

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Regional 2 Semifinal - Maryland vs South Carolina

Thursday, March 27, 2025

Birmingham, Alabama, USA

Legacy Arena

Maryland Terrapins

Brenda Frese

Sweet 16 Pregame Media Conference



this tournament, and you're going to have a couple more. What kind of stands out about this group as you've gone through your scout, particularly their top two guards?

BRENDA FRESE: Yeah. They're really good at taking smart shots. You never see within their system that they're going to take a tough three or a tough two. I mean, they play really well within their offensive system. They're difficult matchups because all their guards are athletic. They can score the three, pull up, get to the rim. Then they just bring waves off the bench as well.

It's a deep team that is able to kind of wear you out with their depth.

Q. You mentioned the portal. I'm curious. I know you're focused on this game, but do you have an assistant who's like the portal person? As you've been in the game a while, what do you think the ideal portal timing would be, because Sweet 16 doesn't feel like the right time to be worrying about people are being transferred?

BRENDA FRESE: They changed it. It's a week later, so now it only impacts your Sweet 16 and beyond teams, compared to a couple of years ago when it started right as the Selection Show was announced.

Ideally after -- it's a dead period all the way through the Final Four. I think you should let teams and players come down off of their emotion. It should be a level playing field. Right now, it helps teams that have lost early, that aren't in the tournament, that don't advance far that are able to put all their time -- yes, my entire staff is watching film. I have an assistant dedicated, but everyone is making calls. I made a call last night, but then kids are already on Zooms and taking visits.

That makes it really difficult for your teams that are currently playing.

Q. You have a lot of transfers on your roster this year and a really deep roster. One of the players that came into the team this year is Mir McLean, one of those

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach Frese.

Q. Coming off that game where it doesn't finish until almost 9:00 local time on Monday, and you've got on Tuesday, I'm assuming, kind of rested, and then traveling here yesterday. What is the schedule when you are trying to prepare for a Sweet 16 game, but also balancing the need to rest players at this time of year?

BRENDA FRESE: You know, it's really tough because South Carolina had an additional day. And then you look at a game where we had multiple players play close to the entire 50 minutes. A lot of rest and reset for them. For our staff, around the clock with the scouting that has to take place and the transfer portal that, fortunately for us, opened on Tuesday as well. Little to no rest, but a lot of reset for the kids. Then getting back to actual practice today. A lot has been going on.

Q. You and Dawn Staley, obviously two of the greats going at it tomorrow. What are some takeaways from every time you play here, as well as just what's it been like going up against her over the years?

BRENDA FRESE: Yeah, they're awesome battles. Clearly, we're going against the defending national champions, and it is a team that we're really familiar with just because of the past games that we've played. They're really talented, obviously well-coached, deep, athletic. When your top two leading scorers come off the bench, that just speaks to the bench of their balance.

Tall task, but one that, like you said, a familiar opponent for us that we kind of know each other extremely well.

Q. You've dealt with some dynamic guards already in



players who played a lot of minutes on Monday. What has she -- she's kind of had an interesting journey with all the injuries and things. What has she meant to your team this year, and what has she provided?

BRENDA FRESE: Yeah. I'm really happy for Mir and just to see, through this NCAA Tournament, she's stayed the course. Like you said, she's had an incredible journey through a lot of injuries as she transferred back home and wasn't even 100% healthy until the season kind of unfolded for us. To see her having her most impactful minutes right now during the NCAA Tournament, she's been our most complete lockdown player on the opponent's best player. It's a credit to her. Those are the stories you love to be able to tell of the players that just continue behind the scenes. That's who Mir was all season, even when she wasn't getting the minutes. She'd go out on the court, pre-practice, post-practice, and she would be out there getting shots up and working on her game.

I'm really happy for Mir, as well as for us, that she's kind of peaking at the right time.

Q. You get one more reunion with one of your former practice players before he gets to head off to his first head coaching job. Kind of how have you seen Winston grow from his time running practices undergrad to now his first Division I head coach job, and how much have you spoken to him since the news broke?

BRENDA FRESE: So happy for Winston. No one deserves it more. The way Winston works, the relationships that he's developed over his career, it's appropriate that he's ready for his next step in his progression as a head coach.

We literally, by text the other night, he had shared with me he had accepted the job and needed a quote to be ready for his press conference, so I did know out ahead. Pretty special that we do get to see each other one more time and before he takes off as the new head coach.

Q. In 2006, you guys won the national championship in overtime, and then after last week's overtime game, you said overtime was your time. What are your kind of superstitions now around overtime games?

Q. I don't know if I would call it superstitions. I would say just good juju, right, that overtime has been a part of Maryland where we've had a lot of success. At that point in the huddle, and it's been a while since at Maryland, we've had an overtime game, so just wanted to instill confidence into our team that we were fine, and that we were going to be okay when we went into

overtime, as well as when we went into double overtime.

Q. What was Barker maybe able to do, even though everyone kind of knew who was going through her, and to be on the sideline and to watch someone have a performance that maybe defines what March Madness is, what was that like?

BRENDA FRESE: Well, I mean, again, we had Mir McLean on her, and Mir made her life miserable, but she still got 45 points. That tells you everything you need to know.

Then even as we adjusted with the ball screen defense throwing two at her, she still was able to continue to find a way. She's just a warrior. She's an elite level competitor, obvious winner. It was a spectacular night. Unfortunately, on our watch to be able to watch, but just speaks volumes to what kind of kid, character, player, competitor and winner that she truly is.

Q. Just to follow up on Mir, you said often she guards the opposing players' best guard. What about her game has given you the confidence in her to give her that assignment time and time again?

BRENDA FRESE: She's so versatile. We can put her on a point guard, a wing, a center. It doesn't matter. You give her a job, she's going to take it to heart.

I think to be able to see just defensively, her rebounding, but just that selflessness, unsung hero type of play that comes from Mir. Again, just the intangible of wanting to do whatever it takes to help her team win a game.

Q. Can you update us how Shy and Saylor are feeling, and specifically with Shy, how have you gone about balancing knowing that her knee isn't quite 100% but still trying to get the most out of her and not wear her down, but you know, you needed her to be out there. How have you approached her knowing she's not quite 100%?

BRENDA FRESE: We're really efficient with our practices. I mean, I haven't heard from the trainer, from any, from Shy or Saylor that they've been impacted. With everyone, our concern was to be able to get that rest and reset. You saw in the minutes that the Shy played the other night, that knee seemed to be just fine.

When you can block it out and know what's at stake and understand, there's a short window of time left in your career, you are able to put it all out there.

She's in great shape. So is Saylor, as well as the rest of the team.

Q. Just wanted to get your thoughts on Allie. Allie, when we last played South Carolina in the NCAA Tournament, didn't play. The last two tournaments, we talked about her being automatic. Just for her being in this moment, what have you kind of prepared her for in getting ready for this moment and this matchup?

BRENDA FRESE: Yeah, I think Allie is really excited. She had to watch that last time through the injury when we played South Carolina, so now she gets an opportunity.

You know what I love about March is Allie Kubek, and she's shown over these last two seasons. The bigger the game, the bigger the moment, she's been huge for us to be able to kind of give us that post presence. When you talk about your guard play and what they've been able to do, and then to have that X-factor with Allie from her range, as well as her -- I think defensively she's done some really good things for us as well, and we're going to need her with all the bigs that South Carolina has.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports