

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Drake vs Colorado

Friday, March 22, 2024

Manhattan, Kansas, USA

Bramlage Coliseum

**Colorado Buffaloes**

**Coach JR Payne**

**Kindyll Wetta**

**Aaronette Vonleh**

Media Conference

Colorado 86, Drake 72

JR PAYNE: Just really proud of how we played tonight. I thought we had a great sort of week and a half of practice and preparation. Drake is such a good and such a different team. I was very nervous about this game, not that I didn't think we were capable, it's just such a different style. We have not played a team like Drake all year. So I'm really proud of how our team prepared.

It's hard to prepare for a team you've never seen before, and so I thought that was great.

Executing the game plan really, really well. Like when I look at a couple things we talked about, really trying to be aggressive inside, really trying to do a great job on the glass because they're such a good rebounding team, we did a really good job in those two areas, and those were huge priorities for us. Great team effort. These two were exceptional, and just overall great team win today.

**Q. Kindyll, career high for you, and you hit back-to-back threes in the fourth quarter. How good did it feel for you to have such a big game on the offensive end?**

KINDYLL WETTA: I mean, I just go out there and do what I'm supposed to do, and when I'm open, I shoot. I didn't realize that that happened, but yeah, just doing what I can.

**Q. Aaronette, the battle between you and Miller was kind of a key coming into tonight. You had a huge game and really limited her. How much of a focal point was that for you, and can you talk about that matchup**



tonight?

AARONETTE VONLEH: Honestly, sometimes it's harder to go against undersized post players. They're just like less big post players. They can easily draw charges and stuff. But I just was focused on limiting her touches to avoid getting in foul trouble and then just being aggressive on offense to take advantage of that mismatch.

**Q. What is this experience like coming in as a team that's one of the favorites in the tournament that has a little bit of winning history in this tournament? What's the difference coming into this one versus maybe going into last year's?**

KINDYLL WETTA: I don't know if there's much of a difference. I think we just kind of have an expectation for ourselves to perform and we know we're a good team and we can come out and compete with just about anybody. I guess just confidence maybe.

AARONETTE VONLEH: Yeah, I'd say the one difference is we know we're so capable of so much more than what we did last year, so I think we're just even hungrier to make it past the Sweet 16 and just keep advancing.

**Q. Aaronette, when the game plan is centered around getting the ball inside, then you start having results really quickly in the game, does it give you confidence as you go forward, that okay, I'm putting up numbers today?**

AARONETTE VONLEH: Yeah, I'd say early in the game I was missing a lot of easy buckets, so when I was going to get going, I think it gave me confidence, it gave my teammates confidence because when the ball goes inside it opens things up on the outside, as well. Yeah, definitely gives confidence to me and my teammates.

**Q. Kindyll, I know you guys weren't worried falling down 9-0 early, but what would you attribute that slow start to, and what kind of got you guys rolling?**

KINDYLL WETTA: We've had a few games this year where we have started slow, so it's not really anything new.



It's obviously not ideal. But we're comfortable in that spot just knowing that just because we're down early doesn't mean we can't come back.

**Q. For both of the players, first half was pretty close both ways. But the third quarter things kind of blew wide open. What went into that explosion in the third quarter for you guys?**

KINDYLL WETTA: I think we were just confident in what we knew was working. We knew getting the ball into Netty was working, so prioritizing that, prioritizing moving, defense, all of the above. We had lots of people with two fouls in the first half and so going into the third quarter we were fresh and ready to turn up the defensive energy.

AARONETTE VONLEH: Yeah, I'd agree. I think just being able to adjust and see what was working for us and what wasn't and just focusing on the things that were working is just what gave us confidence to keep the lead and build off of it.

**Q. Is there any sort of sigh of relief getting the first one out of the way, now we're on to the second round and you've got your tournament legs under you a little bit?**

AARONETTE VONLEH: I'd say, yeah, it's nice to get the first one out of the way, but I wouldn't say a sigh of relief. We still have another game to take care of, and that one is even more important just because we want to get back to the Sweet 16 and go further than we did last year, so we're just focused on the next opponent.

KINDYLL WETTA: I felt like we had a great game, so just going into the next game, taking this momentum into that game.

**Q. You said Drake was different than anybody you'd played all year. How are they different?**

JR PAYNE: The motion that they run with, the five-out system, constant cutting, five players on the floor at all times that can shoot the ball. Just the pace at which they play. We have some fast teams. We have some athletic teams. But no one that runs that five-out continuous cutting, moving, shooting. That's something that's different for us.

