

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Regional 2 Semifinal - North Carolina vs Duke

Thursday, March 27, 2025

Birmingham, Alabama, USA

Legacy Arena

Duke Blue Devils

Reigan Richardson

Toby Fournier

Ashlon Jackson

Sweet 16 Pregame Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Coach said she didn't know, but this is y'all's first meeting with UNC in the NCAA Tournament. I know it's y'all's third -- looks like you don't know either. I just want to say hearing that, this matchup, what does it mean to you guys to be facing them for a third time this season in the Sweet 16 on such a big stage?

REIGAN RICHARDSON: I feel like just seeing the work that both of us have put in just to be here on this stage in the Sweet 16 is just amazing. I feel like, yes, it's our third time competing against each other, but the rivalry is just super competitive, and we're just really excited to play against one another.

TOBY FOURNIER: I think I speak for all of us when I say this, but we're all super excited to play them again. They're a great team, super competitive, offensively, defensively. I feel like it's a great matchup for us. We're super excited. I think we're both super prepared, and I think it's going to be a great game.

ASHLON JACKSON: They pretty much already said everything, but I'm super excited. Also, just having two ACC teams hash it out, being able to play for the Elite Eight. Yeah, there's no better feeling in the world, of course, playing our rival. We're super excited just to see what type of game it will be. It will be super competitive, I know, for sure.

Q. I'm curious your thoughts on Oluchi's fashion and



being able to set her own kind of brand, her creativity with herself? I'm curious your thoughts on that and what that's been like to be around.

REIGAN RICHARDSON: I mean, one thing about Luch, she's always going to put on a fit to go anywhere we go. She's always one to really dress up and do whatever with the team.

Just being able to have that platform for her is really amazing. She's really into fashion. I know I speak for all of us, we've all been on her little channel, Get Ready With Luch, or whatever. It's awesome to see how her platform is expanding in that aspect because it's something she's really passionate about, and I'm happy to see she's doing what she loves.

TOBY FOURNIER: I would say the same thing. You know, love Luchi. I love when she loves something. It was really fun to do that with her. I was just in her latest episode. I don't know if you guys saw it. The March Madness edition. It was fun to be part of.

We went shopping. I was trying to pick stuff up. She would slap my hand down. You know, she definitely has a passion for it. It's great to watch. It's really fun to be a part of, and I'll always support her in everything she does, so...

ASHLON JACKSON: Like they said, I love Luch. Just her being able to set her mind to something and still go through with it, I love it, and I love it for her.

That's really right up my alley as far as fashion stuff because, you know, I love putting on a fit too everywhere. No, but, like, having Luch -- because I was on one of her episodes as well. Having Luch style us, it was just amazing. Like I said and like they said, whatever she puts her mind to, it's gold for her. I will always support her in whatever she does. I love Luch.

Q. Toby, you're feeling better. I wonder if you could give us an update on how you are feeling and how eager you are to get back out on the court after not playing the second round?



TOBY FOURNIER: You know, I'm feeling great. I'm here. I'm well-rested, well-hydrated. I'm ready to go.

Q. Just for Reigan, is there something you remember about your guys' Sweet 16 loss two years ago that just has stuck with you, the mindset, approach, a memory from the locker room afterwards that is informing this experience that you are currently going through at all?

REIGAN RICHARDSON: Yeah, you know, it's two different years, being in the Sweet 16 last year and the Sweet 16 this year, but one thing that I remember about last year is just how much we -- the memories that we shared all start flooding back in that locker room. Like, just from the season that we've been through and everything that we've been through, it kind of came again at that moment. Yeah, there were tears, but it was also -- it wasn't just tears of sadness. It was tears of joy just knowing that we've been through that journey together.

So going into the Sweet 16 this year, you know, we're just focusing on the team that we have at hand and just looking forward to competing.

Q. For any of you, what is it like playing for Coach, from the standpoint of what is she like in of practice, out of practice for you guys?

ASHLON JACKSON: I've said it multiple times. Playing for her, it's everything for me. I pretty much can speak for everyone that wears a jersey that says Duke.

