

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Murray State. vs Iowa

Saturday, March 22, 2025

Norman, Oklahoma, USA

Lloyd Noble Center

Iowa Hawkeyes

Jan Jensen

Ava Heiden

Taylor StremLOW

Media Conference

Iowa 92, Murray State 57

JAN JENSEN: Sorry, I was in another world. Did you say what does it mean? Opening statement?

Well, actually I was thinking about the sentimentality of it, really. I'm just really thankful. It's really special to be in the NCAA Tournament, and we've just had so many people step up at different times this year, and I get to sit up here with the future, right. And these two were terrific high school players, and they have improved and met challenges. They stayed patient.

I'm just so proud of them. I'm just really proud of the overall team effort. I thought we had a really good defensive effort. I think we held Murray State to their lowest. Obviously I felt badly that Katelyn Young got hurt in that third quarter. That's a big blow. But I think we were on point.

I'm just really grateful to get this first win, and any time you can survive in advance in any tournament, but when you get to do it in the NCAA, it feels special. So I'm really thankful.

Q. You knew you were going to have roles coming in today, but maybe your roles came out early than expected. Talk about getting thrust into the game earlier than expected and how you were able to contribute in the first half?

AVA HEIDEN: I think with my team it's just next man up, so always being ready on the bench, ready to come off and do well and perform for the team.



TAYLOR STREMLow: Agree with what Ava said. That's our whole mindset is being ready when you're name is called. Obviously today it worked well for us and everybody on the bench came off and did good and put some good minutes in.

Q. Another career high, just seems like you're doing that over and over and over again right now. What got you to click in these last few games? What's working for you right now that maybe wasn't working before?

AVA HEIDEN: I think that just over the past few months I've been put in a lot, a lot of extra work, and that has helped me get to the competence level and skill level to be able to come into games like this and perform well.

Q. Taylor, you also hit a career-high today. I'm pretty sure you had a couple good threes, and you also created a lot of opportunities for your teammates. You had a moment where you drove right in and then you just passed it back to Syd and she knocked in a three. What's it like not only being the person who is able to shoot and score but also creating opportunities for teammates?

TAYLOR STREMLow: They make it really easy. It's fun to score obviously but being able to make the extra pass, and I think we had our most assists in an NCAA game ever. That just shows how special this team is how much we love to share the ball and support each other.

Q. Can you tell us about the spin on your ball, whether it's a side spin or a no-spin? It's almost like a knuckleball when you shoot it.

AVA HEIDEN: I couldn't tell you that, but she will always get me. She'll pass and won't look and I'll be like, where did the ball go? She's the best passer on the spin.

TAYLOR STREMLow: As far as the shot, I couldn't tell you. I'm working on it, but trying to get better backspin. I don't know. It went in, so that's good.

Q. Were you concerned when Stuelke went out with



that second foul, two minutes in?

JAN JENSEN: I was, just because, more so because that's your normal fluidity and your flow, and. This is the first time Ava and company, the young kids have been on the biggest stage. But I've always felt, you know, when Ava started really, she just kind of locked in that next level. We challenged her and she really answered it.

I was comfortable that we could sub, but any time you have a starter, yes, I was concerned.

I think a key point, though, also, was right before half, everybody had foul trouble: Lucy did; Kylie did; Hannah did. But they came in, this group and they did a really good job, and I think we went in 12. I think that was a pivotal confidence-builder for them; I think for our whole team.

Yes, I was concerned but I also trusted our youth.

Q. Did anything feel different going into today's game? I know you have obviously been successful the last couple of weeks with those double-figured games.

AVA HEIDEN: No. That's all I got for you. (Laughter).

Q. What's your mentality -- the whistle -- when you got to get in the game?

AVA HEIDEN: Hannah is a great player, and I'm here to contribute as a team and make us as a whole better. But I get to come in and help the team in any way I can, and Hannah can get out there in the second half and do her thing. We all get our minutes, and we all contribute.

Q. In regards to defending Katelyn Young in the first half, it seemed like your length gave her some trouble. I guess what was your assessment in defending her?

AVA HEIDEN: She's a great player. She can shoot. She can drive. She's left-handed. So it was definitely going to be a defensive challenge. But I think that my length definitely contributed to that, and then, yeah, I don't know, just worked out pretty well.

Q. In Indianapolis, we saw, I can't remember which game it was, but we saw a moment where you guys were down and you tied and gave the lead, and just kept it for the rest of the game. You were kind of like very pivotal in getting up when you guys wanted. In the first half, we saw that same thing kind of play out today. You tied it up, and afterwards your team had this momentum. Do you think that seeing you as a

freshman being able to score, create these opportunities for both of you even, kind of just amps the team up and gets them going?

AVA HEIDEN: I think everyone on this team is for each other. So when anyone can go out there and contribute, it's such a fun team to be part of, and I'm just happy that I was able to do that for the team today.

Q. Taylor, you had eight points in your last 11 games. What allowed you to explode today and again ten points? What into that performance?

