

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Green Bay vs Tennessee

Friday, March 22, 2024

Raleigh, North Carolina, USA

Reynolds Coliseum

Green Bay Phoenix

Coach Kevin Borseth

Media Conference

KEVIN BORSETH: Obviously with Wisconsin, Green Bay, and excited to be here. I can tell you that I was at North Carolina State's National Championship game and Valvano was in it. It was in the stands. As a matter of fact, I'm in Sports Mirror magazine. Yeah, see me sitting in the band section.

So, whatever that's worth.

Anyway, glad to be here. Fun times. It's an honor to be playing in the tournament.

Q. Coach, you had a long run of making it to the NCAA tournament every year and then it's been now a while. Does it mean more getting back here this year after having missed the Dance a few years?

KEVIN BORSETH: Yeah, it's interesting. Became almost like it was going to happen every year. It was like 20 years in a row we were in and missed about the last four.

Yeah, a little emotional getting in this one. The players we had were cut out the last couple years, weren't able to get in. It's kind of sweet to be back.

Q. Kellie Harper has mentioned multiple times this week she has been an admirer of your program and the kind of basketball you guys play. She is familiar with you guys. Did you have any idea she was an admirer of your program? What does it mean to hear the opposing head coach say she's watched you quite a bit?

KEVIN BORSETH: Yeah, I've been around for 40 years. Somebody has seen us play before. And our program has been consistent through the course of time.

I think good you take a look at the success that our



program had over the course of the last 45 years for the most part, I've been there for about 20 of those. It's really pretty remarkable. I don't take credit for that. A lot of things are important with that.

Yeah, I don't really follow what anybody else says obviously. I'm too busy doing this right here trying to find how to win the next game.

But tell her thanks.

Q. For those of us who haven't watched your team throughout the season, who would you consider the X factor on your team? You can look at the stats and see the biggest stars. Who's the X factor?

KEVIN BORSETH: For us?

Q. Yes.

KEVIN BORSETH: We really don't have a superstar. It's good and bad. We don't have the player to go to if we need to get something.

It's the strength of the group. Really is. There is strength in numbers. We're pretty balanced. I think we have four, maybe five players that average in double figures, maybe at the highest 12 or 13 points a game.

Kind of run a system where there is an opening, you kind of find it. If you're fast enough to get to that opening, you might get some points. If you're not quick enough you may not get it.

Pretty balanced for the most part. We're not a one-player dominant system. All of our players have got some skill. As a result, we have a multitude of kids that are leaders in scoring and rebounding during the course of the year.

Q. Are you excited when you get out of your region to another area of the country to put your team on display? Everyone else is kind of a little bit of a -- know about each other and you're kind of I guess the outsider.



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KEVIN BORSETH: Yeah, you know, it's -- you play in your conference, and everybody can probably say the same thing, if you play your conference tournament you play a team for the third time, and can be finally be done with this and play somebody else.

Yeah, it's exciting to play somebody besides ourselves, irregardless of who it is. Just happens to be Tennessee, which is a pretty big mountain to climb. Obviously seeing an opponent we haven't seen all year long.

I could probably speak for a lot of coaches that want to get outside their conference. Your conference is hard. Your conference tournaments are even harder. When you get out of that it's almost like a breath of fresh air to play somebody you haven't seen before.

Q. Your team had some pretty big wins in non-conference play. What did you see from them that makes you think they will be ready to face a team where they are technically the underdog again?

KEVIN BORSETH: Yeah, we're competitive. Our players are competitive. Again, I said at the beginning of the year when the year started, these players have been with us for the last couple years. I didn't know if we would win one game, but I could guarantee we would be competitive in the games we played in.

Won a few games and put ourselves in this position right now. So our kids are competitive. We kind of take care of ourselves, do what we do to the best of our ability. We're not really worried about any of the outside forces. I don't think our players will be intimidated by the stage.

We're excited about the place being sold out. Going to be a full arena. Yeah, and I feel confident that our players will play to the best of their ability. They battle. They been battle-tested. Maybe not at this level. Tennessee is pretty good. But we have played some good teams over the course of the last couple years that they had an opportunity to play against that -- and it's fun. It's a challenge.

But fun to be able to do that.

Q. Why were you at the championship game that NC State won? What was your reason for being there?

KEVIN BORSETH: I went to six in a row actually. I did. I started St. Louis at the Golden Arches was the first one, and the last one was at the New Orleans where Michael Jordan won it, and I think Valvano won it in '83.

Yeah, and we drove -- actually drove up through Denver, watched a Nuggets and Lakers game and back down in

Albuquerque.

