

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

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Norman, Oklahoma, USA

Lloyd Noble Center

Michigan State Spartans Coach Robyn Fralick Kennedy Blair Rashunda Jones

Media Conference

Oklahoma 77, Michigan State 71

ROBYN FRALICK: Yeah, well, heck of a game. A lot of credit to Oklahoma. They are a very good team. They've had a great season. I was incredibly proud of our group. I thought we fought. We played with great competitive spirit. I shared in the locker room which is always -- it's always sad when a season ends.

But there should be a real pride in it a last game leaving it all out there. I've been part of a lot of different teams and seasons, and to have a real feeling of knowing that we gave it our best and there are things we can do better. There are things we could clean up. There are things that we'll all replay in our heads.

At the end of the day that's kids left it all out there in a great game. This particular team has really helped elevate our program and has done some things that haven't been done here in a long time.

And even from a season ago, this second round game our team has taken a big jump. So really proud of these kids for how they've come together over the course of the year and helping our program elevate.

Q. Kennedy or Rashunda, how tough was it -- looked like it was a tough defensive game to me. How tough was it to get into the offense today?

RASHUNDA JONES: I don't think it was tough necessarily for or offense. I think our offense was flowing. We needed to hit our free throws. That's what it came down at the end of the day.



But not just that. But they're a really request good team and we game planned for them. Believe it or not their game plan played right into our hands and we forced them to take only jump shots and they unfortunately made more than we though they were going to do. We had to make an adjustment. Chavez and Beers are two really good players and credit to them.

KENNEDY BLAIR: Yeah, I think they're big and physical, and that's something that bothered us a little bit. But I thought we did a good job offensively just keeping up with the pace. We knew it was going to be fast and play in transition a lot. So I thought we did a good job for the most part playing with them and being able to use our speed.

They have a lot of really big size so I think that bothered some of our down low and paint action a little bit. But credit to them. I thought they did a really good job playing to their good and take advantage of us where they could.

But proud of us and I'm proud that we fought. I think this was a really good game and I think there is a lot of things we can learn from and get better from.

Q. You really bothered Oklahoma's ball handling. I think they had two is turnovers through three quarters. Then only two or three in the fourth quarter. Whatever you were doing to get them off rhythm, what happened to change that?

RASHUNDA JONES: I can't give you a direct answer for that. What I can say is I think once we got down we started -- once the fouls starting adding up we obviously tried to play it a little bit more safe and stuff in my opinion.

But I think for the most part they just took really good care of the ball. They weren't making careless passes or handling the ball careless.

So I think credit to them for just playing through adversity and staying solid on not turning the ball over. I think we still played the same defense as we did in the first half.

KENNEDY BLAIR: Yeah, I mean, that's basically it. But I



also think that we like got warn out a little bit I would say. I think like I said, if big and physical. We knew it was going to be a big rebounding game. I think near the end when they went on their run to get ahead in the fourth it kind of beat us a little bit physically and emotionally.

I mean, I think we could have been more aggressive in the fourth being able to play our pace and not letting them take over the game.

So like I said, still credit to them. I think they did a good job executing their plays in the last a little bit and they kept going back to the high low to Beers. Beers is such a hard matchup. Our bigs I thought did a really good job containing her for the most part.

She's just a tough matchup and when they're continuously looking to bully ball down low it's hard to pick off those passes and being help side when they have good shooters, you just got pick your battles and I thought they did a good job skipping and doing whatever they needed to do to score at the end.

Q. The crowd here especially game alive in the second half. How tough is it when you're in an environment like this and trying to regain momentum and they've got just a deafening crowd at every turn?

KENNEDY BLAIR: I think that plays a big part into it. They got rowdy in the third quarter. You're always going to hear things, so just have to stay in a different mindset. I think we knew coming into this it was going to be a tough environment.

But at the same point, we could have hosted a game, too, if we would've won a couple games this the regular season. This is personal. We you said that hosting is a big advantage. That's something that we need to put our mind to. We know we can do that.

You know, that's credit to Oklahoma forgetting able to host. They won the games that mattered. Next year obviously we want to take that advantage and use it because clearly it does play a difference.

