

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Princeton vs West Virginia

Saturday, March 23, 2024

Iowa City, Iowa, USA

Carver-Hawkeye Arena

West Virginia Mountaineers

Mark Kellogg

Jordan Harrison

JJ Quinerly

Media Conference

West Virginia 63, Princeton 53

MARK KELLOGG: Yeah, thank you. Proud of our group. Proud of the effort, especially on the defensive end. I really thought coming in it could look a little bit something like that just based on Princeton and the way they defend. I thought they were maybe underevaluated or underappreciated for how good they are on the defensive end. And we talked a lot about, or people did, too, and we read quite a bit about Jen and some of the stuff they do offensively.

But I thought we had a chance to especially defense them in we were dialed in and locked in. A little out of sorts early but I thought we settled in quickly after that and played and competed. I want to say they got up nine if I'm not mistaken in that second quarter. And I thought our run to cut it to two, Jordan hit a big three going in at the half to give us momentum I thought was huge for us, and so we just hung around enough in the first half until we finally looked like ourselves in the third quarter and that was us at our best. We couldn't get the pace going. It was too slow. Couldn't get them turned over.

So finally in that third quarter, we played with a little bit of pace, and let some defense lead to some offense and that's us really at our best.

Again we were not great tonight but we were good enough. Obviously the free throws was an issue and the rebounding. So we've got to get that fixed for sure. But again, proud of them. Thought we gutted it out, especially when some things were not great offensively for us.



I thought JJ was special again, as she has been all year. I hope people across the country are starting to realize how talented she is. We have a great backcourt. They are dynamite for us, and I thought Kylee had some really good minutes especially in the third quarter for us and the rest of the kids just battled third way through. Happy to advance and congratulations to Princeton, a fantastic team.

Q. What happened in the second half, and how much did your defense change the game especially in the third quarter?

JORDAN HARRISON: We knew we had 20 minutes left to give it our all or go home. So we just went back to what we've been doing all season. We finally settled in a little bit, got deflections, slowed them down, started playing in transition like we always do and how we have been doing all year. We fed off that momentum and all that energy and we just kept going the rest of the game.

Q. What about Princeton defensively? It was such a low-scoring bout in the first half. What about them defensively kept it that way?

JORDAN HARRISON: They switched every ball screen and each person that switched a screen could stay in front of all West Virginia, our team. So honestly just them switching the screens, that what we struggled with. And when we did get a mismatch, they did good getting their bigs back on our bigs.

Q. You've played a lot of good offenses, how does that ability to turn over opponents going to help you guys against Iowa on Monday?

JORDAN HARRISON: Honestly, like we've been doing all year, like we feed off transition buckets, steals, deflections. So we are not going to change nothing. We are going to do what West Virginia does and that's get turnovers regardless who the team is.

Q. Coach mentioned your buzzer-beater to end the first half. Can you walk me through what you remember of that possession and how big was it for and you your teammates in the halftime locker room



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knowing that you had that kind of momentum swing?

JORDAN HARRISON: I know it was a high ball screen, came off, picked up my dribble, probably shouldn't. Saw JJ there, and kicked it to her and they both went with the big. And I was wide open and I let it go. I knew it was going to go in. I'm just glad it did.

Q. You kind of had a moment after shooting your last two free throws and you missed the first one where you looked a little disappointed. Was it going through your head that you had an opportunity for 30 in an NCAA Tournament game?

JJ QUINERLY: Not really. I was mad that I was missing a whole bunch of free throws honestly. A lot of people probably get disappointed missing free throws, so just because of that.

Q. Last year battles from Georgia in the second round went shot-for-shot with Caitlin Clark. Is that something you're looking forward to on Monday?

JJ QUINERLY: I mean, I hope not. I hope we can put the game away a little faster than that and we don't have to go shot for shot but I mean whatever happens, happens.

Q. As somebody who is usually one of the shortest players on the court, you attacked the rim so much and you get a lot of rebounds. What is it that helps you have success down low?

JORDAN HARRISON: Honestly I've just been doing it my whole life so I just got fret good at it. I got a good little reach, got good touch, especially going right. So I mean, I just been doing it for so long that it comes easy.

Q. This was asked before you stepped in here, Princeton seemed to be okay with the pressure in the first couple quarters. What changed in the third quarter run to really get them off balance?

