

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Regional 1 Semifinal - LSU vs NC State

Friday, March 28, 2025

Spokane, Washington, USA

Spokane Arena

LSU Tigers

Kim Mulkey

Aneesah Morrow

Sa'Myah Smith

Shayeann Day-Wilson

Kailyn Gilbert

Mikaylah Williams

Sweet 16 Postgame Media Conference

LSU - 80, NC State - 73

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement from Coach and then take questions for the student-athletes.

KIM MULKEY: I don't have one.

THE MODERATOR: Okay. We'll take questions to the student-athletes, please.

Q. Aneesah, just that performance, and you've been great all post-season, but this one, how much of this was about not going home and kind of extending your college career?

ANEESAH MORROW: Nobody likes to lose, so I talked to my teammates in the huddle, and I told them we got to take our matchups personally. We have to be able to dominate and we have to be able to make defensive stops and we did that towards the end of the game.

Q. Kailyn, can you take us through that block? Because that really seemed to shift the momentum. And any of your teammates, can you -- what was that like? How did that change things for you-all from there on out?



KAILYN GILBERT: I'm not even going to lie. Like, she was cooking me, so... Yeah, she had me beat on that play, and I just saw that she brought the ball in front of me a little bit, so I went up and got it and then shot, chased it down, and pushed the ball up, so, yeah.

Q. Mikaylah, you guys went down 64-69 and then after that, you just seemed to hit a different gear, like, a switch both offensively and facilitating the ball. What clicked there from that point?

MIKAYLAH WILLIAMS: I think it's what Nees said. She got in the huddle and told us that this was not going to be her last game. So that's just me playing and not wanting it to be my last game, not wanting it to be her last game, so I think that's just a little bit of heart and a little bit of luck that them shots finally started to fall at the end of the game.

Q. I wanted to ask about the fan support that you're seeing out here quite far from Louisiana, particular Aneesah and Mikaylah. Mikayla, I saw you go celebrate in front of the fans with Flau'Jae, and so you blew a different couple kisses at different times to the fans. Could you talk about you how the fans have supported you and what those interactions mean to you?

ANEESAH MORROW: I've never had a fan base like this before and, honestly, the love and support that I got from the fans when I first came on a visit, that's exactly why I came here. You get to see they travel. They care about you more than just a player. It's more of a person as well. They send you long paragraphs after the game, and you be like, You got this, and just how much that they see the growth in you as a person and how much you mature. Like, they really watch us and they really support us and it's good for someone to not only care about you as an athlete, but as a person.

MIKAYLAH WILLIAMS: Like I was saying, they're, like, our sixth man or sixth person on court. Just knowing that they have our back going into the game. When we're down, they still have our back. Like, I know y'all are in there and y'all here that "L-S-U." Like, that really drives us to want to win the game. And just knowing that they've traveled this



far.

And also just seeing my dad in the crowd. He hasn't missed one game since I've been in college. So just me -- just seeing his sacrifice just makes me go that 10 times harder.

Q. Aneesah, you said that in that huddle, you told your teammates to take their matchup personally. Is that a mentality that you've always carried throughout your basketball playing days?

ANEESAH MORROW: I feel like if the person that I'm guarding or defending scores the same amount of points as me, we even out. Like, I didn't perform that night, and that's kind of how I feel. So it's about dominating your opponent and your matchup, and nobody want to leave the game like what KG said, Oh she cooked me and we lost. Like, that's something that make you not want to -- like, you can't sleep at night after those games where you know that you should have won, and you can pay attention to details while you have the game in your hands.

Q. Aneesah, you talked about some of the sacrifices that your parents made. How fulfilling is it that you continue to show well on, like, the biggest stage?

ANEESAH MORROW: I'm honestly just overall grateful. My parents have been through a lot of stuff, and I've been through a lot of stuff. I've seen things that I shouldn't have seen. I've been in crossfire. I've been through it all, like, honestly, being on south side.

And the sacrifices that they've made for me, I go out and -- not only on the court, but off the court, I'm a student-athlete, and I make sure that I take care of my grades academically, and I just never want them to worry about anything. I never take anything for granted, an opportunity or anything, so just coming out here working hard every day is just giving my thanks to them.

