

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Texas vs Illinois

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Austin, Texas, USA

Moody Center

Illinois Fightin' Illini Coach Shauna Green

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: Coach, if you could just open with a statement then we'll take questions from everyone here.

SHAUNA GREEN: We're super excited to see you again and to be back here. A great win for our program last night against a really good craton team. We said it last night, but have not won a tournament game in 25 years for this program, so this is a really big step for us. Now we have a really tough task of playing a really, really good Texas team on their home court but that's what the NCAA Tournament is about. We had one day of prep and feel good about where we're at and now it's just about going out there and competing and leaving everything you've got out on the court tomorrow.

Q. This is your third game in a month against a number one seed in the tournament on their home floors. What have you guys learned from those first two experiences that you can carry into tomorrow?

SHAUNA GREEN: Yeah, that's what we told our team just in our film session back at the hotel. We just played UCLA and USC a couple of weeks ago on their home court and had opportunities in those games. I think we can learn a lot from that. Texas is going to be similar. This is kind of think USC, UCLA in terms of physical, length, athleticism, so I think that's a real good prep for us. Obviously Texas is Texas and they bring a little bit different elements and challenges as opposed to those teams, but same type of feel and you're going to have to come in and play. You have to match their physical. We got to really take care of the basketball against them and you got to play with a great deal of toughness if you have to have a chance to be in the game in that last battle we talk about. Have a chance to win.

Q. Yesterday you said y'all have been the underdogs really all year. With all the hype around Texas being in



Austin, how do you make sure that doesn't weigh too much on your players?

SHAUNA GREEN: Yeah, I don't -- these guys are a veteran group. They know. We're locked into what we want to do and we know that the challenges that we have, we've been like the same thing going out to LA having to face those two schools, you know? Obviously they're top-five programs, no one in the Big Ten went out and did that trip and won, so we've been there. We understand it. It's going to be hard but any game you play in the NCAA Tournament is going to be really, really hard. That's the thing, on the women's side, it is. It's really, really hard to get to the Sweet 16 on our site, especially if you're not the hosting team. You have to give credit to those teams that are hosting because you do your work in the regular season but I think you would see a little more parity and maybe some more upsets if we went to, you know, like the men, and went to neutral sites.

Q. Shauna, I'm not going to ask you to comb pair the players, but you played Juju. You've played Lauren. Why do you think Madison Booker, from what you have seen on film, belongs in that class, that First-Team All-American class?

SHAUNA GREEN: Yeah, I hadn't watched her as much as even just watching her last night live and then watching her on film and I know obviously my assistant, Coach Mac, has coached at Texas and brings a lot of her experience and their overall time, what we're going to expect and just seeing them last night and seeing a player like herself, she's on another level. She's up there with all of them. Her size, she's smooth, her ability, her midrange game, her athleticism. She can do so many things on the court. Obviously we'll be undersized against her, who we put on her, so it's going to be a really hard guard for us, but, yeah, she's a little bit different in my mind than Juju or some of them, but she's obviously an elite player and deserving of being that First-Team All-American.

Q. Coach, what kind of challenge do you face with the Taylor Jones, Kyla Oldacre rotation they have and the physical nature of that lineup?



SHAUNA GREEN: Yeah, that's one thing I think that you see right away from them. Obviously their size is their... their size is imposing but they're so physical. I think a couple weeks ago having to guard Lauren Betts, having to guard Kiki, you know, similar where Betts is really, she's physical, she's going to try to bury you and get those elbows up and fly around in there too. I think that's going to help prepare these guys of what it feels like, but the thing about Texas is, yes, they have multiple. Jones goes out, you bring Oldacre in and Oldacre, we recruited her when I was at Dayton. It feels like 20 years ago. I'm like isn't she out of eligibility yet? But she's just a great player who's played really well and Jones, just their size alone.

I did tell our kids, you think you got fouled yesterday and you thought yesterday was a physical game? You have no idea. We gotta ramp up and be able to match that, be ready for it and not let it affect us because this team is physical, they're tough, they're going to get into you and you're going to get fouled and they're not going to call it and that's okay. We got to continue to be mentally tough and physically tough.

Q. KB and the matchup she's faced in the Big Ten, how much do you feel like that helps her in this matchup on Monday? What is it about her that she's been able to have some of the success she's had against some of the bigs in the Ben ten?

SHAUNA GREEN: Yeah, I think obviously the experience she's had throughout her years here of having to guard. She hasn't grown, right? So she's always been 6'1". She's used to having to play 6'5", 6'6", 6'7" and the thing I love about KB is how much she's grown as a defensive player in her time here. You guys remember her first year with us, she was getting fouls left and right, getting frustrated with some of that. She's so poised now and she understands how to wall up. She understands how to do her work early, how to hit them high, keep them high. She understands angles. She understands how to utilize her disadvantage of lack of size to her advantage with her quickness and just her mind.

So Betts, Markowski, Kiki, go down the line, Serah Williams, of great, elite bigs in the Big Ten, she will not... she's felt and faced players. I'm not going to say they're exactly the same, but she's had experience with bigs.

Q. Vic was talking about how tough he thought your team was. Obviously this could be a real grind. You obviously like the mental aspect of what your team can bring to this game.

