

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Regional 3 Semifinal - Notre Dame vs TCU

Saturday, March 29, 2025

Birmingham, Alabama, USA

Legacy Arena

**Notre Dame Fighting Irish
Niele Ivey**

Maddy Westbeld

Olivia Miles

Sonia Citron

Sweet 16 Postgame Media Conference

TCU 71, Notre Dame 62

THE MODERATOR: We will ask Coach Niele Ivey to give us a statement, and then we will take questions for the student-athletes.

NIELE IVEY: Well, tough loss today. I want to start off by starting my seniors. Exactly what I said after the game in the locker room, these three believed in my vision and they are so loyal, amazing young women that have a lot of great basketball ahead of them. I am just really grateful for what they have done for me and for our program. It's a resurgence of the program taking over, and they've left it better than what they came in with. I'm really grateful, such an incredible group of young women.

I'm really proud to be their coach. They know that I've got 'em for life. This is just an amazing group of young women that are so talented, so gifted but more importantly they are better humans than they are basketball players. I'm just really grateful I had this opportunity to be part of their journey. They're very special to me. They mean so much.

Again, came up short today. I thought with the game, obviously a high game. A game of runs, we had a great stretch in that third quarter defensively that we went up, but unfortunately tables turn, couldn't make shots that we normally make. Couldn't get the stops and just didn't finish the game the way we wanted to.

For this group and for these three, like I said, just really, really grateful and looking forward to eventually trying to



build this back up. Or not even build it back up, but, again, with Notre Dame women's basketball they put it in a great space, a great place and I'm really grateful for that.

Q. Maddy, you had that match-up with Sedona Prince. Can you tell me how it was to take on a player like that and how it went throughout the game?

MADDY WESTBELD: I think definitely the plan was to be as physical as possible with her. She is a great post player. She is the center of the offense. So being as physical as I could, really tried to push her off the block and make her try to work for everything.

So I think fouls here and there, but I think we tried to do just that.

Q. I wonder if any of you can comment on why was their defense so difficult today? Just didn't seem like you guys made a lot of shots that you're used to making. Was there anything particular that made that tougher?

OLIVIA MILES: I can comment on that. No offense to them, but it was really nothing they did to alter us. Obviously Sedona is in there, she was blocking shots, that's one factor, but we literally were just missing shots that we normally make and that's going to happen at times.

In those moments we have to rely on our defense and we tried to do that. I thought my team played extremely hard and fought to the end, so I'm very proud of them for that.

But it's just shots that we should make that are on us at the end of the day.

Q. Niele touched on the importance of the three of you in the senior class. Could you each talk about what kind of legacy you hope you created for this Notre Dame team and what you look back on in terms of your own personal growth in the season.

MADDY WESTBELD: I think that this group of girls is so special. Coming in with all of them you never -- oh my goodness (tearing up). There's truly no place on earth that



I would want to play with. There's no people that I would want to play with other than these two, other than Coach Niele, other than play for this university.

When you go around the locker room, it's not about the basketball. It's not about anything other than the people, and, that's why you do it. You do it for each other, and throughout my entire career I have done it for them.

I know that they would say the same thing about me and I know they say the same thing about Coach Ivey and about this university.

OLIVIA MILES: When I think about legacy I think more about the impact that I leave on people. Winning is great. Obviously everyone wants to do it. But as Coach Ivey said, as long as you leave the place better than you found it, you left a really good impact. And these two sitting by my side and Coach Ivey not only had a big impact on my life, and I hoped that I had a big impact on their life.

At the end of the day my goal coming to Notre Dame was to leave Notre Dame better than I found it and I think I did a pretty good job of that. I hope so. Like Maddy said, I love all my teammates in that locker room.

We've stayed together. We've grown so much through this entire season. We are very proud of the work we've done, and ultimately we have had fun. That's really what this is all about. You sign up as a kid because it's fun to throw a ball in a hoop and look where it's gotten us to at this point? Just love them a lot.

SONIA CITRON: Hard to follow those two but I think they hit it on the head. Again, I wanted to leave the program better than I found it and Coach Ivey believed in us and we believed in her. We committed to that and four years later here we are and, again I think it's better off than it was a couple years ago.

And then I think an important thing that Maddy said was just the people. Thinking now I'm not even thinking about the game, I'm just thinking about the people that I've met here, the relationships that I've formed, the friendships that I've formed and it truly is -- Notre Dame is such a special place. We're just so blessed to be able to play the sport that we love with the people that we love for the coaches and the university that we love. So I mean, reflecting on it, I'm just -- we're all truly blessed.

Q. This is a program that has a lot of success, especially getting to the postseason and making runs in the postseason. What was different about this season as opposed to others where all this really good senior -- just veteran talent manifested itself? What

was different about this season?

SONIA CITRON: I think we just had so much talent. Sometimes too much talent, you know, we didn't even know what to do with. We got Liv, we got everybody.

So I think this year was just how talented we were and, yeah, I don't know.

