

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

Friday, March 22, 2024

Austin, Texas, USA

Moody Center

**Alabama Crimson Tide
Coach Kristy Curry**

Loyal McQueen

Essence Cody

Aaliyah Nye

Media Conference

Alabama 82, Florida State 74

KRISTY CURRY: Well, I'm really happy for our team. Today's game was a game of runs, and I thought we were really, really good on being able to weather their runs and make sure that ours were just a couple of plays longer. Florida State had an incredible year, and they're a really great team. I'm just so proud of our kids today and their resilience. We fought through some foul trouble, our leading scorer, and we just had so many of our players step up today, and I'm just incredibly proud.

I think there's nothing better this time of year, I've learned through the years, than watching your team celebrate, and I'm just incredibly proud, and we're looking forward to the opportunity. We'll enjoy this until midnight, and like all season, we'll hit the reset button and prepare and try to go out and execute the game plan against a great Texas team.

Q. Essence, this was a career high for you, points and rebounds. Were you inspired by playing against somebody who's really good inside?

ESSENCE CODY: No, not really. It's just my team motivated me, and my team was fired up, and I was fired up, too. We all work hard, and that's what our thing was.

Q. Loyal or Aaliyah, can you talk about how much Essence has grown up this season and developed into what we saw tonight?



LOYAL McQUEEN: Yeah, Essence has grown up a lot this year. We need her to be aggressive every single night. We need her to be on the boards essentially every night in order for us to beat big-time teams, so we're definitely going to need her again on Sunday to have a big night. So we're going to continue to stay on her because Essence can be great and we all know it and we all see it. I'm excited for her, but many more career highs to come.

Q. How did you all encourage each other to stay the course and see this game through, especially when Florida State started to make it a close one at the end?

AALIYAH NYE: I think we just continued to just play our game and stick together. Obviously we had our leading scorer SA who doesn't just score for us but rebounds for us. She is a vocal leader for us, and we knew we had to pick her up. I think everybody came in and did their job, Karly Weathers, Burg, Loyal, Essence, we all just came together and we wanted to win, and I think everyone played their game today.

LOYAL McQUEEN: I think the main thing that we were just telling each other during our huddles was just to stay the course. We knew Florida State was going to make their runs. We knew we were going to make our runs. The main thing was just staying together, keeping the main thing the main thing and just staying together and just staying vocal with each other and just continuing to lift each other up.

ESSENCE CODY: It's the same thing. Just communicate and just keep working and focus on the right things on the court and not allow outside things to distract us and just stay focused.

Q. I don't know how much of the first game y'all were able to watch, but what are your thoughts on Sunday and the challenge that you guys are going to have in a couple days?

AALIYAH NYE: Obviously they're the No. 1 team for a reason, so I think we're just going to go and look at film. I know they're a big presence defensively. They're a good defensive team. I think we're just going to continue to do



what we do, as well.

I know we have to rebound and we have to execute on offense.

Q. Kristy, with Sarah Ashley battling foul troubles, were you surprised by the depth and how those players stepped up in your absence?

KRISTY CURRY: I really wasn't. I felt like she was so inspiring on the sideline and stayed connected and into the game and continued to try to encourage. There's been times during the season that she's been in foul trouble, and I thought that Loyal, Aaliyah, Karly really continued to be even more vocal. It's just what you do when it's your turn. We lost Jess Timmons who was a huge piece to what we do. We lost Naomi a month and a half ago which was going to give us another dimension inside. As this team has faced adversity, whether it's been injury or foul trouble, they just continue to weather and stay together, and I just really credit their character. They're a gritty bunch. They're fun to coach because of that.

Q. What were your impressions of Weathers just being able to step in like that with 18 and 5?

KRISTY CURRY: I just have so much confidence in Karly, and she's played starter minutes for us all season. She just makes winning plays. She's always doing what she's supposed to be doing from a spacing standpoint, the way that she affects the game for us defensively. She's so poised and so disciplined.

I've been pleading with her all year long to look to score because she really can, and she's just so sound fundamentally. So happy for her and just the entire squad and the way that she stepped up tonight. It's nothing new. She just is a very good player.

Q. You've battled Vic and his teams in the SEC for a while. What makes his style of defense so difficult?

KRISTY CURRY: Well, they love to really be disruptive and physical. They're so good, defending the first pass, and there's such a great help side. They love to take charges at all five possessions. They're just so well-coached. I've often just wanted to see if he'll let me come to practice to see how he teaches defense because it's incredibly special. I just have so much respect for him.

He's just really a good friend, and I have a lot of respect for the way he runs his program.

Q. Coach, at the half obviously Florida State was testing you guys there early. What was the

adjustments you tried to make and that message you were giving your team at the half?

KRISTY CURRY: Well, we went in and talked more about trying to keep the basketball in front of us and make sure that we kept the ball in the high post. I've not played so much zone all season. But we had to protect the paint and keep the ball out of Timpson's hands. I thought early they really got to the rim on us. We put them on the free-throw line, but the goal -- it's so important against Florida State that you give them one-shot opportunities. It'll be the same against Texas. To out-rebound them by 14, to be able to make more free throws than they shot, and I think the zone allowed us to do that.

We got our transition game going from the zone, and really proud of our kids at halftime for making a few adjustments mentally in their poise and the discipline -- you've got to be disciplined, and we were much more disciplined in the third, to start the third quarter.

Q. Coach, you were able to get that high post screen going down the stretch, and you kept going back to it. It was just there. Was that just something that was done by design or that was something that you knew you were going to get going in today's game?

KRISTY CURRY: Yeah, I think that's what Essence can set the screen-and-roll with a tremendous amount of energy, you're going to see her have a lot of success, and I think because they were going under, we were trying to make the adjustment of setting the ball screen flatter, and we did a much better job. That was another adjustment at half. It's not going to be hard to see.

Just really proud of our execution and adjustment there because I thought we got her some open looks at the rim off the ball screen action.

I think Karly and Aaliyah and Loyal, they're going to counter what you take away. We're going to make a one-second decision and find open shooters.

Really, really proud of our execution and our ball screen series today.

Q. There was a play in the second half where Aaliyah had a three-pointer blocked and she immediately tracked it and threw it into the paint for an easy two. Aside from her three-point shooting, what intangibles does she bring to this team and how important is she to y'all?

KRISTY CURRY: It's just the basketball IQ. She is such an incredible, selfless player. She just happens to find



other people because she understands when she draws that much attention, she's just incredibly selfless and just made a really heady play, which she makes every single day. She has such a great basketball IQ.

Always, again, I think she sees so many double-teams, and when she does get her shot blocked some, she's able to find the open person. Really proud. That was a really heady play. Her three there on the special situation execution, we work on it so much. We've worked on that for two weeks. We've run it all season but we haven't run it very frequently. But man, what a shot. Really proud of her. She's just cold, in a good way, and I love who she is as far as offensively in her decision making.

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