

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

Saturday, March 22, 2025

Norman, Oklahoma, USA

Lloyd Noble Center

**FGCU Eagles**

**Chelsea Lyles**

**Dolly Cairns**

**Skyler Gill**

Media Conference

Oklahoma 81, Florida Gulf Coast 58

CHELSEA LYLES: I'd like to start by giving credit to Oklahoma for the job they did and how well they played. So all credit to them and their coaching staff.

And then I'd like to give credit to our players for how hard they played and how hard they worked all year and for the job they have done.

**Q. Things didn't end the way you guys wanted to. When you reassess the season, how would you guys say from top to bottom you guys assess that?**

DOLLY CAIRNS: I'm just really proud of this team. You know, we faced some adversity this whole year, and we've responded really well. I'm proud of the way we fought today. I wouldn't have wanted it any other way so I'm just overall just super proud of everybody.

SKYLER GILL: What Dolly said. We fought through adversity from the beginning of the season. Didn't go the way we wanted it to go. But we fought through and came together, and we got what we needed to do done.

**Q. Tonight you were on fire. How were you able to get open and knock down those threes?**

DOLLY CAIRNS: Yeah just credit to my teammates forgetting the ball to me when I was open. I wish a couple more went down but yeah, just credit to my teammates for setting screens for me, looking for me, getting the ball to me when I'm open.



**Q. You were probably one of the main reasons why FGCU was able to fight and claw back and get within five, six points going into the fourth quarter there. What were you able to do and see on top of the key and driving to the paint?**

SKYLER GILL: I just had to give everything I had left in me. It was all I had left, and I knew my team needed it at that point. Kaelyn got in foul trouble, and we needed to pick her up. And I just had to attack and shoot big. I knew I was smaller out there, and I just knew what I had to do and use my body.

**Q. Looked like you had your own fan section. How many people did you bring down from Wichita, Kansas?**

SKYLER GILL: I think I had 42 tickets that I had to put in, yeah. I was glad that my family got to see me play a little bit this year. They got to see me play a little bit while I was at Kansas but I'm glad they got to see me play here.

**Q. Both you guys transferred here and got an NCAA Tournament run. For the freshmen looking to find a school or someone that's in the portal coming on up, what would you say to them to come to FGCU and have this experience?**

SKYLER GILL: Just put your trust in Coach Lyles. I think she's done an amazing job this year taking over, and we couldn't be more grateful that she was the one that got to take over and lead us and support us through the very hard time we had when Coach Smesko could he left.

I think it's just a winning environment. It's a good environment that, I mean, I wish I could have spent all four years here. I didn't, but I can't change it now. I just had to give it all I had because my one year.

DOLLY CAIRNS: I would say the exact same thing. I wouldn't have wanted it any other way. I loved playing for Coach Smesko, Coach Lyles. Just really proud of our whole team this whole year.

**Q. A big factor in this game was their size. How much**



**did that factor in the way you guys approached this game?**

DOLLY CAIRNS: It was probably the No. 1 focus. It's hard to win when you give up 23 offensive rebounds. They just kind of beat us down the stretch with that.

So that was tough. But I'm proud of the way we fought. We tried our best to stop them in the paint but they just went on a couple more runs and we couldn't stop them.

**Q. You talk about, obviously, coming in the game and being a big physical presence, and toward the end of that third quarter, what was it in the fourth where Beers and Vann started attacking? What would you say about their paint presence was so tough to stop?**

SKYLER GILL: I would say a little bit towards the end, they just started burying. It was hard. I tried to work around all game and I did the best I could, but there, after a while, they just started burying us. There are some things we can fight through but there's a lot of things with size we can't fight through all the time.

But I'm so proud of everybody, and how they fought, and we did our best. They are obviously a lot bigger than us. There was no secret to that. We knew that coming into this game, and I'm proud of what we did.

**Q. For the two of you, just how would you want this team to be remembered and the legacy that this team had?**

DOLLY CAIRNS: I mean, like we said before, we've been faced with adversity the whole year. And just the way we respond to any challenge that's thrown our way, we always have a plan for it. But really, just this group of people, I love this group of people. My teammates, coaching staff, everybody, part of this program, and we just have a really strong connection with each other.

I think that's what I'm going to miss the most.

SKYLER GILL: I'd say just this team it strong. Coach Smesko, when he left it, was not an easy task, thing for us to do. We struggled a bit. I know personally I struggled a lot when Smesko left.

But we were strong. We had a great leader, Coach Lyles and Coach Cam and our whole coaching staff, just they had to change their role every night, and everybody had to step up and do different things. I'd say just strong and able to fight through adversity.

**Q. Talk about the fight that you guys showed to bring**

**the game within five or seven points. What did you see in your team today?**

CHELSEA LYLES: Like they said, they are just a resilient bunch. They have been resilient all year. They don't back down from a challenge, and they don't play to the scoreboard.

