

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

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Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

Williams Arena

Green Bay Phoenix Coach Kayla Karius

Jenna Guyer

Maddy Skorupski

Media Conference

Q. Jenna, your family must have been ecstatic when this was announced.

JENNA GUYER: Yeah, I think we were just -- they were really excited. Watching the show from home, which is about 15 minutes away from here, they were pretty excited when they saw our name called. Our team was really excited as well to come here and play against Minnesota.

Q. So did you play a lot of these kids in high school? Like Sophie Hart, did you ever play against her and stuff like that?

JENNA GUYER: I played against Sophie I think in AAU, maybe earlier. I think before high school, but definitely at some point.

Q. OK. I did notice that like from your junior year to this year, many more minutes, many more points, everything. What was that like? Did you expect that as your last year, or like what did you see coming and how do you feel about this season?

JENNA GUYER: We had quite a few seniors graduate last year. So I knew I would have to step up in more of that leadership role, and I think along with that came more of a role for me on the court. Like you said, more minutes. Then just finding myself where my teammates need me, either on the perimeter or inside, just found the ball in my hands more. That kind of just came along with it.

Q. Maddy, question for you. Obviously, Jenna, you've been not here before but in the NCAA Tournament. Maddy, a little different experience for you transferring



in. What's it been like for you to kind of have this opportunity for the first time?

MADDY SKORUPSKI: It's been really cool. Going back to last April or May with talks with Coach, just knew that this was the goal, knew that this was the standard at Green Bay. Being able to work towards it all summer, all pre-season, during the season, then getting into our Horizon League championship, it's been a lot of fun. It's a really cool experience for me and I know for all the other transfers on the team who have never experienced this before.

Q. And similar question for you, Jenna, what's it like getting three years in a row now to be in this position?

JENNA GUYER: It's kind of surreal. Something that we work hard for throughout the entire season and in our conference tournament as well. It takes a lot of hard work to get to that point, and then to win our championship, get here.

I think it's really special with this group of people. I've been really excited just to see them experience it. Like Maddy said, our transfers who haven't experienced this before and some of the freshmen, too, just seeing the joy on their faces. That we get to do it with this team, I don't know, it feels incredible every single time. The three times we've been to the tournament, it's felt different but also felt like a really cool experience.

Q. Jenna, did you want to play here, and what does it mean to be playing the Gophers here in this tournament?

JENNA GUYER: Yeah, I kind of wanted -- like for this game, I wanted to -- I knew once we won our conference tournament, we would get -- we would go somewhere. I think it's really cool to be able to come home for me and play at Minnesota. Definitely not something I think I saw throughout just like the predictions of who we might play that Minnesota was on -- we had the possibility of playing Minnesota. So I think that was like, oh, that would be really cool to be kind of be able to come home, play in front of a lot of my family, friends from just my hometown.



So I think that's a really cool experience that I don't think everyone gets to have. But it's a cool thing, too, especially because past five years we haven't played a game in Minnesota. So I don't know, to end my last little postseason run here is really a cool chance.

Q. Coming out of high school, did you have any interest in playing here?

JENNA GUYER: I'm not sure I was recruited by here, but that's all right.

Q. Maddy, what do you see in this Gopher team? Like they do a lot of things well, but when you see them, what stands out to you?

MADDY SKORUPSKI: I think they're a pretty solid team. Their whole starting 5 I'm pretty sure is in double figures, so they seem pretty balanced.

But we've played teams similar to them in our Horizon League, so although they're going to be a little bit bigger, Big Ten, I think we'll be well prepared for them.

Q. And Jenna, I asked somebody are you a post or are you a forward or are you a guard? Someone said "yes" basically. I'm sure you played, you know, different roles on the court, but what do you see yourself as?

JENNA GUYER: I think for the past four years I've seen myself strictly as a post, a center. Then this past year, with how lineups have worked and Meghan Schultz being such a dominant big for us, I've kind of had to shift my game a little bit more to forward. So I think depending on lineups and who's in the game at a certain time, I'll play either the 4 or the 5. I've kind of embraced that role throughout the season and been able to work on my game in both areas to hopefully succeed.

KAYLA KARIUS: Well, we're really excited to be here for Green Bay. This is our 21st NCAA Tournament appearance. It's a great thing for our program to see the tradition of excellence that we've had over the course of our 52-year history, and to see that continue.

I think what's really special about this group is how new our roster was last April and how we had eight newcomers and six returners all come together in the most beautiful way and find some really good synergy and chemistry along the way in conference play. Certainly had some tough nonconference games that helped prepare us for this moment.

And more than anything, just love those girls in the locker

room. Love the people that we have on our team, on our staff, with our administration. There's a ton of support for our women's basketball program at Green Bay and throughout the Horizon League and we're just really proud to be here and to be representing all of them.

