

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

Saturday, March 22, 2025

Norman, Oklahoma, USA

Lloyd Noble Center

Oklahoma Sooners

Jennie Baranczyk

Skylar Vann

Raegan Beers

Media Conference

Oklahoma 81, Florida Gulf Coast 58

JENNIE BARANCZYK: I don't really know what to say today. No, honestly, you could tell that -- we know that Florida Gulf Coast is good, and having played them a year ago, and you could tell we were a little bit tight. I thought the more fun that we had throughout the game, the better we got, especially in that fourth quarter.

But I was proud of, I thought Skylar just at the time the tone from a rebounding standpoint. I thought she was just testify nominal and just kept us going. I was really proud of a lot of our players. We could have gone south because things weren't necessarily going well for us but I think we poured into each other, and sometimes you have to be able to do that. So you have to find different ways.

And I felt like we've defended just well enough; maybe not that third quarter, but I felt like we defended well enough in the first half to just keep us afloat, and then we kind of got ourselves going.

But hats off to Florida Gulf Coast. They are just a great, great program.

Q. Can you talk about just what this means to you to be here on this stage, and you know, especially that second half and that run y'all made there at the end of the fourth quarter to finally stretch the lead? It looked like you were having probably as much fun as you've had.

SKYLAR VANN: I told myself even before the game started in the locker room, I was like just play with joy, have



fun. I was like this could have been my last game in my college career.

I just want to play with joy with my team and I think we did that, especially in that fourth quarter going on that run and we were putting each other in really good positions and just made it easy.

Q. What has Skylar meant to this team? Just that, just what she's meant to this team and what she meant today.

RAEGAN BEERS: Collect myself. Skylar has -- the minute I was here on my official visit the, Skylar was just like, "We want you here, I need you here. We're going to win when you come here."

Like to have that said to you and have so much confidence put on you not just from Sky but from the coaching staff, and Skylar, especially, just constantly lifting you up, and to have that as someone who has been here and came back for her fifth year is absolutely incredible.

And to have her as our center and part of our core on this team all year, has just been special. I told her after the game, you balled out, and it was so fun, so fun to watch you.

But that whole time she was hitting shots she was constantly turning to her teammates and me and everybody else saying, "Let's go, let's play defense," and "Play defense, let's shoot it again." Tried; couldn't make a layup. But she's like, "Shoot it again."

To have someone like that and to have that leadership on this team, and you said it, it could have been your last game, but just to play like that today was incredibly incredible. I could not be more grateful for her and the other seniors that have poured into this team all of this year (tearing up).

Q. Do you guys need a moment?

SKYLAR VANN: We're good.



Q. You looked like you were looking for your shot more than sometimes you have this season? Because you've been a good passer and everything but were you looking for your shot more today.

SKYLAR VANN: I mean, definitely. I give kudos to my teammates and the staff. They have told me all year to look for my shot more and be more confident in my shot. My teammates were giving me the ball and putting me in good positions to shoot are the ball. Everything was just going in today.

Q. That was a game going back-and-forth, going into the fourth quarter, you outscore them, and you had that stretch where you scored seven. What were you looking for in the fourth quarter, and what was key to you guys pulling away?

RAEGAN BEERS: I think going to that fourth quarter, especially we knew we had to pull away and the stretch where it was close with was are important that we kept pouring into each other.

And Jennie reminded us of that the whole game because when we pure into each other and we are playing with so much joy, it's easier to go on those runs than when we are played frustrated, and there was a stretch where I was; and I had my teammates and coaches to pull me out of that obviously.

But it's important that we flip that switch and I think Skylar set the tone, obviously rebounding, and being relentless, Sahara coming in defensively and we flipped that switch. It's fun, obviously.

It's fun basketball but definitely what we needed to do and helped us make a run when we needed to.

Q. You have not had the year individually that you had last year. How frustrating has that been and how difficult was that to overcome and what got you going today?

SKYLAR VANN: I guess it's a little frustrating but also when you have a team with so much depth and talent, it's going to be anybody's game at any time. I'm just lucky and blessed to have the teammates that I've had around me.