Q. Maddy, you found yourself in foul trouble in the third quarter into the fourth quarter. When you are in a position like that, how do you balance playing aggressive, while defending somebody like Sedona Prince and avoiding fouling out potentially?

MADDY WESTBELD: Yeah, I've been trying to figure that out this whole season. I think just not thinking about the fouls. You go in a space where people are saying you're in foul trouble, and then you're thinking about fouling and you're trying not to foul, and you can get in this space where it's tough.

So just staying present, not focusing on it and just trying to play as aggressive as possible but as clean as possible. So just staying disciplined I think really is the key to that.

THE MODERATOR: Okay, ladies, you're dismissed.

Q. Coach, that's the fourth straight Sweet 16 exit for you guys. I'm curious, what is it about peaking at this time? I felt like this might have been the time to go past that. What might it take to finally get into the Elite Eight and beyond.

NIELE IVEY: I think playing forty minutes we showed that stretch that really kind of catapulted us, went up nine but you have to sustain that for forty minutes.

So having the sustainability on this type of stage. Unfortunately our fourth exit but knowing that you have to sustain that for forty minutes because of this stage and how big the stage is.

Q. Last time you guys played TCU is when Sedona had her 20-20. What was your approach today on defense?

NIELE IVEY: We were trying to be physical with her, I had more size, adding Liza and Maddy within the rotation. They weren't available for us the first time around. So just wanted her to defend on the opposite end and be physical with her, wall her up and obviously try to limit her touches but they did a good job of getting her the ball and she had a really great game.

Q. Take your coaching hat off, as a fan of the game, can you speak to the talent of just the senior group that you had and just the depth and talent of the -- it all came together this year?

NIELE IVEY: Absolutely. Special group, so talented coming into the season. Sonia and Liv are generational talents that I have had a chance to foster and help to develop and grow the last four or five years. So it's been a blessing from the beginning and Maddy Westbeld super versatile.

It's just been amazing. They're amazing humans and I feel like you got a chance to listen to who they are as people. They're very caring, nurturing, they understand at some point it's bigger than basketball. They love each other, they love this group, they love this university and I wouldn't want to coach anyone else that didn't recognize the beauty that is Notre Dame. They understand it. They understand that it's bigger than the basketball piece, but talent-wise they're just so gifted. I'm excited to be able to watch them in their professional careers, but, again, they're just special. They're special young women outside of basketball.

Q. Olivia was limited in terms of the ankle. How did you game plan through that and how do you manage a game when you can only get limited minutes from a player that important?

NIELE IVEY: Right. She was a little sore today, every day it feels differently for her. Last game against Michigan she went off a lot of adrenaline, and today she was a bit little sore, so just kind of watching. It's more of a feel. We were in great communication, kinda knew before the game that she was a little bit sore.

And she fought through -- she is resilient so she was fighting through some things, but, again, just the awareness of how she was feeling. And I taught Cass was great. I thought Cass came in and gave us a great spark, like she always does, always ready, so just kind of saw how the game was dictating itself with her and how she was moving.

Q. Each player at different moments or a lot of different players individually impose their will on the game, and at the end it was Hailey Van Lith that impacted the game. From your perspective what did she do on the offensive and defensive end to affect the outcome?

NIELE IVEY: She is a three-level scorer, a great player, and I feel like she saw the ball going in and she kinda rose. You could tell her energy, her confidence was getting stronger, play by play. I thought she made some really

good defensive plays as well. Yeah, this is that stage where great players emerge, I thought and she had a really complete game. You know, she is a really good player.

Q. Coach, Olivia and Sonia took a chance on you after your first season at Notre Dame when you all went 10-10. Can you talk about how special they were to see them grow up from freshmen to seniors now?

NIELE IVEY: Exactly what you said. We're not in a collegiate landscape that you see that very often, so that kind of speaks to their loyalty to me, and I'm really grateful that I've had the opportunity to watch both Sonia and Olivia grow and be their coach for four plus years. It's special.

They will always have a special place in my heart, because they believed in me when I took over this program and being a first-time head coach, we'll always that special bond because of that. But, again, it just speaks to their loyalty, the vision that they were looking for, for the institution of their choice, being Notre Dame, and the vision I had with them being my premiere guards. I'm just grateful that they trusted in that and, again, there is a bond that I will always have with both of those two.

Q. You've seen Hailey in her time at Louisville to the time now. Has she grown as a player? Same player? The growth she has had probably since they are freshman year when you played her, then, to now?

NIELE IVEY: I think she has definitely grown with the experience she has had. Playing in the ACC, SEC and now the Big 12, she has all that experience under her belt. I think she is just -- her composure has gotten a lot better and just, again, and being able to score with a lot of different defenses, I think, has been really helpful for her, as far as just the way she can dictate games and take games over. But you can tell with her experience she has gotten more confident and has played against a lot of different type of styles with three different conferences, and you can tell it's paid off with the way that she plays.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

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