I even remember my doggone cab driver's name when we were in Albuquerque. Yeah, it was fun to go down there, sit in court. So actually we sat in one of the band sections of one of the teams that got beat, so we were down nice and low.

So I think the last shot was shot, missed the rim. I don't know if it was Lowe tipped it in or who put the ball in the basket.

And then Valvano was running around court. Look at him, he's running around not finding anybody. It was pretty cool, but that was quite a long time ago.

Q. I want to go back to Tennessee, and I wanted to know from your perspective what is that balance like when you have to balance the challenge of going up against a team with so much tradition like Tennessee, but at the same time, dealing with that excitement of that challenge and preparing for them. How is it for you balancing both dynamics?

KEVIN BORSETH: First of all, I want to tell you a little bit of nostalgia you probably don't know. The two winningest programs in NCAA women's basketball college history are Green Bay and Tennessee. For the winningest seasons. Each one of us got 45 winning seasons. Tennessee is 1 and Green Bay a No. 2.

Look that up. That's kind of interesting. Carol Hammerly started that for Green Bay many years ago. We've been able to carry it through to this point right now.

At any rate, your question was how do we balance the excitement and still being able to play?

I just think you have to be who you are. I mean, dance with who brought you. I'm not trying to be cute with my words, but I think we do what we do. That's what our MO has been the entire while, is just do you, whatever that is, and do it to the best of your ability.

I don't think we're going to reinvent the wheel in a week's period of time and trying to do something to either combat or beat Tennessee. We just have to do what we do to the best of our ability. Stay within ourselves.

If we do that, you're in familiar ground. At least you know if you take a left or right, it doesn't work, you'll be able to go because you'll know -- because you've been there before in that regard.

Balancing the emotions, that's a different story obviously.

But, again, we played in front of big crowds before and I think our crew is pretty determined.

That doesn't guarantee anything. But by the same token, I believe they'll play well.

Q. Your team is going to be going up against one of the best players in the country in Rickea Jackson. How do you go about preparing for a player like her?

KEVIN BORSETH: She had 19 against us at Mississippi State many years ago. Played in a tournament in Vancouver. We didn't do very well back then. She just went right around us.

She is really impressive. Really is. If she's not one of the top players in the WNBA draft I would be surprised.

She's just a really good player. I don't know how to answer that question. Obviously someone you have to key on, but they have other players that have ability right along with it. They've a very nice club. They almost beat South Carolina. I mean, came down to somebody banking a three at the end of the game.

You look at their losses, three to South Carolina, two to LSU. So they're in a pretty good league, you know. Tough opponent.

Again, I go back to what I said earlier. We just have to do what we do to the best of our ability, stay within what we do, and see where it takes us for the most part.

Again, we're not going to reinvent the wheel. I can't focus on Tennessee. I got to focus on Green Bay.

Q. You've been part of so many NCAA tournaments and part of the sport for so long. How have you seen it grow? I guess this is your first time being actually having the March Madness insignia behind you.

KEVIN BORSETH: Yeah, right. I feel like I worked for the NCAA. I deserve a pension when it's all over with. That's a day for a different story. 40 some years.

But, I started in junior college back in '82 and '83 and players had long fingernails and two-hand shots. It was really dire straits back then.

There was for a long time, and probably in the last five years is where it's really changed, you were recruiting players and juniors in high school because -- and then all of a sudden now you're watching sophomores in high school and now you go down to seventh grade level and watch some of the tournaments in the summer and look at

these players and think, my, where did they come from?

Seventh grade kids are really talented. The game of girls basketball leading into women's basketball has grown so much over the last 40 years, and I've got an opportunity to witness that, got an opportunity to be a part of that. It's been just astronomical.

Of course it's really capped off this year with the Caitlin Clark era. How fitting that she's stepped to the forefront and elevated or game to a new level. Really helped a lot.

Look at North Carolina State. Place sold out in 30 minutes. How awesome is that? What does that tell you about the game of women's basketball nowadays. I think that's probably the same to be true for a lot of places. A lot of gals can play basketball. What used to be girls basketball is now women's basketball, and these young ladies can play. Trust me.

Anybody that watches them appreciates the game a lot because there is a lot of teamwork involved in women's basketball.

So from fans' perspective what I hear is we like watching the gal's play because a lot of the teamwork involved. Brings you back to the -- I don't know I'm a Larry Bird, Magic Johnson fan. A lot of teamwork back in those days, not quite as much individual play.

Yeah, it's grown a lot. Been fun to be a part of and see it.

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