

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

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Raleigh, North Carolina, USA

Reynolds Coliseum

Michigan State Spartans

Robyn Fralick

Media Conference



good attention to it. It's been a little bit game-to-game which lineup is getting us on a roll.

It's both. I think that you can have an advantage, and then there's things obviously that you have to pay attention to when you're playing a 4 and a 5.

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue our press conference with Coach Robyn Fralick.

Q. Both the coaches, the Harvard coaches and players talked about how they had never seen that defense before and that they had a hard time adjusting to it. Then obviously you see a lot of great players in the Big Ten. Can you just give us a little idea on how you come up with your game plans and that your players trusted it?

ROBYN FRALICK: Every game plan takes a lot of time and intentionality, and I think it's a combination of, okay, how do we stay systematic and really key in on the most important things for the opponent?

With that, every team looks a little bit different, but we've got to be able to merge those. How do we guard, and how do we stay in a system that we're confident in and try to minimize the most important things?

With Harvard, I shared this last night, it was really important for us to take away Turner's 3s, guard her with multiple matchups, and do a good job kind of building pressure in layers.

Q. Is it your general inclination to use a pair of post players for the most part? NC State tends to be guard-oriented. Is that generally what you do with your team this year?

ROBYN FRALICK: We do both. I think we play segments of the game with probably more of a true 4 and 5. We play segments of the game with four guards. I think it depends game-to-game, matchups. We track closely lineups, who's playing well.

I think our team this year especially we've had to pay really

Q. 12 teams in the Big Ten are in the tournament. You've played against great competition all year long. What team in the Big Ten reminds you of NC State in any kind of way? Have you played a team in that conference that reminds you -- the style, the size, what have you?

ROBYN FRALICK: We were talking about that a little bit as a staff this morning. I don't think there's a particular team. I think NC State is, their guard play is so good. I think Ohio State there's some resemblance. Not necessarily defensively, but offensively. A little bit of overlap there.

NC State is their own and a really good team.

Q. A lot was made about how you wanted to get through that first round, get the team their confidence. I was surprised to hear the North Carolina State players say the same thing. They're obviously a very experienced team. Is that just part of having a mature program?

ROBYN FRALICK: I think it's a big part of taking the game in front of you really seriously. At this time in the season, anybody playing is really good. Anybody playing is really dangerous. Anybody still playing is doing things really well.

You always say the most important game is the game in front of you. We say that all season long. Then when you get into March, there has to be an incredible intentionality behind the game in front of you, the possession in front of you, the details that go into that.

Q. Talking about NC State's guards, their top three scorers obviously are guards. You did a great job on Turner. What uniqueness do the three guards for NC State have as far as challenging to defend them?



ROBYN FRALICK: They can score at all three levels, really creative, excellent at creating their own shots. They'll make tough shots. It's kind of like guarding three of her, which is a challenge in front of us. We obviously have a lot of respect for them.

Q. Your players talked a lot about your defense being unique. How would you describe the way you guys play on the defensive end?

ROBYN FRALICK: What I love is season to season it's been a little bit different based on our personnel. A pretty cool stat -- actually Abby Nakfoor shared this with me last night -- we actually last night set the school record for steals done in a season, which is done collectively. We've done that as a group. We've had a number of people who have been obviously very involved in that.

We build our system based on -- one of my favorite sayings that I always tell our team is, when in doubt, be aggressive. Sometimes it comes back to bite us, but I think it's a mentality and it's the way we play and it's the way we practice. It's built together. I think you can only be disruptive as a unit. A player can only do so much, but five people moving together in disruption can create chaos.

At our best we've been able to do that. Not at our best, we've not done that. So it's critical that five people are doing it together.

Q. Kind of to piggy-back off that, we talked with Grace yesterday after the game, and we talked about playing with physicality, and she had a big smile on her face. We asked your two guards about the same thing today, and they had a smile on their face. Do you expect the physicality, especially on the defensive side, from all positions, which kind of plays off of what you said?

