

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - FGCU vs Virginia Tech

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College Park, Maryland, USA

Virginia Tech Hokies

Coach Kenny Brooks

Elizabeth Kitley

Aisha Sheppard

Media Conference



ELIZABETH KITLEY: On that particular one, I think it was Bell in the paint. I was there, the game plan was for me to be there to help KT, I think it was and then to get out there as fast as I could. And if they make it -- she made them. She was, I think, 4-for-7 from 3. Credit to her. She stepped up.

Q. Aisha, wonder if you had any chance over the past couple of weeks to think about the legacy you're leaving at Tech and what you've accomplished here?

AISHA SHEPPARD: No, like Coach said, none of this has really hit me yet. But I'm just grateful for the opportunity to have played here and to be able to have my name in the record books is a plus. But the biggest thing that I'm proud of is that I received two degrees from Tech.

Q. Aisha, can I get your thoughts on Liz's performance today, having the school record points. Every time you throw it to her she's scoring in the fourth quarter. Just when you're out there with her, what was that like to be able to watch her do that?

AISHA SHEPPARD: She's phenomenal. I think Coach would agree with me, we knew she was coming. She's phenomenal in every aspect of the word. And she works so hard at this, so I'm sad for her for the outcome. But I mean, the things she's able to do and how she's able to take advantage of people's defense is amazing. So I'm just so happy for her and it's exciting that she has a couple more years here.

Q. You hold Kendall Spray to one 3-pointer. It was a desperation shot at the end of the shot clock. But they still finished with 15. Was it just a case of too many sort of supporting players stepping up for them and it's hard to guard everyone?

COACH BROOKS: Yeah, it is. It is hard to guard everyone. We wanted to make sure -- we did a really good job on the main two 3-pointer shooters. But in a game like that, with a game plan like this -- Karl can probably say the same thing. Their game plan was to take away our 3 and let Liz do her thing, and she did it. And our game plan was

Florida Gulf Coast - 84, Virginia Tech - 81

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Virginia Tech's Kenny Brooks, Elizabeth Kitley and Aisha Sheppard.

COACH BROOKS: Obviously we're very disappointed with the outcome. But it doesn't change how I feel about these kids. The effort that they gave all year, very, very proud of what they accomplished. Stings right now because we had high aspirations for this group. So stings right now but I'm very, very proud of these kids and the effort they gave all year long.

Q. Liz, first off how is the shoulder? What were you seeing that allowed you to be so successful today?

ELIZABETH KITLEY: It's fine. When the game gets going it's not something you think about. And obviously I had a pretty large size advantage. We knew that coming in. Did a lot of stuff to take advantage of that.

Q. Aisha, what can you say about their style of play? And it really seemed like their tempo kind of threw things off on the offensive end for you all?

AISHA SHEPPARD: We knew coming in that they wanted to either shoot 3s or layups. And give them credit, they hit shots when they needed to. But that's their style of play. Very similar to ours. But they hit a lot of timely shots.

Q. Liz, that 3-pointer by Seay at the end looked like you were trying to rotate as quick as you could. How much of a challenge was that tonight for you to get out on those shooters, and what did you see on that particular play?



to make others hit shots and they did.

And it wasn't only that they were hitting shots. They were hitting timely shots, the big ones, when momentum was about to swing our way or whatever the case might be.

And give those kids credit, man. This is not just a Kierstan Bell show or whatever the situation is. They did a really good job. They stepped up and knocked down shots and they looked confident. It's a good game, very entertaining game. But give them credit. They did a really good job.

Q. They only had three turnovers in the game. What about the way that they played offense made it so hard to disrupt their passing lanes?

COACH BROOKS: We're not a disrupting team. You can look at our stats. And I'm very proud of it. We don't turn people over a lot. We guard the paint. We guard the paint and we force you to shoot a lot of mid-range shots. This is why this was -- we knew it was going to be a tough matchup for us because they don't shoot mid-range shots. It's either layup or 3-point shot.

And when you've been practicing it for 365 days, it's what you do. And so we didn't want to overextend and try to get them -- they're a smart basketball team, very well-coached basketball team. So you're not going to give them layup, backdoor cuts; they take advantage of that.

