

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

Sunday, March 23, 2025

Norman, Oklahoma, USA

Lloyd Noble Center

Oklahoma Sooners Jennie Baranczyk

Media Conference



Q. Jennie, talk about this matchup. They've had some great wins this year.

JENNIE BARANCZYK: Uh-huh.

Q. I know they come in as not one of the favorites to get through, but this is going to be a heck of a matchup tomorrow.

JENNIE BARANCZYK: I mean, we're in the NCAA tournament, so you know that every game is going to be a really good game.

But obviously Iowa is really good or they wouldn't be in the tournament. They're so talented. They've grown this season. They're obviously a program that you don't get to keep a really close eye on, but you keep an eye on obviously with my background.

Again, just so we're all aware, I played there. (Smiling.)

Yeah, I mean, I have all the respect in the world. I know how good they are and how good they've been. I know for a lot of years I followed that program. We're not overlooking anything and we better be ready.

Q. You've been closer and closer and closer at this spot in the tournament.

JENNIE BARANCZYK: Yeah.

Q. What's it going to take for this group of veterans plus Reagan to push through and get to the second weekend?

JENNIE BARANCZYK: Well, you got to play the game and you can't get too far ahead of yourself and hold on to things that are behind.

I think we had to work through some of that yesterday. You could see that in our game. So we've got to be able to step out and you got to be able to play the game. And then you to have things go right, you know.

Some of these things you can control and some of those things you can't control. You have to give everything you have.

Also we have to have a lot of fans come. A 3:00 start is a hard start time, but we've got to have everybody in Norman get over here and come fill the stands. It's going to take that as well.

I'm excited to continue to build our fan base. I thought our crowd was amazing yesterday. I loved how many people came. I think we're continuing to build it, grow it, but we still have a long way to go.

Tomorrow is going to be a great tipping point for us to really see how far we have come and how far people want us to go here.

Q. Kind of along those same lines, I know Raegan and Payton have had that experience playing past the round of 32. Anything you learned from them as a coach getting to play -- like what it takes to get to that level? What would it mean for the program moving forward to show that you guys can make it to the Sweet 16 and beyond?

JENNIE BARANCZYK: Well, you know, honestly, I really look at the coaching profession as our student-athletes are our greatest teachers. So many times you sit there and try to emulate different coaches and try to do different things and study different programs.

Not that you don't -- that I don't do that, because obviously I've had great mentors. Jan Jensen is one of those and Lisa Bluder was one of those.

At the same time, I think your players constantly teach you those incredible lessons, and then they teach you how to continue to get better. So their experiences getting to



where they've been are different.

So there is not a pattern. If there was a pattern it would be really easy to be able to do.

But there isn't, and so you've got to learn through life experiences. I think they continue to teach me. I love their leadership, period, regardless of where they've been.

I think they show up every day. They have a smile on their face. You can't help but really like them. Competitors might not like them between the lines, but once you talk to them outside the lines they're literally just the most amazing people.

Of course they're going to teach us. There is not a blueprint; there is not one way to do this.

Q. Coach, I like that you touched on this already; obviously you played four seasons at Iowa during the Bluder era. You've got connections in Iowa and Jan Jensen. Obviously coaching tenure is at Oklahoma now. Does tomorrow's game feel a little sentimental or nostalgic for you?

JENNIE BARANCZYK: There is a couple ways I'll go about this. The first way is when I was at Drake we played Iowa for nine years, so you cheer -- you learn to -- at the beginning it's personal and you want it so bad for yourself, right?

And then you realize it's really not about you.

Then you grow. You start to see your teams compete. Then it becomes a game, and then you can have really respect and love for a place that you came from and other programs and you keep it between the lines, because you want to win every game that you play.

Every other game that Iowa I want them to win. Of course I do. I want them to be really successful. That's one way.

This game will be a little bit sentimental because this last December I lost one of my teammates that I played with at Iowa for three of those four years.

She's a mom and she did the radio and you all know her. Jamie Cavey. And that's humbling. That's hard. That's going to be something that we're going to celebrate tomorrow. So you'll see us have 52 pins on. So we're going to get some for the Iowa staff as well.

And that will be somebody that we want celebrate and honor during this game. She meant a lot to me personally, but she really meant a lot to that program, and that's

important for me on both levels.

Q. Just wanted to know kind of what it's been like entering your cell phone since you found out you would be playing Iowa? Are you getting a bunch of calls, good natured ribbing?

JENNIE BARANCZYK: The SEC Network brought out old playing photos, so that was awesome. You know, fashion was a little different in the early 2000s; so were hair styles.

I mean, of course you get that. At the same time, you know, you want to keep it a game, too. I want to keep it less about the fact that I played however many years ago -- and I know you'll all have the dates so please just leave that out -- but I really want to keep it on how special our team has been this year.

We've had a phenomenal year. It's been a hard year and it's been one that we've had to fall down, get up, had to grow. We've had to -- we're in a new conference. Every game we've played this season has been like an NCAA tournament game.

So it's just been a really cool journey that goes back a couple years. This team has really grown together, so that's really where I want to keep the focus as much as I can.

You guys can keep the focus wherever you want.

Q. Obviously every time you prepare for a team that's a couple categories, you say, man, this team does this or that really well. When you look at Iowa and you've been scouting them, what stands out about them that are maybe the biggest challenges you'll face tomorrow?