This has been one of my favorite years, which is hard to believe, but it really has just how we've connected and how hard we've worked this year to get to this point, it's been my favorite year in college basketball.

JENNIE BARANCZYK: She still shows up every day -- I know it's my turn but you don't get to see that in college

athletics. A lot has been highlighted lately, especially in the NIL world, but for her, I've been really impressed with her every day still showing up. It's been pretty cool.

Q. You spoke about the crowd being a big factor for you all in this environment, and now that you've experienced it, how big was it for you all tonight?

RAEGAN BEERS: We love Sooner Nation. First of all thank you so much for coming out, and we need you back on Monday first and foremost. But to come out and have that home-court advantage truly is so much fun, and to be able to play in that environment; and to when we did go on a stretch where we had a little bit of a drought; or we had to flip that switch in that fourth quarter and the crowd was behind us, that's really, really important and a fun environment to play in.

We are thankful that they all came out. We need you back out on Monday, so we will see you then.

SKYLAR VANN: I couldn't agree more. She said it all. Women's basketball is fun. We've seen that throughout the years and to see that crowd just supporting you, I mean, definitely, she said, home-court advantage is something we've been wanting since we've been going to the tournament the past four years, and do have that finally was great. Shout out to Sooner Nation.

Q. Obviously Florida Gulf Coast brings such a unique offense, and you guys had plenty of time to prepare for that, but how different was it actually going up against it?

SKYLAR VANN: I mean, they are very different from what we have played. Especially like in-conference, we played a lot of big girls. So with their size, I mean, that was an adjustment for us naturally. They are fast. They can shoot and get to the paint.

So that was a huge adjustment, and playing them obviously, like I think we guarded really good in the first half. But then third quarter, they kind of started taking advantage of one-on-ones.

But I think we made adjustments and that helped, and we made it a little bit harder for them in that fourth quarter to get those easy buckets they were getting in that third quarter.

RAEGAN BEERS: Yeah, Skylar said it. 18-0 in-conference, that's a hard, hard thing to do. So coming into the tournament, we knew that they were going to be a difficult team to match up with because of their speed because they can get downhill very, very well.

And so it was really important that our guards keep everybody in front, which I thought Zya did a great job at one point. At one point, I think I screamed at her from across the court, like yeah, Zya. She did it.

But our guards did a phenomenal job containing when we needed to contain. I thought that was really good and obviously when we needed help people were rotating. When you're in that and in that flow defense, it's difficult. It's difficult to score on us and just like any good team, and so it was fun tonight. Credit to them. They were a difficult task tonight.

JENNIE BARANCZYK: Before we start, just know that I did go to Iowa (laughter). Thought I'd throw it out there.

Q. That's a game that wouldn't go away, it was going back-and-forth. What was could he in that fourth for you guys to get that separation and pull away ^ ?

JENNIE BARANCZYK: I liked the way that we started the game ask then we kind of got tighter as the game went on honestly. I thought the biggest keys, I thought, obviously, Raegan kind of coming life and her ball movement. I thought Payton put people in really good positions and then you have Skylar. I think Skylar was just so relentless tonight in terms of rebounding. I just thought she did a really nice job. Again I'm going to, you know -- /STKAO*EU was about the same. She had a first half that was a little tough. But then I was really proud of the way that she was able to come out of it a little bit, too. She got a little too frustrated with the fouls and she got a little too frustrated with some things. But she hit a big three, too.

So I like the way that our team is responding. Sometimes I want it to be a little faster than it is. Obviously you know coaches want everything yesterday. But I was proud of just our overall response because it was a team response. It wasn't, oh, all of a sudden, Raegan started making shots that. Was a byproduct of our team response.

Q. What do you think of playing the Hawkeyes, and how emotional is that going to be, all the people you know, including the head coach, all those things.

JENNIE BARANCZYK: First, I just want to -- you know, I got into coaching because I loved my experience. I loved playing basketball. And a lot of times people get into coaching for different reasons but I did it because I loved it, and so obviously Iowa always has a place in your heart and then there's people that are still there. You know, even when they had their kind of trouble part of their season, and it's easy to still cheer for them and want them to do well. We know that every time you step into your

game against them, both teams want to win, and that's okay.