JJ QUINERLY: We went in at the half and Coach said, like, that's not us. Like our defense is way better than that. So we just picked it up, showed some intensity, some toughness, and you see what happened.

Q. This was a tough game in the first half for you guys. You really seemed to struggle a lot with Princeton's defense, especially. And so one thing I'm wondering with Columbia having just made it into the tournament, do you think that people should -- sorry, I lost my train of thought. Do you think that there's more to Ivy League basketball than people have been giving it credit for in the last few years?

JORDAN HARRISON: Yeah, of course, Ivy League is a really good league. I give it to those girls, it's pretty tough in the classroom and they do basketball, so they balance both of those well. Yeah, I think they should get a lot more exposure because they are really good baseball players, really smart and they can do exactly what Power Five schools do, so yeah.

Q. You talked about at halftime, Coach said that's not who you were defensively with the press and being better with that. The other thing was, you were outrebounded significantly in the first half, let up a lot of offensive rebounds but not so much in the second half. What was said at halftime and what adjustments went into fixing that?

JJ QUINERLY: Pretty much the same thing. He comes and gives us goals before each game to keep them at a certain amount of rebounds or points.

So that number was -- I ain't going to put a number out there, but they got a couple more rebounds than we expected to, and he just told them to just keep working. I mean, Kylee, Danelle, everybody who was out there battled on the boards and did what we needed to do.

Q. Princeton took 21 three-point shots in this game, 12 in the first half. They don't normally take that many threes. Was that something that you wanted, were you -- was it part of your game plan to let, basically, text them to shoot from three?

MARK KELLOGG: No. We did not have a goal. We had a goal that we wanted to hold their makes under, but not necessarily attempts. Some of those came late, too, probably, when they were playing from behind a little bit in that fourth quarter.

No, I think they made what -- 5 or 5.8 a game or something like that and they made 6 tonight. So we needed to keep them somewhere around that number. Thought if it got up around 9, 10, 11, we might be in a little bit of trouble.

They made two or three there felt like right off the bat in the first quarter and it was like, uh-oh, here we go. If you can make teams somewhat one-dimensional, I think that's an advantage.

So I think points in the paint swayed pretty heavily our way and if they were taking perimeter shots, then they weren't getting paint touches and that was something that was important to us.

Q. Going back to that press, were there any tactical

changes you made at half, or was it just locking in more? What specifically was the difference between Princeton being able to handle your pressure in the first half and kind of not being able to handle your pressure nearly as much in the second?

MARK KELLOGG: Yeah, there were some minor tactical adjustments, which not going to go ahead and give you those in case we need them again. Really it was settling in to see what their press breaker was going to be. Was it something we had seen on film. They had a week to prepare something different if they wanted to. It looked like they had a couple different press breakers prepared for us depending on what press we ran.

So it was just kind of that back-and-forth from the coaching side that, hey, here is a couple things we wanted to do. I thought we backed off a little bit. But part of it, too, is we were not scoring. We can't press if we don't score very effectively. So we needed to score more, which we did in that third quarter.

Q. You guys beat Oklahoma, a high-scoring offense led by guards, does that remind you of the matchup with Iowa coming up?

MARK KELLOGG: I think that's somewhat fair. This is the elite offense in the country. Oklahoma was, I think, top five or six as well when we played them. They can definitely get it going from three.

The way they run their offense is probably a little bit different, and obviously Caitlin is special, but they are really talented around her. But there are some similarities in how good they are in transition and how free they play on the offensive end. I thought OU does the same thing. They just play with this freedom on the offensive end, and so yeah, it will probably be a similar conversations or a game plan that we can use again.

Q. Neither team shot particularly well from the free throw line, and you guy the shot 50 percent and Princeton shot just about 60 percent. What do you think was the factor?

MARK KELLOGG: We may need to check the rims but then I was like well, the first game that wasn't a problem, so I guess it's not the rim. I don't know. Maybe nerves. Maybe excitement. I think shooting is contagious, though, and even from the free throw line, when you see even your teammates make free throws, I think that rim starts to get a little bit bigger. And if you're watching misses, then that rim may seem to get a little smaller.

We are a better free throw shooting team than that. We'll

have to be better than that obviously on Monday night. Yeah, we'll get it corrected I hope.

Q. How important was it to get ten points out of Kylee, and did you expect this was a game she would have a good matchup and give you what she gave you?