I would say for me, she really brought out a side of me and a side of my game that I never knew that I truly had. She instilled this confidence within me on and off the court, I would say. Just playing for her, you know, to share her same passion and to share her same, like, grit, there's no other team that I would rather play for, no other coach I would rather play for.

Like I said, the way she coaches, you know, it's like you would do anything for her. You would run through a burning house just for her. But, no, I love it because it's really genuine. Like I said, I can speak for most of us here but just having that and having that type of coach, it's the best feeling in the world.

TOBY FOURNIER: I would say the same thing as Ash, kind of just to reiterate. I feel like one thing about Coach Kara is, she's going to prepare you for the next level. Being a freshman this year, that really helps me. I'm so glad I chose here just because she really knows how to prepare you for games. She knows how to prepare you for the level of competitiveness that you are going to see when you face certain teams.

I feel like she's never going to tell you a lie. She's going to tell you exactly what you need to know, and she's going to tell you the truth. I have a lot of trust in her. I know that she has a lot of trust in me, and that's kind of what our relationship is like.

So I'm really lucky to have her as a coach, and I hope to just see our relationship grow from here.

REIGAN RICHARDSON: Yeah, I second everything that they're saying. You know, Coach has not only helped us on the court, but also off the court. I know I can speak personally about it. She's helped me be able to talk to you in this kind of setting like this, because I know my first year, I would never be able to sit up here on stage and talk to you.

But she's instilled so much confidence in each and every one of us and just being able to play for her and having her coach us is a blessing, for real.

Q. Do you guys have a plan to watch the men's game later? Has that been discussed at all, how you're going to do it? And any preview you want to give about Duke-Arizona on the men's side?

ASHLON JACKSON: I will speak for us. Yes and no, because it's so late, and we do have a game tomorrow.

Yes, we support them 100 percent. We will be tuned in until, you know, our eyes close tonight. So, yeah. I don't know what y'all will say.

TOBY FOURNIER: I will say the same thing. I obviously want to watch it. What time is it?

ASHLON JACKSON: 9:30.

TOBY FOURNIER: Yeah, it is a little late. My cut off is at 10:00. We love Sports Zone. Those are our boys. We'll watch the first 30 minutes, have a little watch party, and then go to bed.

Q. (Off microphone)

ASHLON JACKSON: We will be watching the whole game.

TOBY FOURNIER: We'll be tuned in.

REIGAN RICHARDSON: I'm sure it will come up once we get back to the locker room.

Q. This is for Ashlon. Can you talk about just the



emotion? Obviously, it's a Sweet 16, so there would be emotion no matter who you are playing, but because you know the opposing team so well and you've had these two sort of grind-it-out battles with them, how do you sort of balance that emotion with staying within yourselves and playing the way you want to play?

ASHLON JACKSON: That's a great question. I would say -- I say it all the time, but just staying Duke. You know, just staying us.

We know the game tomorrow will be like a lot of highs, a lot of lows, but as long as we just stay connected, stay together, I feel like we could push through whatever it is that we may face. Yeah, like I said, just focusing on us and focusing on the big thing that we want to get to. So I would also feel like that is going to be key for us tomorrow.

Q. What do you feel like it is about the ACC that has helped prepare you to reach here, but also go further in this tournament?

REIGAN RICHARDSON: I feel like a lot of teams in the ACC where everybody is great offensively and defensively, and I feel like we're all just super competitive. Regardless of the opponent we're playing, we're just going to compete each and every day. That helps us throughout the season.

TOBY FOURNIER: I mean, I would say the same thing. The ACC is super competitive and very physical. I would like to say very physical again because coming in as a freshman, coming from high school and just facing, you know, girls that have been in college for four years, it's a lot to adjust to. I think that's really helped prepare me just for this next level and competing in March Madness as well.

ASHLON JACKSON: I agree with everything they just said, the level of competition. And also, being in the ACC knowing every Thursday or Sunday, it's up for grabs. Like, whoever plays the hardest, whoever makes the least amount of mistakes, whoever stays together, those are normally the teams that win.

I would say just having to be able to prepare week to week for those type of teams, yeah, like I said, it's a monster in the ACC. I love the level of competition that it continues to build and build each year, yeah.