Q. Kayla, you talked about obviously your return trip for you, a lot of the coaches, some of the players but a lot of newcomers. So what kind of has been beneficial to you about having done this before and how do you help kind of those who haven't done it before kind of get up to speed quickly with how this works?

KAYLA KARIUS: Yeah, we certainly have a mix. We have half the team, 7 out of 14, that have never had this experience before. So I think what's really neat is to see it through their eyes. A lot of them came to our program because that's what they wanted, and they went after that experience.

What's really neat is to see the excitement of selection Sunday and seeing our name pop up and just that whole experience they never had before. That just makes you appreciate it all over again.

For the returners, I think what's really neat is so many of them weren't necessarily on the floor during that NCAA tournament game. We had seven seniors last year that graduated, they played the majority of the minutes. So for them, it's a new experience too because everybody's in a different role.

And for our coaching staff, I think it's exciting to be back for a second time. You do know a little bit more what to expect as coaches going through it, so you're just helping guide them but also keep reminding them that we're one of 64 teams that's still playing in the NCAA Tournament at least and how really special that is.

We get to practice and we get to spend more time together, and right now you want to keep focusing on that and stay in the present moment because that's a really special thing.

Q. I was wondering what you saw in Jenna. Sounds like her role has kind of changed from last year. She said she was mostly a post before and now she kind of does it all. I mean, that seems like a real luxury for you to have a player like that.

KAYLA KARIUS: Well, Jenna's had an incredible year. But you nailed it, she had such a different role last year and even the years prior.

I wasn't the one that was here recruiting her, but she really

took the time to develop in our program, which I think speaks a lot to our coaches, especially the ones who were in place before me and who took the time to develop her and see the potential in her years and years ago, and knowing that she had a great frame and great skills, ball-handling skills, shooting skills, passing skills.

But like anybody who comes in as a freshman, needs the time to develop and to get stronger and to get smarter. She did all those things. She attacked that and kept getting better.

What was really fun last year from my perspective to see is she was that first post off the bench. She gave us a lot of versatility. She's able to shoot it from the perimeter, score it inside, and she can become a real matchup problem for people. She gained confidence as the year went on, and we saw in the conference tournament last year, she hit big shot after big shot.

That momentum sort of propelled her into this senior leadership role come spring where she had to introduce eight newcomers really to the culture of our program, which we call the Green Bay Way. It's the way we do everything and we think it's the most important thing that we do. We think it's the separator. That fell a lot on her shoulders to carry that forward.

Now on the floor you are seeing somebody play with incredible joy, you're watching her be a matchup nightmare. She's been scoring from the perimeter at a really high level. She can score it inside, and just her ability to get her teammates involved. We've seen her play elevate every single week as the season has gone on.

Really a neat award for her to receive the Conference Player of the Year Award. I think it's well deserved. She wasn't averaging the most points in the league, but she's the reason why we're sitting where we're sitting. I think for her to be able to play this game here tomorrow night is a really special thing for her. It's well deserved.

Q. You mentioned the Green Bay Way. Dawn also mentioned the Green Bay Way and the Kevin's fingerprints being on both programs. Was curious if you see that having also coached a couple years under Dawn, if you see the similarities like that.

KAYLA KARIUS: Yeah, there's a lot of similarities I think between the two programs. I think when you're from the same coaching tree, there's a lot of philosophies that are the same. I think we've both put our own twists on things as people do and found our own little ways to make it our own, but I think at the core, there's a lot of similarities within our programs.

So yeah, it will be a fun matchup to see that, and of course having worked for her for two years and being on that inside, you can tell that there's a lot of similarities between the two.

Q. When you watch Minnesota, like what do you see? They do a lot of different things, they have a lot of different pretty well. What do you see and like what do you see is the biggest challenge?

KAYLA KARIUS: Well, I think for -- well it's the NCAA Tournament, this is the best of the best. And we're talking about a 4 seed, so this is somebody who has done really well throughout the conference play. Anybody who wins 13 games in this year's Big Ten league is doing a really good job and has a lot of good pieces.

I think for us, of course anybody, once you get to this time of year, it becomes about size, athleticism. That's why we play the nonconference schedule that we do. We were fortunate enough to play at Wisconsin, we played at Washington, we played at NC State and Richmond, played Kansas State on our home floor. It was because of that type of scheduling that was meant to prepare us for this.

So we've seen the length and the athleticism, and you see that. I think that's something that they do really well. They certainly have a lot of power with their inside presence with Sophie Hart and plays really good shooters around her. I think they are really disciplined and I think they take the right shots. They certainly don't turn the ball over. They're really methodical in what they do, but they do it really well.

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