RASHUNDA JONES: Yeah, I would say home court advantage definitely plays a difference. I think they started getting more rowdy when they went on that run a little bit in to the first -- I think the first five minutes of the third quarter.

But I think our huddle still stays the same. I think we still rallied around each other and I think we did a good job maintaining through it.

It was just a matter of hitting shots, hitting free throws. When they came down to it they were going into beers and

she is a tough matchup. So, yeah, I would just say credit to them forgetting the home court advantage but also credit to us for not letting it over stimulate us or not letting to get us frazzled.

Q. Robyn, Beers and Chavez have such unique skill sets. What are the challenges of game planning for both of them specifically?

ROBYN FRALICK: Well, for us, Beers is just her size. And she's good. So I think it's always hard to game plan for good players, but her size is just a challenge. She's got great hands. She's a great rebounder, too. Just her ability to get them extra possessions outside of scoring.

We knew that coming in. But we also thought our kids have found ways being undersized and fight and get around. There was a time even we were just a little late on help or -- and then Chavez, she's such a unique player because she can get really hot. I thought we actually did a good job on her, but she made a huge three near the end of the game. She made just a really, really timely shot.

But they're a good team. I mean, I think when you look across why they've been successful, they have a lot of good players, and they don't just count on one player. I thought Vann made some of the biggest plays of the night for them, made some really timely shots.

Q. How important for the sport is it to have good games like this? We've seen a bunch of blowouts. USC Clemson had a good game, Ole Miss, Minnesota. I'm flipping around all the channels yesterday just looking for anybody that's playing a competitive game and then you guys go to the wire. How important is it to come on the road and play a game like this that people want to watch?

ROBYN FRALICK: Well, we gave everybody two really good games. I think it's really important for our game. On the women's side, the home-court advantage is a huge piece of it, and you fight like crazy during the year to try to get that, and your body of work over the course of the season is so important. We know that. A year ago we were at NC State who was a 2 seed, and this year we understand the implications.

But I will share, our team has been good on the road this year. We've had some of our biggest wins, and we have been undeterred on the road. I think we've done a good job of not letting that bother us or change who we are or change how we play. But I think it's really important for the game, the competitive games.

But there's also just some really, really, really good teams,



and the home-court advantage piece definitely makes our tournament different.

Q. You guys played a great first half. You have a five-point lead. What do you think happened in the third quarter?

ROBYN FRALICK: Well, it was a really tough start to the third. They called an upgraded flagrant, which I don't think it's the time or place for me to get into it, but that was an eight-point swing really fast. It was an 8-0 run, which I thought was not the way you want to start the third quarter. So we kind of got on our heels and they got a lot of momentum early, and then we settled back in. We turned it over in some timely opportunities. We had a huge open corner threes. We had some opportunities.

The biggest thing for me, some of it's the game. We knew coming in, this game is going to be fast. They turn people over, we turn people over. The biggest thing we talked about was rebounding. We felt like that is their superpower, and we had to find ways to minimize that. So that bothers me a little bit less.

But our free throws. We were up five and we should have been up nine, which is really different than being up five. We've been a good free-throw shooting team, and we had good free-throw shooters miss free throws. In these games we know margin is super small, and some of the things played out the way we thought, but the free throws for us, I think that's an area that we have counted on those, and we have been able to get to the free-throw line and add that as a dimension to the way we score.

But it was not a lack of effort. It was not a lack of toughness. There were sometimes mistakes, but yeah, the five-point lead dwindled quickly to start the third.

Q. You talked about things being good for the game. When you look at the growth of the game, obviously you would have liked to host, but to see an atmosphere like this, what does it tell you about the direction and just the passion that people are showing out and showing for women's college basketball?

ROBYN FRALICK: Well, it's worth your time. It's worth your time. It's a great game. These women are incredible. They're so athletic and strong and fierce. Today there was a wrestling match going on at different parts of it. And credit to Jennie. She's a friend. We had an opportunity. We were both mid major coaches, so we coached against each other when she was at Drake and I was at Bowling Green. We coached together this summer with USA Basketball, and she's building something really special here, and she's been really consistently good.

You know, people follow that. The crowd tonight is a testament to what she's built here and what her program has been doing. She's somebody that -- I didn't cheer for her tonight, but I'll cheer for her on any other nights that they're not playing Michigan State.

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