So they continued to play hard. They continued to attack. Just had a few lapses going into the fourth, and then we couldn't come back from that.

But there was never a doubt in my mind that we would come out and compete and play well.

**Q. We knew coming into the game their size advantage, but you put up as you have all year a barrage of threes, a lot of them didn't go down today but how do you feel about the looks you guys got in comparison to trying to combat that with their paint presence with Vann and Beers?**

CHELSEA LYLES: We knew going into the game, we were going to be undersized pretty much one through five. Defensively we just tried to take some things away. We gave a few like quick shots that we didn't want to give up, and then our shots weren't falling. I think we had to shoot it a little bit quicker than we are used to, and then, you know, CC hit a few shots early. Kind of got us going.

But you know, for the most part, we did a pretty good job with our turnovers and turning them over but if you give up 23 offensive rebounds, it's kind of hard to come back from.

**Q. What were you saying in the huddle there going into the fourth quarter and you had them right where you wanted, what was the message there?**

CHELSEA LYLES: Just stick to our defense. Dig deep. Everybody in that huddle believed, and so you know they just had to stick with the game plan, making sure that we were hitting the main points again and doing those things.

But at the end of the day, I'm just very proud of them. You know, they did an amazing job. They worked really hard this year. They had quite a bit of adversity they had to fight through as a group and individually, and you know, they are just resilient. I just told them to keep fighting.

**Q. Did you ever ones considering double-teaming Beers? Any game plan to try to show her down any bit more toward the end?**

CHELSEA LYLES: Yeah, we were trying to send more bodies to her. We just were a little bit slower. I mean, I



think towards the fourth quarter, maybe got a little bit more tired, and you know they just did an incredible job. Monday tee was only able to play 16 minutes and I thought a lot of the players stepped up, and then in the fourth quarter, we just had a few defensive lapses and weren't able to get the look we wanted defensively on her.

**Q. Obviously your first year with the program, you come in 30-4, go on a 23-game win streak. What can you say about the direction the program is headed in and about your experience in this first year under the helm as a head coach now?**

CHELSEA LYLES: I told them this experience has been the best experience of my life. And it's not because I'm sitting up here right now and it's not because of the wins. It's because I got to see a group of girls come together, grow, and accomplish something that a lot of people doubted.

I think a lot of people saw that Coach left, and they didn't think that they were going to be able to accomplish the things they accomplished. They came together. I got to see them grow. I got to see them work towards their goals and I love every single one of them. This experience has been the best experience of my life, and I'm just really proud of them.

**Q. Last year you had a lot of success from behind the three-point line, and today not so much. What were your thoughts on the defense that Oklahoma was throwing at you? What did they change relative to last season?**

CHELSEA LYLES: Well, obviously, they have Beers and she was protecting the paint a little bit more. We rely a lot on getting paint touches, and then cutting. But when you just have somebody who can sit in the paint and then they can take away your shooters, it makes it a little bit more difficult.

I think in the third quarter, one thing we were successful with is still attacking, and then we kind of went away from that. We got open looks down the stretch. We just didn't have them fall. Probably one of the lower percentage, lowest percentages we've shot this year.

But I mean, they did a great job defensively, and again, just very proud of them.

**Q. What can you say moving forward and the future of the program, what the future looks like to you, if you can look that far?**

CHELSEA LYLES: Yeah, I've been at FGCU a long time

and we have always been able to recruit good players. Now, obviously, college basketball is changing a lot. So you just have to make sure that you're continuing to bring in the right players and the right character kids. CC, Rolle, Kae Flowers, freshmen who came in and did not have an ounce of fear in her in this moment. We have got Ana (ph) coming back and we have quite a few pieces coming back.

So you can get a few kids, bring in some pieces; I have full confidence in the future of the program. And then our assistant coaches, I mean, Camryn Brown, she and Lisa, they are great people. They recruit really well.

And so we're going to hit the recruiting trail. We're going to try to bring in the same type of players, and then we're going to get to work, like they said. My voice doesn't change. Smesko is gone, but we're going to still continue to stick to our standard, bring in some transfers, try and get the right kids in this program and continue with our success.

**Q. You've obviously talked a good amount about what this team means to you and the entire program. What was the message to the girls in the locker room?**

CHELSEA LYLES: Pretty much that I'm proud of them, and that they worked really hard. They are going to all be successful in the future. All of our seniors, nine people that are going to graduate and all of them are going to be successful. We're always going to be here for them.

But just told them how proud I was of them and for the work they put in this year, and that if there's anything I can do to help them along the way, I would be more than willing to do that.

But the message was just my gratitude to them for stepping up, leading this team, and for the job they did this year.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