SHAUNA GREEN: Yeah, that's great. I'm glad he said that because that's what we want. That's the culture.

That's what we want. We want to be tough. We want to be blue collar. We want to be one of those teams that's going to outwork you and be disciplined in the fundamentals and the mind set of just coming and, yeah, we may be short. We may not be as tall as everyone else but that's okay. We're going to work really, really hard. We're going to do the little things and the details really, really well. We're going to be disciplined and everything. We're going to play really, really hard together and united and I think that's what's made us good this year and the last couple years is, again, we don't have the athleticism and the length of some of these teams that we faced and sure as hell don't have it like Texas does so we look like... we walk out there, Gen's 5'6", KB's 6'1" and they're all 6-feet and up. So, but it's okay, though.

Q. Did you sense at all last night just like a pressure relief from your team to get that first one here and for relaxation or anything like that?

SHAUNA GREEN: That's a good question. I really didn't sense that they even had that pressure. I probably had more that I felt, it was probably more of a relief for me, but I personally didn't think... I thought they handled it really well. I really do. I thought they handled the two weeks, the lead-up, coming out of the Big Ten Tournament, I thought they handled the prep well, even when they went on some runs. I didn't sense pressure. I sense anticipation of playing and being excited to have the opportunity to win. I think we were really confident. We believed we could win that game coming in, so, yeah.

I also think tomorrow I think we all know everyone expects Texas to win, right? So we are the underdog. All the pressure is on them. We have zero pressure. We can just go out there and play. Obviously we're competitors and we put pressure on ourselves because we want to be elite and we want to be great, but, yeah, all the pressure is on them right now.

Q. Obviously Calamity has a relationship with Vic. I'm wondering have your paths ever crossed? Do you know him at all aside from coaching against him tomorrow?

SHAUNA GREEN: Yeah, I don't. I don't know Vic personally. Obviously recruiting and when I called him to ask him if I could talk to Calamity about coming to Illinois, but, yeah, I don't know him, but I have a ton of respect for him for what he's done everywhere he's been. He's one of the best coaches out there and what he's done here at Texas, what he did at Mississippi State. Everything that he does, I'm a defense-minded coach. I love his defensive mindset. His teams are tough. They're physical. What he has done is what we're trying to build our program to be

with consistency and being able to get those high-level kids to be able to compete for conference championships and national championships.

Q. Are you okay with the early afternoon tipoff time and what time will you have to start things in the morning?

SHAUNA GREEN: Yeah, I'm great with it. I love it. I think I got the text from our ops person last night at like 1:00 in the morning and she's like we're playing at 1:00. I was shocked. I thought for sure it would be a 6:15 or 7:00 game. I think if I was Vic I would not be happy with it. I'm sure he's not happy with it because at home you want to play later so your place is full, right? And I'm sure we're going to get an unbelievable crowd anyway, which this atmosphere last night was unbelievable, even our game, but how they do stuff here and this arena and this setting, I was really impressed for their game and for our game, but, yeah, 1:00's fine. I hate waiting around. Our players, we don't like to wait around. Let's wake up. Let's have pregame. We'll walk through and then we'll get to it. And we're not taking our as I think they gave us a 6:00 a.m. option to shoot-around. We have six players. I said... I don't want the to tell you what I really said (laughter) but, no, we're not taking it.

Q. With Jasmine, she had that big three last night and she's kind of done a little bit of this and that. How do you look at what she's been able to add to you guys this season?

SHAUNA GREEN: She's been huge and talk about a tough kid. She's battling through, has battled through a lot of different nagging injuries and now with the hamstring and literally kind of playing on one leg and hasn't practiced really coming into this game. Practiced a couple days full. Toughness is Jasmine and whatever she needs to do for us to impact winning, she's willing to do. That's what I love about her. Last night going in, if she can just play unbelievable defense, I don't even really care if she scores. Now, that was a big-time three she took in a big-time moment but I thought her defense was elite. I thought she changed, especially against a team like Creighton. We're going to need her tomorrow defensively and, again, I'm just really... when you have kids like that willing to put it on the line and play through some injuries is what you love to see as a coach.

Q. Shauna, I remember you talking about before the tournament Berry Wallace and the experience she was going to get in this tournament, just that first game from her and maybe the moment not being too big for her, what did you see from that game and what can benefit her down the road?

SHAUNA GREEN: Yeah, she doesn't look like a freshman. She hasn't looked like a freshman all year, really. She was poised. She was aggressive. Everything she's been to us all year and we know what she's capable of doing got her in a lot of action that we wanted her. We were really intention fall with that because we knew we could have some advantages and mismatches in certain positions with her. She made some big-time plays, big-time shots. Obviously the one that everyone remembers is the offensive rebound off the free throw. That's a veteran play, right?

She's well beyond her years in terms of her IQ, in terms of how she sees the game. I don't have enough time to sit up here and say what she's done this year and how much she's blown every... we knew she was going to be an elite player, like, you know that. But it's hard. It's hard to come in as a freshman and to be able to perform at the level she's performed is absolutely amazing.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you for your time and the best of luck to you and your team tomorrow afternoon.

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