We try to keep them in front of us, make the others shoot the 3s. And they stepped up and made them. So I'm not looking at the fact that we only turned them over three times as a disappointment. It wasn't part of our game plan. Our game plan was to really contest those 3-point shots and make the others make them.

Q. No 3-pointers in the first quarter that you guys took and then took eight in the second. Did something just switch? Did the shots just become open?

COACH BROOKS: We just kind of went with the flow of the game. Obviously we knew we had a size advantage inside. And once we found out that they were really trying to go one-on-one with Liz, that's where our focus was, to go there. And then they kind of mixed it up a little bit where they were, kind of like us, they were in desperation mode. They were, like, we've got to change something. They threw a couple double teams at her. Like we tried to switch up our focus off of the ball screens or the way we were playing.

But we're a team, we've never been one way or another. We're not one-dimensional. We're not just inside/outside, we play to the flow of the game, and that's the way the

game was going.

Q. You told us yesterday, look, don't get upset if they hit a 3, we know it's going to happen. They hit one in the third quarter that was off the backboard at the end of the shot clock. At that point, were you like, what do we have to do here?

COACH BROOKS: Sometimes the basketball gods are on your side. That's why you play the game. And miracle things happen. This time of the year just gets really exaggerated, but that was a momentum swing. I think we were fighting and we were doing what we needed to do to climb back in.

I think that took them back up to seven or eight-point lead. And just the way it happened. It could have been demoralizing, but we responded from it. And we were able to take the lead. And a couple things happened after that we could have done better to shore up the lead.

But you look at a shot like that and you play basketball long enough, you coach long enough, you're on both sides of that kind of shot. And that's just something that you have to make your own luck and maybe we don't even think about that shot if we handle some other situations differently. But it was a momentum swing for them. And maybe pushed them over the hump.

Q. Did you ever find yourself having to huddle in which you told your girls, hey, let's stay is that true to who we are? As much game planning you did to defend them, did you have to remind them stick to what you do best?

COACH BROOKS: In a game like this, you have to. What's your alternative? You are not going to go out, do something totally different. You've been practicing what you've been preaching all week.

And eventually you have to say maybe we push out a little bit harder contest a shot, maybe they don't make that shot. But again, you give them credit. They made timely shots. It was like they desperately needed to have that shot, seemed like they made it. Maybe it's just me in the way it felt. But you give them credit; they made those shots.

Q. They switched up their coverage on Kitley in, like, the middle of that fourth quarter. I was wondering if you had seen, if you were expecting them to play that card and if you could evaluate how your team played, like play the card of attacking the entry pass?

COACH BROOKS: The way they started playing her, anytime that anybody plays her one-on-one, her numbers

are astronomical. She's player of the year. She averages 17 points a game in our league. And she gets beat up quite a bit. She gets beat up all the time, double team. When she's able to move freely, I don't think there's anybody in the country that can guard her.

And I'm biased, obviously, but she's a tremendous talent. So we were expecting them to do a lot of different things, the fact that they mixed it up a little bit wasn't surprising. I just don't think tonight much would have worked just because she really had it going.

She's probably really mad at herself right now because she missed four free throws and that she probably missed a couple of shots that she'll be thinking about probably all night. But I thought she played a great game. But she's a phenomenal kid. Aisha said it. She doesn't care if she scores two points or she scores 42 points; she wants to make sure she wins. That's the thing she'll be thinking about right now.

Q. As you mentioned, some other players had 3s for them, but you had taken a 68-66 lead and Bell got one pretty much in transition. Just your thoughts on her having a shot like that?

COACH BROOKS: My thoughts on her hitting that particular shot was that we were very frustrated after the fact because it was a miscommunication in transition. We had people where we wanted them, and one of our kids took the wrong person and allowed her to walk right into the 3-point shot.

That's the one thing that I remember about that particular play. But so again, those are things that we have to take ownership of. You can't give a player of that magnitude a shot like that in a moment like that. And it just goes back to what I was talking about: They hit timely shots. When they needed a shot like that, they stepped up and they knocked it down.

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