But I played them nine straight years at Drake, so I don't have, oh, this is the first time I'm going against that, I don't have that. And quite honestly, I know those are incredible story lines and the NCAA Tournament likes to do that.

But I'm so excited about this team that I get to coach here, and their resiliency, and this season that's been an interesting season, being the first in the SEC, and being able to see what we can do on our home floor against a really good opponent in the NCAA Tournament on Monday.

And I want to see these fans show up because everybody is showing up on a national level for women's basketball right now, and I think we're getting there here. I really do. I think people in Oklahoma are really starting to pay attention.

Look how many people are in here now. Y'all weren't in here the first year. Y'all weren't necessarily in here. You've been following us and been great, but you're in here because people are interested in it. So I love your interest. I love what you guys have all given. And you can start to feel that our fan base is continuing to grow.

I was lucky enough to go to a place where women's basketball matters, and I got to play in front of some great crowds, too. And I'm lucky enough to be at a place that you can see that it's coming.

And if you can print that I was better than Caitlin, please do. I tell my kids that. (Laughter).

Q. What was it like to come back and play after the break and how did your team handle that?

JENNIE BARANCZYK: I feel like we had some really good opportunities. We missed a lot at the rim today, and again, you've got to credit Florida Gulf Coast, too, because they are scrappy, again like Sky said, I don't want to underestimate, that's not always easy. Even though we are like, oh, you guys have a size advantage and so you're pounding the ball inside. They are fast. They are small. They are scrappy. It wasn't like they were just going to lay down, and we haven't played against that for a long time. We've played against a lot of length and size, and so there is an element that we had to adjust, and I think we got in our heads a little bit. But then when the game needed to, you know, be the game, I feel like we did a nice job of being able to convert on that.

So I don't want to -- I don't think anybody panicked. But I



think we were just like, okay, at some point, we can just start to adjust and be better. And I thought we did.

Q. You talked quite a bit about Skylar but her role in that big run, and Raegan scores seven consecutive points, a couple of the last two plays were assisted by Skylar and made that thing go. Just how integral was she in that run and what did you see there?

JENNIE BARANCZYK: Yeah, I thought she was huge. But I don't even know if she was just huge in that run. I think she was huge in that whole game. I think she just kept us steady the whole game. I thought her leadership was good. I thought her energy was good. Again the way that she just went after the rebounds I thought was -- we can tell Sky is Sky when she does that. You know, she's always had this unassuming way where she comes up with something and none of us can figure out how she did it. I thought that's what she -- I thought that's really what she did during that time.

Obviously she hit a big three to start that quarter, but I was just really impressed with her demeanor, even when -- because they were iso'ing our bigs and that's heart to be able to do all the time. She got scored on a couple times and I thought she adjusted. I thought she did a really nice job of staying steady and figuring some things out.

So I think it was probably a microcosm of her season. You know, there were some moments where she just was steady and it was maybe under-the-radar steady where we all wanted flash and then there were moments of the flash.

So I think she said it best. This has been a fun year for her, and it's been personal growth and it's also been all about team development. That's what makes her special and that's what's making us have the season that we can and the team that we have.

Q. You guys set a tournament record 72 rebounds tonight. Talk about how you guys got to that point, and how you guys can continue --

JENNIE BARANCZYK: A lot of missed shots. (Laughter) lots, lots, of missed shots.

But no, I thought, I mean, Raegan having 18 rebounds, Sahara having 10, Sky having nine and seven offensive rebounds, that's how did you it. Scott, she tell limited time. She had foul trouble obviously but seven rebounds in her limited time that's impressive, too.

It was a game of pace. I think there's part of that where both teams are really getting up and down, and I think it was a fun game for a women's basketball fan, and so I

think that was a huge part of it.

Yeah, the 23 offensive rebounds means we missed quite a few but at least we were there to cover them up.

Sorry, you thought I was going to say something really nice and positive.

Hey, but in all fairness, I really do, and I hope that you took that as a major compliment that people are invested because you guys have covered us and just done an amazing job. So I just really, really appreciate your coverage. Thank you.

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