

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

Sunday, March 23, 2025

Raleigh, North Carolina, USA

Reynolds Coliseum

NC State Wolfpack

Zoe Brook

Madison Hayes

Media Conference

Q. What did you guys learn from yesterday's game, working, moving into tomorrow, just maybe avoid a slow start or something like that?

ZOE BROOKS: No matter who the team is, they're going to come out and play their best back basketball. Vermont played very well. They shot very well, as you guys can see, yesterday. They hung around in the game till about three minutes left in the fourth quarter, which is very impressive. So just not taking anybody for granted.

MADISON HAYES: I mean, that's pretty much it. We can't come out lackadaisical. We have to make sure we come out and give the first punch. And they did last night -- or, yeah, last night. And we just got to make sure we come out ready to play. Every team in this tournament is going to be a good team, no matter what conference they come from.

Q. Zoe, to possibly go to the Sweet 16, for the first two years of your career, what does that mean to you? And Madison, this will be your third possible trip to the Sweet 16 as a player in your career. What does that say about your growth in this program overall?

ZOE BROOKS: It's something I never really could have imagined. Last year going to a Final Four as a freshman was something that pretty much everybody dreams of. And then this year possibly going to the Sweet 16 again is just crazy. And I feel like we worked so hard to get here and we deserve it more than anybody else.

MADISON HAYES: I would just say that obviously being a part of the first Sweet 16 team going to the Elite Eight, it was amazing. And learning from K.J., Elissa, Raina, and Kai, the super seniors that year, just learning from -- even



though I didn't play that much, I still learned a lot from them and how the program is and the culture. And it was so different, but it made me not just a better basketball player but a better person as well.

And then going to the Final Four last year, with a different group, but we had that same chemistry, that same feel that we had when I first got here. But now still having that same chemistry, we still have the potential to go to the Sweet 16, Elite Eight, all that.

Q. The word that many people within this team like to use to describe you is the glue, someone that can fill any hole that is needed or rise to any challenge that the team needs. Do you kind of pride yourself on that sort of flexibility in your game?

MADISON HAYES: I mean, yeah, it's good to be versatile. I can guard one through four. I mean, I can play one through four, one through five even.

But just accepting the position that's best for the team. Coach Moore pulled me to the side, asked me to play the four. And obviously when you've been playing in a position so long, you want to stay in the position that you're comfortable with.

And going into playing the four and taking that challenge that girls are going to be bigger, but I'm not just going to lay down and be like, oh, I can't bang with them. I'm going to do what I'm supposed to do for my team.

I feel like I've done a pretty good job in guarding their four players even though I'm undersized. But I'm going to continue to do that for my team and help us win.

Q. Saniya has mentioned the last couple days how important it is for her to go out the right way in this building. Now that that moment is about to hit us here, what does that mean for you?

MADISON HAYES: It means a lot. I've been here -- I didn't come here my freshman year, but coming here for the last four years, making an impact on the seasons and stuff, I try not to think about it too much like this is my last



time being in here. But just worry more about the game, and then after we can have the emotional piece.

But, I mean, I'm just here to win basketball games and move on to the next round. Obviously it can get really emotional for me, with the friendships that I've made here and the relationships that I've built, especially with the younger players. This is their last time being with us, not even our last time being with them.

Q. Kind of a two-pronged question. Can you talk about the home-court winning streak, the crowd support you get, and then also there's a lot of history in this arena. A lot of it predates you by a lot of years, even Kay Yow. How much have you learned to appreciate the history in your time here, the statues outside? Kind of a two-pronged question.

MADISON HAYES: The first question I would say that obviously this home floor, this arena, the crowd, it's a big -- like it's a big factor for us. Playing at home, obviously you can see that we've won how many games straight? 23? 20? 22. Not a lot of teams can say they won 22 straight at home. It's hard to do. It's not something that's really easy because we're in a great conference, and now coming into the NCAA Tournament.

But it's just culture that we built through this team, and like the relationships not even as we built as a team but with the fans as well. They love us. They support us through the hard times and the losses. But they always come and show out, and that's why I feel like they're the best fans in the nation.

ZOE BROOKS: Like Maddie said, we have a great fan base. I feel like we have the best fan base in the country. And that definitely helps how we play. We win a lot here. It's important for us to keep the crowd entertained so they keep coming back and showing up in the arena.

But we want to win every game no matter where it is. But I definitely think the fans play a big part.