TAYLOR STREMLow: I would say it helped that they were lining me first, which is staying off on defense. So I was like, okay, that's okay. I'll shoot it. I knocked some down. That was a good confidence booster. I think we just played really well off each other and I got some open looks, and so that definitely helped me score more.

Q. Obviously now with advancing, a game left to be played but there's a possibility of a former player being on the other side with Oklahoma and Jennie Baranczyk. Seeing a player go from being part of the program and then the success she's had in her coaching career, what does that mean for Iowa?

JAN JENSEN: Well, first off, I want to give all due respect to Florida Gulf Coast. I think that every team in the tournament, we see the upsets that are possible, and they have done a super job.

So I would like the record to state that I have been asked about the Oklahoma team.

And I will have to say being I think playing the Drakes and Northern Iowas, they prepared us more for Murray State. Although Jennie Baranczyk did a super job at Drake. She's in the SEC now. And she does similar things, right. We like what we like.

But I think that that's more the deal is, I mean, she's got some tremendous talent. Getting Beers from the portal. Payton Verhulst. They are two really key pieces that she added, and we recruited the heck out of Sahara Williams. That was an interesting story line. Halli Pooch at Murray State was a teammate of Sahara Williams, both really good Iowa players.

And Jennie is just a tremendous young coaching talent. She's really great. She helped us with our first Big Ten Tournament championship. She was a freshman, another coach on my staff, Randi Peterson Henderson, she was a senior, so they were teammates. That's a fun connection.

But very proud of Jennie. She's just shining, and I'm really happy for her. But I usually like to cheer for our teams. It's not so fun when you have to face them.

Q. Obviously before the unfortunate injury in the third quarter of Katelyn Young, you were able to hold her to 1 and 7. How much was that preparation?

JAN JENSEN: Our whole team up to this with the we have done a pretty good job with scout prep, and honestly I think Murray State did, too. You heard Taylor mention she were sagging off her, and the numbers would show, you wanted to make her prove it for a while. She's a freshman and has not hit so much out there.

A kid like Taylor, at least today, if Florida Gulf Coast or Oklahoma, whoever wins, does that, we'll see if it happens again. But we knew she was such a major cog to their wheel, and I thought we handled our scout prep really, really well.

When they don't score in transition, I really wanted to slow them down. We did a decent job for the second half of the first quarter, we kind of got it. You have to slow down one and two, Ford and Pooch first, and then you have to hold serve with Katelyn down there.

But she does a lot of her damage at the elbow. She let her catch it easy at that elbow and let her do what she wants; with that elbow, you find yourself a little in more trouble. Because she's pretty crafty with her drive and we fouled a couple times, she didn't hit her first two free throws. But I think we did a good job with that.

She's a key player. Although a lot of the other kids do a good job. We had to make sure that 1 and 2 and Young didn't feel confident, and I think we went into halftime, and I think that was a big key.

Q. I think it's interesting, you're well-known as head coach now. You did a lot of post work in the Bluder era, and we saw a lot of hard work in the paint from Ava. Do you think some of that maybe stuck around with you as you took on a new role?

JAN JENSEN: I think if you enjoy the post play, and you have been successful with it, I'm not going to abandon that. You know, I don't -- as a head coach, it's like being a parent. You can't play favorites, right. You can't like your first child better than your baby.

I think today that was just smart basketball. We had an advantage in there. They don't have a lot of depth. I thought the different post players we have, even if Katelyn Young, sadly, had not gotten hurt -- and I want to say, what

a great player, man, what a great young lady, and what a scorer. You hate when her last game has to end on crutches.

Then when they got hurt, I think most of us could say, well, let's keep going inside. So I think today that just made sense. They had to play their power forward at the five, and she got in foul trouble and she fouled out. I think that was pretty clear today.

But, yes, Ava is a nice post player and developing. Addison O'Grady, she's usually more accurate. Hopefully that will mean some good things Monday for her.

Yes, I love the post play, and I'll continue to go with the post play. But if we have to win games going with the guards, I'll do that, too.

Q. Building off that question, they went to Katelyn on the first two possessions, got a foul and a layup. What changed when Ava went in defensively on Katelyn, and specifically that Ava kind of was able to shut her down a little bit?

JAN JENSEN: Yeah, I think Hannah, neither one of them got a lot of shots at the beginning. Hannah and Katelyn, it was just kind of a stalemate, really. That's what I've always liked about our post play when we shifted Hannah to the five.

Hannah is undersized but she can give you a lot of different things speed-wise running up and down, but also she'll appropriate sometimes and play behind, all the things. But when we have Ava come in, Ava can be pretty crafty and Speedy, too. And she's got length.

So that's why I like, as Ava has developed, she's gotten more consistent with her shooting. Able to make more shots with the pressure, and that's what we've been bringing her along. But when Ava came in, that length bothered her and she was pretty fast, too.

So I think that, instead of like sometimes there's relief, oh, we got her in foul trouble. If Ava can hold coming in there, then it's not really a relief, right, because she was able to make it hard on you.

Thank you for covering women's sports.

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