you maybe hurt in the conference tournament, and are just kind of working through and will you be able to play then tomorrow?

KENLEY McCARN: Yes, I'll absolutely be playing. We probably think I'm going to have a stress fracture, but we just went ahead and started wearing the boot so that it doesn't get worse before we play. But I will be taking it off and playing.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you. We'll have coach in here in a little bit.

(Pause.)

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement from coach and then take some questions.

KEVIN McMILLAN: Opening comments. Well, it's been awhile since we've been here. It kind of wasn't expected, if you look back at November for our squad. They have figured out a way to compete and learned how to win, and had to deal with some issues all year long, like every team does. We've had our share, but everybody's got adversity to fight through. Proud that these kids are still playing.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions.

Q. I wanted to ask you about the resiliency of your

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Kenley, could you talk about how the Ohio Valley Conference helped prepare you on this journey and what does it mean to be able to play in the NCAA tournament?

KENLEY McCARN: I think we have pretty good competition in our conference. It's very competitive. So, to have to battle every single game and we constantly get better every single game definitely helps us when we get to this level.

ANAYA BROWN: Just going out and playing day by day and just one team at a time, it will help us prepare for this moment.

Q. Going into the matchup tomorrow, what do you see on film with Holy Cross, what do you expect out of the game, any areas of focus that you guys have going into tomorrow internally for your team?

KENLEY McCARN: I think it's going to be a battle the whole game. They can shoot, they have got bigs. I feel like we match up pretty well though, so we're going to get after it on defense and hopefully that flows into offense, but we just got to communicate really well and know what we're doing.

Q. Kenley, your team is relatively young team, you've been in the post-season, but not the NCAA. How has it been for your team since Selection Sunday?



team. I believe you started 0-6 early in the year and then to come back and fight back and get to this point, what does it say about your team, how they came together and the leadership?

KEVIN McMILLAN: Well, there's no, we really don't play seniors and juniors, so the leadership has had to come from freshmen and sophomores. I think that's one of the reasons -- early on, even though we weren't winning, we were doing stuff in games that I was extremely impressed with. We weren't getting killed on the glass against a Marquette that was ranked the top 25. We took Vanderbilt down to the last second, had a chance to win. We just, being as young as we were, we didn't know how to win. But then the injury bug hit us and we lost Shae Littleford, we lost Morgan Borgstadt, we lost Ally Collett. We had already lost Sydnee Boykin, and then we lost Nora Clark at the end of the year. So I think what this team has learned how to do is re-invent itself. Each time it's re-invented itself it's gotten a little bit better and a little bit better. The thing that I said all year long is that they find a way, then you just kind of fill in the blank. They will find a way to compete on the glass. They will find a way to rebound. They will find a way to win. I think that that's a rare thing these days. When you find kids that just figure out ways, they don't have to be talented, they just figure out ways, it's a great quality that we have definitely had to tap into all season long.

Q. You mentioned it's been awhile since you've been here, but you have a lot of coaching experience in the NCAA tournament. What messages did you share with your team about competing in the NCAA tournament, being here in the moment, any things like that that you shared with this young squad?

KEVIN McMILLAN: Well, as you get older you want your kids to enjoy the moments, I guess you would say, in life that don't come around all the time. I've been watching the March Madness stuff and there's so many good teams, good coaches, good players, that are either in the NCAA tournament for the first time or they haven't been in 10 years or they're not here. So I want these kids to enjoy it. I do think that they're young enough that they don't really know what they're doing, and I'm not sure if that's a good thing or a bad thing. I think we'll figure that out tomorrow. It's kind of, we weren't really supposed to do it this quickly, and they have done it, and I'm hoping that they will enjoy it, but take it as a springboard to maybe get hungry and try to do things more often.

Q. I wanted to ask you about Kenley and her impact, not only to help bring you to this point, but her toughness. We saw she's got potentially a stress fracture she's trying to work through, and to do it at a

high level as one of the best, if not the best player in the Ohio Valley Conference?

KEVIN McMILLAN: Well, she's got the beginnings of a stress fracture. She's got an MRI set up for her shoulder as soon as the season's over. She's got an MRI set up for her knee as soon as the season's over. We moved her to point guard back when we were 0-6, and I really wish you hadn't reminded me of 0-6, we try to block that part of the year out, but we moved her to point guard, and she's not a point guard. But when we moved her there we started figuring out how to win ball games. You're talking about a kid that won four state championships in high school, was MVP three times. She's just a winner. You don't count that kid out in any setting. I think that the kids in the tournament kind of looked at her and she put it on another level and they all just said, Oh, well, yeah, let's do it. It's, again, one of those rare qualities that you find, and especially in somebody as young as she is, that she's able to galvanize the people around her and make them raise their game. It was fun to watch. I sat over and shut my mouth and let 'em do their thing, because they were following her.

Q. You mentioned the start, the injuries, everything that goes with that, and having the young team that's just kind of enjoying the moment. As you reflect on it, how difficult was the year with everything, and how sweet is the moment winning the tournament and then getting to this point, given everything that's happened?

KEVIN McMILLAN: Well, I think the most difficult -- it's been hard, let's be honest. It's been really hard. The most difficult thing for me, again, as I got older, is when you look out there and you're putting these young kids in positions that they're not accustomed to, and then you're asking 'em to play 38, 39, 40 minutes a game, and you see the toll on their body that it takes every single day. It's hard on me to put them out there and ask them to do that, but when things happen and circumstances are what they are, you do what you have to do. I didn't, we didn't go into this season thinking we would have four kids that averaged 38 plus minutes. We didn't think we would be getting, what, 98 percent of our scoring from freshmen and sophomores. We didn't plan on all that stuff, it just happened. So, looking back, again, as coaches, we don't ever really get to enjoy what we go through. You just don't. That's probably the worst part of our profession. I hope these kids have enjoyed it. I hope that our fan base has enjoyed getting to know these kids. But for me personally, it's been a hard, hard year watching these kids struggle, watching 'em hurt, but then seeing them reap the benefits of their work, it's extremely enjoyable.

Q. The opposite of your younger team, Holy Cross plays a lot of seniors. They were in the tournament last year. In a quick turnaround, how do you see the matchup and what your team has to do in the first game?

KEVIN McMILLAN: Well, ironically, we, if you listened to kind of what I was talking about, we don't have a point guard, everybody's out of position. So we've actually gotten pretty decent at playing different styles, turned around things quickly because we're not really very good at one particular thing, because we're not in what we're natural at. So they are way more experienced, which is a challenge, and the problem is the offensive and defensive scheme that they have is extremely hard to prepare for, especially in a quick turnaround. I think our kids have had to do that and have done it against some teams in our league. Again, they could be stary eyed. We've been down 17-3 in games and come back and figured out ways to compete. I don't know. I think that Holy Cross presents some problems for us that these kids hopefully have seen on film and can figure out -- what I'm hoping that they will do is find some team that we've played that they can connect to. Actually, the team that we likened them to was the team we played in the first game of the season, which was Marquette and some of their players. But I'm hoping that that will click in their minds and that they can have some kind of reference point, which might help 'em.

THE MODERATOR: All right, thank you, coach, thanks for joining us and good luck tomorrow.

KEVIN McMILLAN: Thank you.

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