**Q. You talked about the rebound advantage, 39-18. Were you expecting it to be that big because you guys are much bigger than Drake is?**

JR PAYNE: I was not. I wanted it to be that big. We talked about it. We were repping box-outs in warmups.

That's how focused we were on rebounding. We don't usually do that.

But they're incredible on the offensive glass. They shoot so many threes that sometimes those are long rebounds. We felt like we could guard but we've got to be able to finish plays, and then also we felt like we could offensively crash. We felt like that was going to be an important factor for us. It almost felt like our size could be an advantage on the offensive end more than the defensive end on the glass.

**Q. Finally your thoughts about K-State Sunday.**

JR PAYNE: It's funny, we recruited two of their best players, so I know them pretty well. Great team, obviously very well-coached, had a lot of success this year. They're very healthy and playing really well.

**Q. I think you called the time-out at 11-3 and then you guys came out and scored 10 in a row right away. What were the magic words?**

JR PAYNE: Shoot, I wish I knew so I could replicate it if we're ever in that situation. I think it was really more just everybody take a deep breath, calm down, let's execute, let's talk defensively. Just basic stuff. It's never anything -- I'm not the most magical speaker. We usually just keep it pretty simple.

**Q. It looked like it took you guys a bit to adjust to the tempo, which you said. In the second half you guys were great defensively. I think they started 1 for 7 in the second half. What kind of tweaks did you guys make at halftime to kind of counter their attack?**

JR PAYNE: I thought our communication was better in the second half. We talked about that a lot. There were several possessions in the first half, maybe just a guard-guard screen that we could have switched, maybe we called it but the other person didn't hear it so somebody is wide open under the basket, so we really just prioritized our communication, playing underneath our player, and the team just did a really, really great job second half.

**Q. When you say you haven't faced a team and you have to prepare for them in practice, what does that look like when you have to prepare for something you haven't before? Does practice change? What changes when you are facing a new test like that?**

JR PAYNE: Well, because it's kind of hard for us to replicate it because we don't run anything like that. Back home we had practice players and sort of scout team that was trying, but even they don't know how to do that. So I

thought our defensive coach, Coach T, did a great job of breaking down actions rather than trying to have five players run a system that we can go against that we don't know how to run, broke down parts of their offense, so certain types of screens, certain types of cuts, and we repped that out all week long.

At times we really executed the defensive plan well, especially second half.

**Q. Aaronette only played 24 minutes. With the big lead was that kind of by design to try to save her a little bit for Sunday?**

JR PAYNE: Yeah, definitely. Anytime that we can rest, we try to. But certainly I knew that Drake was very capable of hitting back-to-back-to-back triples and could have been right back in it again. We were not going to rest more than one or two if we could.

**Q. Sticking with Aaronette, only 8 of 17 shooting but she had six offensive rebounds and I thought a key tonight was her sticking with it, staying aggressive there. How important was that in that matchup? Was that something you guys talked about, that Miller is going to alter your shot a little bit, you've got to kind of stick with it?**

JR PAYNE: We actually did not talk about that. We knew, we saw the film that she's very long, contests really high and things like that. But I was really -- of all the points that we did today, I was really proud of Aaronette's offensive rebounding because she missed the first one. It's hard to score over a 6'5" wingspan, but to stay with it and be able to go right back up with it was really, really crucial for us.

**Q. What was your take on Kindyll's game? We don't see that offensive explosion out of her very often, but you kind of needed it a little bit because they were limiting Frida so much.**

JR PAYNE: So proud of -- the whole team, of course, but so unbelievably proud of Kindyll for her aggressiveness, the way she caught and shot without thinking about it. Her defense is always incredible. I've said to many that I think she's one of the best defensive players I've ever coached, but to see her that aggressive and confident offensively was brilliant.

**Q. You spoke about how you've been preparing for a team you've never seen before. Now quick turnaround, you've got one day to prepare for your next opponent. What goes into tomorrow for you guys?**

JR PAYNE: Lots of film, lots of rest tonight for the girls. Our team -- this is a Pac-12 schedule we're playing this weekend, Friday-Sunday. So we're used to this rhythm of it. So I think our team will do a great job of resting. Tomorrow morning we wake up, the scout is already done, but start teaching our team the scout, what's important, what does it look like, what does it feel like, and yeah, just get ready for a really tough game.

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