

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Vermont vs NC State

Saturday, March 22, 2025

Raleigh, North Carolina, USA

Reynolds Coliseum

Vermont Catamounts

Alisa Kresge

Keira Hanson

Anna Olson

Media Conference

NC State 75, Vermont 55

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by Vermont Head Coach Alisa Kresge and student-athletes Keira Hanson and Anna Olson. We will start with an opening statement from.

ALISA KRESGE: I think our play today really spoke volumes about our program and where we're at. I couldn't be prouder of this group, just showing so much fight and poise in an incredible environment. It was outstanding. This is what it's all about. Really, really just proud, especially of these two next to me and our upperclassmen that played their last game. This is what it's all about. Thankful, really, really thankful for this opportunity with them.

That's the hardest part, is saying goodbye to our upperclassmen and not having a chance to do this again with them. And for the game, I mean, we really felt like we played really good for three quarters. We lost some momentum in the fourth, and we made some errors defensively and of course NC State and their outstanding team capitalized off of that, and really made that push at the end. Couldn't be prouder of this group and being here, representing Vermont, with these amazing student-athletes.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for our student-athletes.

Q. For Keira or Anna, after they went up 18-8, you guys responded with a 10-0 run. How were you able to find the space to get those shots?



KEIRA HANSON: I think by this point in the season we know what we do best. We know if we just put our head down and work good things usually come. So we really focused on starting with defense. We've been in that position before with a lead like that, so just controlling what we could.

ANNA OLSON: I think the mentality, like, we have nothing to lose at this point, and if you have an open shot take it, and I think our shooters did a great job at that, responding. We were down. We could have just let that lead keep growing and growing, but they didn't. They really took open shots, and it was great.

Q. Very raucous environment here in Reynolds Coliseum but and a lot of Catamounts came down and I don't know if you saw, but State fans were saying props to that pep band. They brought the energy. What sort of pride do you all take from that?

ANNA OLSON: I love Catamount country. We have some of the best fans in the country, and for every sport. They show up, they show out, and it's just amazing. They are what make us, our program so great at home games in Patrick. I think we are so successful there because of our fans. They're so loud, and then they come down here and you just hear them chanting "UVM" and it's just like -- you feel like you're back home. They're so special to us.

KEIRA HANSON: Similar to what Anna said, I think our fans really just make UVM, UVM. It really feels like one big family. I think Vermont may seem small compared to other states, but they feel big, a lot bigger than other states, just because the fans are so special and so personal with us.

Q. By halftime had your confidence grown more, and what were you feeling at that point?

KEIRA HANSON: Yeah, definitely going into half we were hyped. We were trying to go in with no doubt so that helps our confidence. At that point we just wanted to keep doing what we were doing. Yeah, there was a lot of confidence.

ANNA OLSON: Yeah, it showed that we could compete with this team. We're only down two points right now, let's



go! Let's attack. We have nothing to lose at this point. We did go in with that mentality. Obviously we got into a little bit of a rut in the fourth quarter, but we carried our heads high in the end, but it felt good.

Q. What worked well for you guys to keep the game close throughout the first three quarters and give you guys a shot?

ANNA OLSON: I thought we never got too high or too low. When we were hitting shots, we weren't celebrating, we were getting back on defense. Obviously they are a really good transition offense team, so we would make shots, and we would get back to get another stop, to keep that run going. Our shooters were taking open shots which is what we needed. They were doing it with confidence and they were hitting them, so I think that's what helped us keep us with them.

KEIRA HANSON: We kept hustling and flying in for rebounds, and the shooters didn't hesitate, and we trusted ourselves.

Q. How can you build off this as a program, to try to get that win against a top team in a big-time game?

KEIRA HANSON: Yeah, I think definitely because they were a 2 seed, we have to remind ourselves that we know the work it takes to get there, and we can do it well. I think for the people that were here a few years ago, we also played UConn, also a very high seed. I think it's constantly reminding ourselves that we definitely can take it to these teams. We definitely beat Missouri at the beginning of the season, so just reminding ourselves that we can do it if we just put our minds to it.

ANNA OLSON: I think the culture of the program is at an all-time high right now, and it's just going to keep building. And, you know, if we keep building, we're going to start getting wins out of these type of games.

Q. As upperclassmen how proud are you for building that culture, where you're able to take these teams down to the wire and be part of that?

ANNA OLSON: Yeah, it means everything to me. This team and the people, the coaches, I mean, I don't want to be a part of any other team. Again, it's only growing. It's not stopping here. It's going to keep going higher and higher, and I just can't wait to see where this goes, because I think it has a really good foundation.

KEIRA HANSON: I'm so proud. I don't know Vermont without Anna, so ever since I came here, I've looked up to her, and amazing people like Bella Vito and all the other

seniors. I think they've paved the way for us, and I'm excited to keep it going. I think a big word for us is grit, so that's something we're going to continue with our culture.

Q. If we want years down the road when you think back to this experience, what will you tell people with this?

KEIRA HANSON: I will say we didn't go down without swinging, and we made noise, and we were proud to represent Vermont.