Q. You guys are the upper-class players. I wonder how you sort of helped Toby as a freshman, what you've been able to do to sort of share your experience and knowledge with her? Then, Toby, what's it been like to have these two as teammates in your first season in college?

ASHLON JACKSON: I really don't know how to answer that. Toby, how about you give us insight about how we helped you? I don't know...

TOBY FOURNIER: I think the girls around you are what get you through your freshman year. Like, there's going to be ups and downs in basketball because playing Division I basketball is hard. Mentally, physically, there's a lot that you are doing every day. The girls that I've had around me, these strong women that I've been able to look up to, it's been incredible, especially these two beside me. I feel like they've helped me through everything.

There are so many different plays that you have to memorize. They would help quiz me before games or practices. Like, things that I need to remember. So having them and then, obviously, the other girls that aren't here right now, has completely transformed the player that I am.

ASHLON JACKSON: I feel like, also, knowing instinct, her play and playing beside her, and knowing what she's capable of, and knowing what she can bring each and every day, I feel like that's a blessing for us because there are certain talents that she has that we don't have or vice versa. And saying that we have been in college for longer than she has and knowing how, like, things work and don't work as far as on the court, just being able to help her navigate a little bit through all of that, it has been really, really fun strictly because, like, I tell her all the time, her growth from when she first started here to now, like, it's tremendous.

I'm just super proud of her because she's going to continue to show that she's a great player.

REIGAN RICHARDSON: Yeah, I second that. There's going to be a lot of ups and downs, especially for Toby, her freshman year. We all know what she's capable of. And in those moments, we try to instill a lot of confidence in her, even though she don't need it because she's a very confident player herself. But in moments where we all make sure that she knows that we're there and we got her back.

Q. I just wanted to hear your thoughts on you upper classmen having come through the tournament before, what it's like being back, and how that's felt so far? Then, Toby, for you as a freshman, what's that been like so far?

REIGAN RICHARDSON: Yeah, you know, being back in the same position we were last year, it's a great feeling. It's a blessing just to be in this position, to be in the Sweet 16. We're all just taking it one game at a time. We're just

all excited to compete with one another for another game.

ASHLON JACKSON: Yeah, I mean, I agree with Reigan. We've been here before, it's a blessing. You know, the excitement, it's always going to be there. Maybe a little bit of nerves as well, but, you know, just being able to compete at this level, coming back-to-back. Like she said, it's a blessing.

We just can't wait to continue to compete within the tournament.

TOBY FOURNIER: I think that people try to tell you what to expect in the tournament, but you don't really know until you experience it yourself. So I'm kind of waiting on that. We had the ACC, you know, champs (smiling). I feel like that is going to help transition into this competition as well just because of the level of competitiveness, and then facing the same teams that are also in the Sweet 16 as well.

So I think that prepared me as much as I can be prepared, but I don't think you really are until you experience it yourself.

Q. Just talk about the challenge of facing an opponent three times and what has y'all's preparation looked like going into this matchup? Is it any different than it has the past two?

TOBY FOURNIER: I feel like the preparation is relatively the same just because we're very prepared as a team every single time we play them because we know what they bring to the table.

I think playing them a few times has definitely helped because we know what to expect. I mean, you can never really know what to expect in a game like this, especially during March Madness, but as much as we can. I think that's definitely helped us before, and it's going to be a competitive game.

REIGAN RICHARDSON: Yeah, I feel like since the first time we played them, they got better. Since the second time we played them, they got better. I feel like you don't really know what to expect, like Toby said, going into the game. We know they're going to bring their A game. They're going to bring their competitiveness, their energy, and we're just going to have to match that.

ASHLON JACKSON: I agree with what Reigan said. This is a great team, a great coach. Like she said, they've gotten better from the first game, the second game. We just know they're going to compete and leave it all on the floor. They're going to bring their best and for us to

continue to compete at the level that they're going to compete at. But, yeah, the preparation was pretty much harder, I would say, because it's March Madness. Anybody can beat anybody.

Yeah, just being prepared for that and prepared for tomorrow's game is really what we've been focusing on. We're going to continue to challenge ourselves and continue to stay the course and stay us in order for us to compete for it tomorrow.

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