Q. Sa'Myah, last time you guys played this Wolfpack team, you didn't score, but tonight, amazing game. You had the team's first six points, and you came down big down in that end stretch of the game. What were you feeling today and how did your performance today change from last time?

SA'MYAH SMITH: I think we played them in, like, November, so I was still trying to get my feet under me after being out last year. But it's March. People come to hoop, so when you hoop, you just hooping. But I just played my role, do my part.

Q. Sa'Myah and Mikaylah, just last week Flau'Jae said

it's going to take eight, right? Obviously, she didn't have her best game tonight, but you guys picked everybody up down the stretch. How much of that was understanding that it's time for you to perform your part late in the game and make this happen?

SA'MYAH SMITH: I would say I think they have been waiting on it all year, really. But again, just playing my role, doing what they need me to do defensively or offensively. Even scoring a couple buckets, so that's been good.

MIKAYLAH WILLIAMS: I think that's just what a team is. Obviously, Flau'Jae didn't have her best shooting night, but she was still an amazing leader. She still kept us together in the huddle. She told us what she saw on the sidelines. So even though she wasn't there presently on the court, she was still there in our ear, still supporting us, still backing us up, and having our back. So I think that's just a testament to the type of person that she is and also the type of team that we have and the type of chemistry and the bond that we have.

Q. Aneesah, offensive rebounds are obviously a big part of your game, but nine of them tonight. Y'all as a team doubled second-chance points over NC State. How much of that ties into that idea of taking things personally? And how much did it mean to get those?

ANEESAH MORROW: A lot of them was off missed shots. I missed a lot of shots around the basket, chippy baskets. But I still have to be able to make an impact offensively when my shots are not going in. That's going up and being able to react and get another rebound.

But also, just being dominant in the post. Like, that was our goal for this game, to dominate the post, to get a lot more rebounds than them, and to be able to score inside as well.

Q. Shayeann, you didn't score today, but you had some big assists and those big stops at the end. In terms of the end of the game, what were you thinking when you got the stop then the turnover then the stop again and how does that sort of relate to how you see your role on this team?

SHAYEANN DAY-WILSON: It's bigger than -- the game is bigger than scoring the ball. I felt like I just -- this year just taught me that there's other ways you can impact the game, whether that's on the defensive end, and I feel like a lot of people don't see that. It's just in their head, it's all about scoring. But I felt like I just did my part, and I didn't want to hurt my team today, and I took on the best matchup, and I took it real personal. So my teammates have my back and it's just not about scoring for me.



Q. Sa'Myah, did it sort of feel like you were picking up where you left off against Florida State? At one point it was 15 consecutive made field goals.

SA'MYAH SMITH: A little bit, especially confidence-wise, but again, my teammates are encouraging me, pushing me, so having them helps a lot, but I mean, it's March. Nobody wanted to go home, so I'm just doing what I can to help us win.

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll excuse the student-athletes and take questions for Coach.

Q. Third straight Elite 8. What's this particular one mean to you with this group of girls?

KIM MULKEY: I think there's five in our locker room that have never been to a Sweet 16, so they certainly haven't been to an Elite 8, and that's what excites you as a coach, is having players experience something for the first time. And you don't take it for granted. You just don't. We made plays down the stretch. We made some bad plays down the stretch, but we made plays down the stretch to pull it out and win, and it means we did some good stuff.

Q. What did you see on Kailyn's block? She said she was getting cooked, but that seemed to really flip the energy for you all.

KIM MULKEY: Well, I'll tell you this great story about KG. When she came to visit, we brought her in out of the portal, and Coach Starkey and I sat down in my office. And if you know anything about me, I'm going to be real and honest with you, and sometimes people can't handle the honest truth. But I feel like if you bring in transfers, you better be real honest with them and tell them ahead of time what your expectations are.

And our entire -- not entire conversation, but the majority of our conversation was defense. We had watched her on film and told her the way she performed defensively wasn't going to fly at LSU. You're never going to see the floor. So if you commit to defense, we know what can you do offensively. But I'll never forget this. This is one of those moments in your coaching career. She sat up in her chair and she leaned over toward me and she said, And Coach, now -- now, I'm just going to be honest. I said, Well, that would be a good place to start. She said, I've never worried about the defensive end because I've always thought I'm going to get it back for you on the offensive end.

