

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Iowa vs Oklahoma

Sunday, March 23, 2025

Norman, Oklahoma, USA

Lloyd Noble Center

Oklahoma Sooners
Payton Verhulst
Skylar Vann
Sahara Williams

Media Conference

Q. Obviously storyline with this game is Jennie and her time at Iowa. Just wondering, has she talked to you guys about how good of a player she was at Iowa and has she shown any of that in practice before?

PAYTON VERHULST: Oh, wow. That's a packed question. She definitely has shown it. Yeah -- no, I know. All good things. I promised Jennie. She definitely has showed us in practice, and she's kicked our butt some, too; we've kicked her butt. Sometimes she doesn't want to admit what maybe.

I think this game, Jennie does a really good job of -- we don't really want to live up to any hype of rivalries even when we play Texas and have the Red Rivalry.

For us we just want to play basketball. No matter who we play or who we are playing against, where we're playing, I think for us it just matters about the game.

Q. Iowa had some big wins last year and of course they were of talk basketball with Caitlin the last couple years. This is a different team though. Skylar and Sahara, talk about what you see in Iowa and what you think you're going to get, what kind of matchup you're getting into?

SKYLAR VANN: I mean, Iowa is a great team and they can do a lot from the inside and out. They can shoot, get inside the paint; they have the mid-range game, too.

I think for us it's going to be really big on guarding and emphasizing that and just knowing personnel, who we're guarding, having those gaps. Just having each other's



backs and help.

SAHARA WILLIAMS: Like Skylar said, they can score at all three levels and play out of a pick and roll, so just really defending that and doing what we do and making this game about us and how we defend and how we want to play. I think the scoreboard will take care of itself.

Q. Just want to go back to the fourth quarter yesterday. Do you think the slower start was because of having a two-week layoff? Did that go into it at all for you all in that game? Is the fourth quarter kind of like where you this you all can be going into this game on Monday?

PAYTON VERHULST: Definitely. I think fourth quarter you see is kind of the separator for us in a lot of games, and I think it has a lot to do with our depth. You see that kind of kicks in when you're playing against teams that maybe aren't as deep.

So for the style of play that we play it's really important that we continue to play deep because we get up and down a lot, have a lot of possessions.

So I feel like the fourth quarter looks that way because of our depth. And obviously we did have a special unique situation where we had a week and a half off before we played. I feel like now we got a game under our belt and we're at home so that always helps.

Q. Sahara, how different do you feel coming into the tournament this year?

SAHARA WILLIAMS: I would say a lot more confident. Just a lot more ready. I feel a lot more experienced being that we got to play last year at Indiana, playing Indiana. But just a lot more confident because I feel like this team has worked so hard in the offseason and our chemistry is getting to a spot where I think we're going to peak in March and the beginning of April, so I'm super excited.

Q. Sahara, now it's a little bit more real than when we were chatting with you on Friday about potentially playing Iowa. What's a matchup with your home state



team mean to you?

SAHARA WILLIAMS: To me it's just another basketball game. Iowa is a great team. I tip my hat off to them and the coaching staff and everyone who recruited me. I'm here at Oklahoma and happy to be here with Jennie and the team we have and being able to play tomorrow.

Q. Sahara, how much did Coach's Iowa background and being from the state, how much of a connection did that help you build with her in the recruiting process, and how real was the recruiting relationship when you and Jan Jensen?

JENNY BARANCZYK: It was a good recruiting process. I thought I built good connections with them. But just Jennie being from Iowa and just recruiting me when she was at Drake also, I think having that special connection is what led me to follow here to Oklahoma.

I think it was a good recruiting process, but I ended up here with Jennie, so I'm happy about that.

Q. Skylar, what really attracted you to this program originally, and how much do you think you learned, especially in this system that Jennie runs?

SKYLAR VANN: I'm an Oklahoma kid obviously, so I've been an Oklahoma fan my whole life. Especially my dad playing here. So I mean, I wanted to come here and this was a dream of mine.

So coming here it was kind of -- when I got the offer to come here I was like, not second guessing. I'm coming here. And I am super blessed, especially with the coaching change my freshmen year that Jennie came in. I remember our first Zoom meeting with her. Automatically I was like, oh, I'm staying. I just want see if I like it or not.

It's been four years and I'm extremely grateful that I came back after last year, too. Just to be with this team, it was an easy decision to be like I'll take my fifth year here and experience it one more time.

PAYTON VERHULST: We're really happy she came back, too.

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