JENNIE BARANCZYK: I think Iowa has depth. I think they can space you out. Obviously they can drive the ball. Score in the paint. Shoot the three. They've got great post play.

You know, just a very traditional Iowa team. And not to mention they have experience. So I understand they had a superstar on their team a year ago and had to work through some things as well, but they have that experience, too, that we don't have.

So that's always something.

And they have a fan base that travels. I said this a million times. What I've been really excited about in the state of Oklahoma is I come from a background from Iowa where women's basketball matters. It mattered before Caitlin

came to Iowa.

Now, she really elevated it obviously, but it's always been really important in that state, and we want to continue to have women's sports, and in particular obviously our sport, women's basketball, really elevated here in Oklahoma.

We want young people to grow up and come here just like young people do in the state of Iowa.

Q. Raegan Beers said in the locker room that you do a lot of scrimmaging with the team.

JENNIE BARANCZYK: Thank you, Jeff.

Q. Tell us about that.

JENNIE BARANCZYK: "A lot" is a strong -- that's very -- what do you want me to tell you about that? If I pulled a muscle? Maybe.

Q. What's your role on the scout team?

JENNIE BARANCZYK: It's not every day. Sometimes you step in. I mean unfortunately you -- you're old enough to have covered some of those games when I was a little out of control and competitive, and I'm still maybe that today. Just in a different capacity.

It's fun. I love this game. I love it. This is why I'm doing it. I had a great experience obviously in college. We talked about that. I love coaching. I have just this immense passion for young people to figure things out, to be competitive, to understand that competition isn't always to hope somebody doesn't do well, it's just to bring out this incredible gift of teamwork.

So sometimes you just do what it takes as a college coach, and sometimes I have to step in and humble them, and sometimes I get humbled. So it's -- I just do it because I love it and it's fun, and sometimes it's just a little bit more efficient when you're trying to figure some things out on scout team.

Q. You mentioned you cheer for Iowa when you're not playing them. I guess just what about this particular team, and the job that Jan Jensen has done as a first-year coach, which I'm sure you know how hard that is, what do you think the job she's done in her first year?

JENNIE BARANCZYK: I'm proud of Jan. I love that Lisa ended her career the way she wanted to end it. I love that she passed it on to Jan. I think that's really positive for so many programs that want to build and sustain something.

That's what they've done.

But I also -- and I don't know this, but it looks like Jan's done it her way, too. That's not easy to do when you've been with somebody for so long. You kind of start thinking the same. I think she's just done a great job of being able to build that program.

And Jan is not afraid of anything. Jan, you know, Jan is Jan. I've literally -- I grew up going to Drake basketball camps when Lisa and Jan were there. Jan used to chase me around and just used to drive me crazy. I didn't know she was recruiting me. I just thought she was in my shadow.

And that's Jan. She would leave you voicemails that would stop. Used to have those answering machines and they would stop because she would still be talking, and she would call back and leave more.

Jan is one of the most thoughtful and caring people. That translates over. She's hired a really good staff. Obviously Randi Henderson and I played together as well. I just think Jan is really -- she's one of those people that wants great people around her too.

So she's going to do an incredible job and she always has and she always will.

Q. You've had about 24 hours since the Florida Gulf Coast game. What's one takeaway you reflect on you can apply to Iowa tomorrow?

JENNIE BARANCZYK: One? We needed to finish better. I mean, honestly, the biggest takeaway of the whole thing is we got to play the game. You can't play the scoreboard constantly. You can't worry so much about whether or not the ball goes or what's happening the play before, what is going to happen the next play.

We got to stay present and play the game. I think we got too far ahead of ourselves and then I think we kind of held onto some things. But we've to be able to play the game.

Execute-wise obviously need to be able to finish and have better ball movement to play against a team like Iowa, and we got to really defend better in terms of one on one. Especially off the bounce.

Q. I asked Sahara about the process of coming to Oklahoma and the Iowa connection you guys both have. She mentioned the recruiting process really started at Drake, so maybe not unlike your relationship with Jan and Lisa. What was the process of getting Sahara down here 11 hours away from home, and how

impactful and important is she to what you're trying to establish here?

JENNIE BARANCZYK: Sahara I saw when she was in seventh grade and I offered her and she said no. I came here and she was a little bit more open.

She's special. I love -- I have said this, and this is something to be really proud of in both programs -- but she's a young woman that her freshmen year she had some moments. Her and I have had some tough conversations.

She's a truth seeker though. Not a lot of young people really want to hear the truth. She does.

In the 20 whatever years I've been coaching, she has grown more in one year than I have ever seen know student-athlete grow.

I'm talking in every area. She's our everyday person. She lights up a room. I know you could kind of see her intensity in her, but her smile infectious. She's competitive, doing well in school.

Her community should be so incredibly proud of her. I know they are, but I don't know if they know the half of it. Her leadership, her drive, I'm just -- I just feel so lucky to get to coach her.

That's how our recruiting process was. She's not somebody that really liked it. She wasn't really into it. But she seeks the truth and wants a real -- she wants real people. She wants a authentic relationships. She doesn't want people to tell her how good she is. She wants people to tell her what she has to do better.

Her skillset is going to continue to catch up to her, because the rest of it, she's got at an elite level. She works really, really hard, and that's all going to come. But, man, she's really, really special.

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