ROBYN FRALICK: I love to say it's a big girls game. The further along you move, the bigger of a girls game it gets. You've got to be able to take contact. You've got to be able to hold your line. I love that.

I think when we go through Big Ten play, the Big Ten is very physical. You have to do it the right way. It's physicality with purpose. It's physicality with discipline. But, yeah, it's a big girls game.

Q. Do you have any particular recipe for road success? How do you think your team has handled the road environments throughout the season?

ROBYN FRALICK: You have to play good basketball. You want to win on the road. I think you have to play really

good basketball. Road experience in the Big Ten, we play in front of soldout crowds and packed environments and loud and all the things that make women's basketball so fun and at the platform it's on right now.

We were here, we saw a little bit of the game before us last night. This place is going to be rocking. It's going to be loud. It's going to be hot. That's what this part of the season is about.

We're excited to be part of a time of women's basketball when people really care about it.

Q. You mentioned earlier that you played at Davidson when Wes Moore was coaching at Chattanooga. How much different is he? How much is he the same? Does he remember you at all or not?

ROBYN FRALICK: Probably not. I don't know how -- I knew him being on the sideline. I think the things that are the same is Chattanooga was really good, they won the league, they're very dominant. They had great teams.

So I think something that has translated over all of this time is he's a great coach and been a part of coaching a lot of great teams.

Q. Do you remember how you did against Chattanooga?

ROBYN FRALICK: Yeah, we lost.

(Laughter).

They won the league every year I was there.

Q. They did?

ROBYN FRALICK: Yeah. They'd play that C'Mon Ride the Train, remember that song? That would play over and over again, I remember that when they were there. They won the league every year we were there. They had really good teams.

Q. But you had big games, right? You had a big game?

ROBYN FRALICK: I mean, I wouldn't say that (laughter).

Q. Last year -- I saw in an interview you talked about how last year you were kind of happy to be in the tournament, and now that you're -- you played against North Carolina last year and South Carolina. You were talking about the mindset coming into this tournament. So how do you feel about your team and their

mentality with a chance to go to the Sweet 16?

ROBYN FRALICK: So many things experience teaches you, and one of them is what it looks like, what it feels like, and what you want out of it. I do think our mentality this year around was different, has been different. You're no longer excited to just be invited to the party. You want to make some noise while you're at it.

The preparation has been good. I think we've also done a good job of savoring it. That was something we've talked about. I shared today with our team very few people in their college career make the tournament, and even less win in it.

So you have to pay attention to kind of the sacredness behind that and then prepare with that and not just be happy that it's happened, but, hey, we have this opportunity. How do we prepare in a way that really honors that?

Q. Kind of along those lines, to be in year two, the significance for you, the staff, the program to get an NCAA Tournament win and what the opportunity is ahead where it could be the first Sweet 16 in 16 years for Spartan Women's Basketball. If you could expand on what that opportunity is for this program.

ROBYN FRALICK: I think you nailed it. I didn't know the time or the years. I've gotten asked a lot did you expect this in your second year at Michigan State? We just expect to get better, right? I know that sounds so simple, but how do we approach a day? How do we approach a practice? How do we approach a film session? And how do we incrementally get better?

With the two weeks between the Big Ten Tournament and the NCAA Tournament, we talked about win the wait. We're not going to become a brand new team, but we can become a better team.

So the opportunity in front of us, I think that's what you're always working for is opportunities and creating new opportunities. That's what we have in front of us. Today we're going to go on the court and hope to get a little better. Tomorrow give it our best.

Q. You've talked a lot about NC State's guards, their forwards are young, but what have you seen from them just on film and what they're able to do?

ROBYN FRALICK: Hayes is a really good shooter and a rebounder and tough. Their freshman, I don't want to say the name wrong, but she's really improved over the course of the season. I think she's been a big part of their team's

development with her size and her ability to guard in the paint and be a big screen and roll for them.

Yeah, they're a connected team. They have a lot of pieces and parts. When you watch, though, I do think their three guards' ability to make a play really stand out.

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