

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Florida State vs Alabama

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Moody Center

Florida State Seminoles Coach Brooke Wyckoff Makayla Timpson Ta'Niya Latson

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: We have Florida State. We welcome junior forward Makayla Timpson and sophomore guard Ta'Niya Latson.

Q. Makayla, you're used to dominating inside. They've got a little size there. What do you try to do to overcome the size?

MAKAYLA TIMPSON: Just play with my speed. I would say when girls are bigger than me, I have to use my speed. I have to be way faster than most of the posts I've been playing against. So just using my speed to get around and being able to score buckets.

Q. Ta'Niya, you didn't get to play in the NCAA last year. Being able to be here and going through practice, how has everything been feeling? What is this journey like now that you actually get to play and not just experience it?

TA'NIYA LATSON: It feels amazing. Like you said, I didn't get to participate last year. And I feel like this year, I'm just blessed to be completely healthy. I've been feeling really good in practice. I'm ready to get the show on the road.

Q. Makayla, for you coming into this game, you talked about how the mission is just to beat Alabama. Coach said you really want to get a win. What has been the focus the last couple days that you've talked about to be able to get a win here in round one of the tournament?

MAKAYLA TIMPSON: I would say just being us as a basketball team. And once be us and we play how we play



and not letting a team be able to take us out of our rhythm, that's what we don't want to cause tomorrow.

And then just continue to be us as basketball players. That's been the focus for us. We've been having great practices leading up to this day, and we've got to continue to have a great one today and be focused for tomorrow.

Q. You mentioned using your speed and your guile and all that. The SEC is known for physical play. Have you noticed that about them, that they're just physically strong and tough?

MAKAYLA TIMPSON: Yeah, we played two SEC teams early in the season. We play Tennessee and Arkansas. So, yes, they were bigger than us, but we was able to get the win versus Tennessee. They were a great team. That was our first challenge that we had early in the season.

But being able to use my advantages over them. Like sometimes you just don't have to be the strongest player, the person who worked the hardest and being able to be able to score the ball and be who I am, just not letting anyone take me out of my game, and we'll get the win.

Q. Just looking at this year as a whole, obviously Coach Brooke has gone through a lot, fighting breast cancer. You get to wear her number that she wore when she played at Florida State. To know what you guys have persevered throughout the season, to be able to cause some upsets, taking down Tennessee, and you guys were able to make a good run in the ACC Tournament, looking at the impact she's had on this program and what she's been able to do, how special is it for you to not only wear her jersey, but you guys continue to fight for her and everything she's battled through this season?

MAKAYLA TIMPSON: I'd say it's very special for me being able to wear her jersey, like you said. It means something more this year than it did my previous two years of wearing her jersey, just knowing that she's a great woman and she has great character.

And being able to play under is an amazing opportunity not



only for myself but for my team as well. We've been through some hard times this season, but we're able to push through and be able to fight each and every game. And being able to recognize her during Breast Cancer Awareness Month was also a special moment. We've been enjoying this process, and we can't wait to keep going with it.

TA'NIYA LATSON: Coach Brooke, she's a strong woman, and that reflects on the team. When she broke the news to us, she didn't cry. She was in good spirits, and I felt like that gave us good spirits, even though it's a sad situation. But she pushes through, and I feel like that reflects onto us as well.

Q. Let's ask a fun question. They call this the Big Dance. Who's the best dancer on the team?

TA'NIYA LATSON: Sara.

MAKAYLA TIMPSON: Yeah, Sara.

Q. Is she going to bust out the moves tomorrow on the court?

MAKAYLA TIMPSON: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Ladies, you're dismissed. Thank you.

We are now joined by Florida State head Coach Brooke Wyckoff. Coach, make an opening statement, please.

BROOKE WYCKOFF: Well, really, really excited to be here in Austin to be a part of the NCAA Tournament. I am so proud of our players and all the hard work they put in this season, through all the adversity that a team faces during the season. They were phenomenal in just keeping the focus on what was most important, continuing to battle and really finishing strong in order to be here today.

So I'm excited for what's next. I'm excited about our matchups and the possibilities in March Madness.

Q. Timpson isn't as big as some of the players she plays against, but she's led the league in blocks, she's one of the top rebounders, she scores. What is it about her, and what maybe is the challenge that Alabama presents? They've got a 6'4" kid.

BROOKE WYCKOFF: Well, Kay Kay, as we call her, she is what you would probably consider undersized I guess for a typical center, but she doesn't allow that to slow her down productivity-wise. She averages a double-double and, as you said, has led our conference in blocks.

And so she's used to playing against size, able to defend size, able to score on size. And so we'll see a 6'4" center in Alabama, but that's nothing that Kay Kay hasn't seen game in and game out in the ACC.

So she understands how to attack size and also to defend it. And I'm assuming you're talking about Essence Cody, who is their starter. She'll provide some issues. She's a great player and she's big. But, again, we've seen a lot of that throughout the season in the ACC, and Kay Kay has done very well.

Q. Coach Brooke, you guys are here getting settled in in Austin, Texas. As you face Alabama, you talked about one of their players that presents a big challenge. As a whole, what do you think is going to be key for you guys coming into this game?

BROOKE WYCKOFF: Alabama is a very good team obviously. They play very, very well within themselves. They don't make many mistakes. They understand their identity. They're just a solid basketball team with some really, really good individual players.