Q. (Off microphone.)

MADISON HAYES: I didn't really know much about it until I got here and the importance, and obviously having the Kay Yow Servant Leader Award and just talking to Kay Yow's sister a lot when she comes to games and just having that -- that I kind of represent the character that she kind of instilled into her players, and just that's a real honor. And just trying to keep that legacy going, not only with Kay Yow but now with Coach Moore's legacy here now as well.

THE MODERATOR: Michigan State relishes playing a

physical game. What did you learn playing in the Duke game in the regular season and the ACC that may help you accept some of that physicality when they're trying to defend you?

MADISON HAYES: Obviously with the Duke game, it was hard to re-watch. I watched the whole game after a couple days. And I think just for us, we can't, like I said, let them punch us in the mouth first. We've got to be able to give that first punch and keep that going throughout the whole game. We can't just do it for a quarter or two quarters or even three because fourth quarter is when usually everybody is trying to kick it into gear.

But we have to have that the whole four quarters and be ready to play. And the physicality is going to come. So my fouls are not always going to be called, and we can't worry about that as much. We've got to worry about our game and making shots, not looking for fouls.

That's one of the biggest emphasis I would say for us as a team we've got to keep building on, because that's something we did in the Duke game a lot, was looking for fouls, and that hurt us a little bit, just throwing up shots.

We're getting better, and that's what we have to instill in tomorrow's game.

ZOE BROOKS: Duke is a great defensive team. They definitely got after us both times we played them, not only in the tournament, but when they came here. Even though we came out with the win, they definitely were very physical. They got after us. They pressured us, forced a lot of turnovers.

So I think that that definitely helped us become stronger, and we have to understand that. We're not always going to get the foul calls that we need, but just play through it.

THE MODERATOR: You talked about having to play in the post. Sometimes undersized. But there's a mentality that you have to have as well. What is that dog mentality in you that allows you to compete against young ladies that are a little taller, maybe more physical than you are?

MADISON HAYES: Just like you said, having that dog mentality. You're not going to bully me the whole game. And I'm the type of player that I'm going to make you for whatever you're going to get. If you want to keep coming in here, then I'm going to show you why you don't want to keep coming in here.

I just take that challenge personally. Because now teams are going to pick on me because I'm smaller. And that's fine. And that's what they're supposed to do. But I just

continuously time and time again show them why you're not just going to keep -- you're going to get a couple buckets here and there, but you're not going to get it all day.

So I'm just going to give them what they asking for. And hopefully they'll make a change. I'm sure they'll make a change. I'm very confident in myself, my team is confident in me to do my job, and the coaches as well. So I'm going to keep doing that as well.

ZOE BROOKS: Woof, woof, woof, woof, woof!

THE MODERATOR: I was going to ask, does some of that mentality seep over to the guards? But I guess you answered the question.

ZOE BROOKS: Absolutely.

Q. When do you feel like in a game that you feel like you have to take over the game in a way? When is it in your mindset as you start, do you feel like, hey, if Aziaha is not going, I got to go, or Saniya is not going, I got to go? Is it a feel or in your mind when you start the game you say, hey, I'm going from -- whatever it is, it is?

ZOE BROOKS: No, I'm going from the beginning. It doesn't matter who's they it is. I'm just here to do everything I can to help the team, whether that's facilitate, score, defend, I'm just trying to do everything I can. Definitely from the start of the game, I'm going to go until the end.

MADISON HAYES: Straight dog.

ZOE BROOKS: Woof.

THE MODERATOR: I noticed a couple of times when things were tight, particularly in the second quarter, you guys were down, there was the huddle on the -- the normal huddle, but when you come back on the court, there's the players huddle of just the five that are playing in the game. What are you trying to communicate there, accomplish, before you start playing again?

MADISON HAYES: Just making sure like snapping back into reality. Vermont went on a huge run. And not letting those runs dictate how we play. And just making sure we go out there, ready to play.

They're going to want to keep pushing, shooting the ball. We just have to stay through our game and don't let them make us do things that we don't want to do. Emphasizing that and making sure we're doing better on defense,

because defense is what we were lacking and rebounding in the first half.

And we ended up coming out really well coming into halftime. I think just instilling that and making sure as leaders we each got to make sure that everybody is on the same page.

ZOE BROOKS: And our players always make sure that we emphasize to stick together, whether we're losing or winning. If we're winning, not to let loose because any team can come back, and if we're down, stay together and keep fighting and playing hard.

THE MODERATOR: Great job, ladies. Thank you.

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