MARK KELLOGG: It wasn't necessarily the matchup for Kylee but she's been trending this way for weeks. I'm excited for her to get to double figures. We talk a lot about trying to get to four double figures which we still didn't quite do, but to get three just takes a little bit of the burden off these two that were up here earlier and.

I thought her third quarter was earlier. Obviously active and hit her three to get her going. I thought her activity on that end helped as well. Yeah, she's been trending in the right direction.

Q. Good pressing teams like Ohio State have taken the press off early against Iowa. Do you have any early thoughts on your matchup press?

MARK KELLOGG: Not yet. It could be difficult but we said the same thing playing OU. So we'll go back and have those conversations tonight and into tomorrow. This is elite. They are pretty good in transition, so we may have to be a little careful but we'll go figure it out.

Q. JJ played 40 minutes. What makes her that type of player that you want to have her out there the whole time?

MARK KELLOGG: Yeah, well, obviously she has a motor. She's a high-level, conditioned athlete, which you have to be. She's an elite scorer. It wasn't -- we usually try to get her a break at least in the first half. Jordan got the foul, so that kind of -- we just were not able to do that and it took us out of our normal rotation.

She's done it before. She played 40 in the last game, too, in the Big 12 tournament. She's conditioned enough to do that and she's a phenomenal scorer. All eyes go to her when she's on the floor which makes everybody around her better, too.

Q. This was a physical game. Do you feel that playing such a long stretch in the Big 12 and just being in the Big 12 in general prepares the team better for a game as physical as this one?

MARK KELLOGG: I do, and we knew that, kind of watching them on film, especially at the post. Princeton is very physical, tough, great rebounders, so we knew we had our hands full especially with those guys. We were

prepared, a hundred percent, Big 12, the size we seed in that league prepared us.

Q. How much weight is taken off the shoulders to get that first March Madness win and how long will you kind of relish and enjoy it, or is it right on to Iowa?

MARK KELLOGG: It's right on to Iowa. Unfortunately I won't get to relish it a whole lot. Yeah, I don't know. I never looked at it like there was a weight on my shoulders or anything like that.

I'm excited to get it. I've been twice at SFA and had leads and had leads against Georgia Tech and couldn't quite close it. It feels good, and you want to get the first. You can't advance if you don't win one but that's what we want our program to be. We want to be in the postseason. We want to advance in the postseason.

That was something in the tournament I used in the press conference almost a year ago that that was the goal was I want to be a postseason team and I want to advance in it, and so this is a start for sure.

Q. You mentioned you wanted to get four scorers tonight, at least three, on any given night. Only seven looks and seven field goals for Fields and Watson put together. What does it say about Jordan and JJ and even Kylee to where if there's not four scorers, you can still go out and beat a really good Princeton team?

MARK KELLOGG: That's the beauty of having those types of players is if it's not clicking, you have a game plan, which we did, and we had to go away from it for a little bit, credit to Princeton for some of that.

But we need to do a better job, give Lauren more touches, Kyah, Jayla, and that's on us. But at the same time, just do what you've got to do to win the game, and that's what we did tonight.

Q. You mentioned it a little bit earlier but to navigate the minutes where Jordan got in foul trouble late in the first half and early in the fourth quarter, how important were those stretches to cut into the lead late in the second quarter?

MARK KELLOGG: Yeah, really important, and JJ is another one that's played well over the last three, four weeks probably. I thought she defended her you know what off. I thought she was really good on the defensive end and she's some of our toughness -- I've said it from day one, our toughness is wrapped up into 00, that identity, so happy for her to have the super senior close that she's had.

Q. The guards, Kaitlyn Chen, Madison St. Rose, you were able to turn them over several times but they also combined for 39 points. What are some of the biggest challenges of defending those two in particular?

MARK KELLOGG: Just that ability to get in the mid-range which scares you, and so then you play off of them. And Chen hitting those threes today, that was a little bit of what we wanted to do I guess early was see if she would take one, dare her to take one and I think she hit the first one when we went under that ball screen, hit another one in that corner in front of their bench in the third quarter and then we just had to adjust but yeah, their ability, really, to put it on the floor, get to their mid-range.

I have not seen a team as good as mid-range as Princeton, really probably ever in our scouting. They are really good there, and can make the three, and at times, they get to the rim but that mid-range is pretty good and we fouled them, what, two or three times on some jump shooters, which is a no-no.

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