And so what I like about our matchup is that they are kind of a four-out, one-in team, which is similar to us, I think, personnel-wise and style of play. We match up well. And we are familiar with that type of team. They're very similar to a lot of ACC teams.

But as I said, they are very talented on the offensive end. They're able to score the ball from the three-point line. All of them are very capable of getting to the basket.

And then defensively they like to create turnovers. So we'll have to be very solid with the ball on the offensive end, taking care of it and really making sure that we're attacking in the right ways.

Q. We've talked before about the ACC and SEC battles that you guys have. I think you're 2-1 right now on the season against SEC teams. What is it that's so special about both of these conferences and the level of play that they bring to the stage?

BROOKE WYCKOFF: Yeah, well, they're just full of really talented individual players. Both conferences have amazing coaches that are just -- that know the game, that are able to get the most out of their players.

And so they're both very, very competitive leagues. And that's what you want. You want conferences and league play that's competitive, there's parity. When you're watching a matchup, anyone can win on any given night.

And that's what we feel the ACC is. There's no easy game in the ACC. And I know the SEC is very similar in that regard.

So it's just a privilege to play in it. It's fun to match up with an SEC team as well in this tournament. And so I'm just excited for a good basketball game.

Q. When you were playing, did you envision becoming a coach? And did you envision coaching here, and what was your dream job when you got into coaching?

BROOKE WYCKOFF: I had no idea that I was going to coach when I was a player. And I had all kinds of plans. But luckily I believe that those plans are -- we don't get to decide a lot of times in life like where life goes. You know, there's a lot of doors and windows that are opened for us that we didn't expect, and that's what happened here.

I just wanted to play as long as I could and had a few thoughts about what I would do after I finished playing, but just kind of, honestly, fell into coaching at the high school level, and coincidentally, and then fell in love with it.

And so when this opportunity at Florida State came about, when Coach Sue Semrau, who I played for, called and said she had an opening on her staff and she was thinking about hiring me to be an assistant, I thought, oh, my gosh, why didn't I think of that before? That sounds absolutely amazing because I loved coaching.

And to come back and play for your alma mater -- sorry, coach at your alma mater, a place like Florida State that always felt like home, always felt like family, it was a dream job, and to come back and coach and work alongside Coach Sue Semrau who meant so much to me as a player.

When I got back, I didn't envision being the head coach. But as time went on, it was something that I certainly wanted when the time came if that opportunity arose.

So here I am, and I am so blessed and so thankful to be here representing Florida State.

Q. I wanted to ask you about the shirts that you guys are wearing. Who's responsible for this?

BROOKE WYCKOFF: Several people. The players were the inspiration. This is kind of like that throwback look that they love, the kids these days, as they say, love to wear.

But our creative content director, who is here, Morgan Azeez, and I and our graphic designer, Jonathan, really worked on this vision putting this together.

I just -- the phrase that kept coming in mind to me was March Magic. There's March Madness and all the things that we can talk about in March, but I want this to feel magical for our players. And there are so many magical moments that happen.

And it's just been a great opportunity to frame this tournament and this time of year just with what does it take to create these kind of moments.

And we've talked a lot. We've been able to teach our players a lot of history about the women's tournament, just moments like these that are magical, both Florida State history as well as just in the NCAA in general.

So just a little mix of all of that. Just something fun. And luckily they got a good response. We did -- sometimes for us old people, it's hard to know what the kids want. But we figured it out, I think, this time around.

Q. I know we talked about your playing days here a couple seconds ago. I think it's really special that Makayla gets to wear your jersey number that you wore when you were a player at Florida State. After everything you've been through, I know that Makayla said it was so awesome to watch you fight and see your strength this year, but to get to wear your jersey is something she takes a lot of pride in. For you to see her wearing the No. 21 out there and wear that jersey and just know that it is extra special for her, what does that mean to you after everything you've fought through this year?

BROOKE WYCKOFF: It's always meant so much to me that Kay Kay represents No. 21 so well and just has far exceeded anything that I could have accomplished as a player. And she's still going.

But just more importantly, she's a phenomenal person. And that's what I'm most proud of when I see that number on her chest, it's that she represents what we want in our program, the type of player, the type of person we all strive to be and who we want to be around.

So she's humble. She's always happy. She's consistent in her attitude, and she's about a team. And so I love everything she does in that 21 jersey and just, you know, her words of supporting me.

And that's who she is. Now, it's who she was before I went through all of this this season and who she'll always be. So it means a lot. I love Kay Kay.

Q. With all of the eyes that have been on women's



basketball recently, what does it mean to you to be able to lead the next generation of women's basketball players, and what do you hope to see for the future of the sport?

BROOKE WYCKOFF: Yeah, it's a huge privilege to be a part of women's basketball. It always has been. But to still be a part of it and at this time when it's exploding, you know, and I said the other day, like what we've all always known, those of us that have been a part of women's basketball on the inside and closely around the game, now it's spreading.

Now everybody, the casual person, everybody just knows so much about the individual players and the game. And that is what we've always wanted, is what we've always known is possible.

So anyway, it's an immense privilege to be a part of it, to be able to watch my players and these players just going through and really making a name for themselves and growing the game.

And that's what it's all about. Because then the next generation is going to come along, and it's going to be even bigger.

And so I'm just so excited for it. Love being here for it. And can't wait to see where it goes next.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

BROOKE WYCKOFF: Thank you so much.

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