Now, I know that's the mentality of probably every player, but for her in that moment to say that allowed me to let her

know, You're going to have to play defense here. And to watch her on-ball defense every day in practice get better and better and then to watch her -- like she said, she was getting beat off the dribble there, make a defensive play, it's only fitting that we talk about that in this game.

Q. You guys have been in a lot of close games this season. You haven't won all of 'em, but you've won most of them. Curious, is there something within teams that are able to close out those close games late, like, an edge or a mentality or someone like Aneesah who is taking it personally? Like, what's the thread through those teams?

KIM MULKEY: This has been a team that's won a lot of close games, I mean, from the very beginning of the season. I think part of it is seniors, another part of it is leaders, your leadership, your captains, and the third part of it is competitors. Got some competitors. And it was really hard for us not to have Flau'jae on that floor, but she was seeing double. She got hit in the eye area, and they wouldn't let her go back in. And she continued in the timeouts to point things out on the coaching board and to say things to her teammates, and that's a sign of a leader.

So I think all these close games, it benefits us to have been in them. I don't like them particularly. I would like to relax on that sideline and let them, you know, relax, but when you get to this level, there's too many good teams.

Q. I notice that after the game, you spent some time with the NC State players and kind of comforted them. I was wondering why you thought that was important to do, and if possible, could you share some of the messages you gave 'em?

KIM MULKEY: Well, one of 'em, I know personally. Maddie Cox. Her older sister won a national championship for me at Baylor. So I've watched that young lady since she was -- Maddie was 10, 12 years old. And she had a good game today. I know that family very well.

And what I said to her was, This is the part of the game none of us like, Maddie. Get your head up. She took it hard. Saniya Rivers, I told her what a great player she was.

I've been through that line when you've lost. And I think the world of Wes Moore. There's certain coaches in your profession you don't like coaching against because either they're really, really good, and he is, as a coach, but he's a really good man, and I just told him that. I said, You're just a good man, Wes, and you're a heck of a coach.

Q. This is Sa'Myah's second straight game with 20

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

points, 10 rebounds. Is it safe to say that it's a big 4 now? Is this something that you're looking for her to display from here on out?

KIM MULKEY: I would say Sa'Myah is playing very confident, and Sa'Myah is quietly just doing her job and somewhat doing everybody else's job too. When we get beat tonight on dribble penetration, and they would come off that screen at the top, she altered shots, she blocked shots, she got rebounds. She's just becoming more comfortable. She's had two knee surgeries, and she is coming off that, and it takes time.

And I think with Sa'Myah, you get a clearance from a doctor that you're good to go, but it's above here (indicating), it's above here that you have to take your time and let it happen, and I just think she's just playing very, very good basketball right now.

Q. Aneesah keeping y'all in the game, the performance. She's been so reliable, but she was extraordinary tonight.

KIM MULKEY: Well, I was actually disappointed she didn't have 20 rebounds (smiling). No (laughing).

That kid's a -- she's just -- she just works. She's an undersized post player in their battling bigger girls, demanding the ball, guarding on the perimeter. We only hit three threes tonight, so for you WNBA scouts, I think she lit it up from out there. I think they forget she can shoot the 3 ball because that's all she did when she was at DePaul. But for us, it's not needed. So when she hit those two threes, I thought, okay, Nees has got it going on tonight.

Now, she missed some, but she just is one you want on your team. She just is one of those kids that she plays that hard in practice every day. Sometimes you put her on the side because it's like Nees, this is one of those days where you can take a deep breath.

Q. Did you get worried about Flau'Jae's status potentially going forward? Is she going to be evaluated at all with the vision?

KIM MULKEY: I haven't been told she can't play. I didn't see it. I don't know if she got poked in the eye, hit in the -- I don't know. I just know I was getting ready to put her back in the game, and I turned around, and they said they won't let her go back in the game because she's seeing double, like double vision a little bit.

So we just went with Mjracle defensively and KG offensively. But I haven't asked. They haven't come up to me, you know, all worried or anything like that. So, yeah, I

anticipate she will be good to go.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you.

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