ANNA OLSON: Same thing. We went there with the mentality that we can win this game, and we came swinging to start, and I'm going to remember the grit it took to get this far.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, ladies. Questions for Coach?

Q. Coach, 20 years down the road what will be your impressions of what you just experienced with this group?

ALISA KRESGE: I think of this group, and I will forever think of this group as just amazing women that have continued to grow and been so impressive. They came in as impressive women, don't get me wrong, but where they are now is just incredible. Their confidence, their care for each other, their love for each other. Really, it was the people.

Everything they gave, the amount of work they put in for each other has been really, really special. So just who they were for us and who they are is what really made this group so special and this run so special to me.

Q. Your team was able to absorb the first blow from NC State but not the second one. What was the difference on that one in the third quarter?

ALISA KRESGE: Yeah, I think a little bit of size, physicality hurt us, that second punch. Athleticism, some things that we just didn't have an answer for later in the game. I think we gave it all. We left it all on the line, but they had that second gather that we couldn't match at the end of the game, and that was, I think, what changed the game.

Q. Coach, how were you able to withstand their first one and start that 10-0 run after the media timeout? Their starting guard shot, quick math, 21 of 55 from the field. How were you able to make up that size gap and keep them to such an inefficient day shooting?

ALISA KRESGE: I thought our players did an excellent job



staying poised. We talked a lot about they're incredible scorers, they're going to respond, how do we respond? Do we get down, do we worry about that or do we go next play mentality? I thought our players handled it well, staying true to who. You can't control that. You can control the next play, the next opportunity. And credit to our guards. We knew they would hit tough shots, but just making it you uncomfortable, so slowing their scoring down.

Really just proud of how they responded when it could have been over from the tip. I thought they did an excellent job of staying true to who Vermont is and buying in to what we have done all year, and why we got this opportunity.

Q. Coach, two years ago you were a 2-15 game, and you lost by 43. What are the differences you've seen in being able to stay in a game in another tough environment in the same kind of seed pairing?

ALISA KRESGE: I think that opportunity has helped us for sure, being in that situation. Going on the road and playing at Indiana, playing at Purdue. We have been at this point in our program where we are taking it on the road in the nonconference or getting these opportunities in postseason that helped set the foundation. Anna Olson knew what to expect in this game because she has done it for three years now against the biggest, strongest posts out there, Catherine Gilwee running the show for us against UConn. I think the opportunities this group has created for us and our administration has allowed us to do has helped us come in with a different mentality in this game, even sitting at a 15 seed against a 2 again.

Q. Coach, players like Anna and Bella, this was their final game. How much have they meant to this program, and how have they left it in a better place than when they found it when they came in?

ALISA KRESGE: This is a tough one. I can't put into words what those two have meant to this program, to me. They're just -- they epitomize what Vermont is about, student-athletes. Two of the greatest human beings that have given absolutely everything. Have stayed true to Vermont and who they are. They have done it in all areas. You guys get to enjoy their play, but I've gotten to enjoy so much off the court that they have done for this program.

That's the hardest part about this is saying goodbye to seeing Anna every single day after five years, Bella four years; that kid has brought us so much joy. So I can't really put into words right now how much they mean to where we are at, what they have done for this program.

Not only obviously what you have seen but the recruiting --

I have put them on every recruit, they're incredible. And they have helped get Vermont back on the map. There's just no words to really sum how much they mean to us.

Q. How can you keep the foot on the gas in the fourth quarter to keep the game close so you have a chance at the upset for building on for next year?

ALISA KRESGE: I thought we made a couple really defensive lapses that we know better. I know our players good enough, their heads, and they know before I'm telling them. So those are the mistakes that we gotta clean up in the fourth quarter. You can't have those mistakes against a really talented team. They capitalized off every one of our defense lapses in the fourth quarter. And so we'll learn from it, those coming back will remember these opportunities, and how to stay sharp for forty minutes is key. But credit to NC State. They're talented, and they ran with those opportunities.

Q. What's the next step for this program of getting another win against a really good team, making that statement?

ALISA KRESGE: Yeah, we're going to have a new roster, so we're going to get back to work, stay true to who we are. We're hopefully going to do some things in the nonconference that can help us be maybe higher than a 15 seed if we get that opportunity to come back here. But we've got work to do in the off-season.

We know that league is very talented. Programs are going to be reloading, and there's a lot of players coming back from injuries in our league. We'll take it one step at a time and keep getting stronger and building that foundation.

Q. Coach, in the transfer portal era it's rare to see players stick around three, four, five years in the same program. What about the culture that you all built at Vermont that makes players want to stay and be part of that?

ALISA KRESGE: Yeah, I think Vermont is a special place with really, really good people, and I know there are great people everywhere, but it is a unique state. We're the only Division I program in the state. There is a lot of passion behind UVM athletics. Our players after games are mobbed by fans, and it's out of love. There's cookies, you name it. It just feels like a home for all these players. I can't credit enough the people that make it so special. The people they're doing it with, the community, the administrators, the professors, everyone is so bought in. When you feel that much love, it's hard to walk away from. When what they've got, they're special, and the people actually care about them. I think that's it, we should have

asked Anna why, but I'm not complaining.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Coach.

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