

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Nebraska vs Louisville

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Schollmaier Arena

Nebraska Cornhuskers Coach Amy Williams Alexis Markowski Britt Prince

Media Conference

Q. Lex, in what way does being in the NCAA Tournament feel like a big deal?

ALEXIS MARKOWSKI: It's really exciting. March is the time of year where every basketball player wants to be playing in, especially in this tournament. I've experienced it twice, and there's also been a season where I haven't. From that season, I just learned how tough it is to make this tournament and to compete in it. I'm just feeling really excited to be here for my third season and just excited to play some games.

Q. Britt, what has it been like learning how to play offensively with Alexis Markowski this year? When did you feel comfortable getting her the ball in a position where she best can use it? Or do you feel comfortable? You look pretty comfortable out there.

BRITT PRINCE: Yeah, it's been a lot of fun getting to play with Lex. I feel like every time I throw the ball up to her she's going to catch it no matter what. It's really fun to play with her, and I think our pick-and-roll especially is something that's a big strength of ours, and I think, yeah, we have a pretty good two-man game. But yeah, it's been a lot of fun to play with Lex. Just going to cherish the last couple games that we get to play together.

Q. Britt, what's been your experience watching the NCAA Tournament, thinking about playing in the NCAA Tournament? What was that part of your basketball following?

BRITT PRINCE: Yeah, I think ever since I was a little kid, I've wanted to play in the NCAA Tournament, and just



watching as many games as I could every March, at school or whatever. I think just being here now in this position, it's really special, and I'm really grateful to be here. I just want to take it all in.

Q. What do you mean by at school? You had one of those teachers who pulled it up?

ALEXIS MARKOWSKI: She did it in her mom's office.

BRITT PRINCE: Just pulled it up on my computer, my phone, you know.

ALEXIS MARKOWSKI: Are you allowed to have your phone at school?

BRITT PRINCE: Yeah, for that.

Q. Lex, what have you seen from Louisville? What do you think it'll be like in the paint, how they're going to defend you what happened you're going to have to do well to be productive there?

ALEXIS MARKOWSKI: I think they're going to guard me one-on-one. It's going to be a really physical battle on both sides of the floor, so just working on getting deep post positioning and then also they're really good at offensive rebounding, so rebounding will be huge not only for me but for our team.

Q. Lex, as you wind things up now, every team is different. You had Jaz Shelley on your first three teams. How different has this team been than the other three years, or maybe better asked, what will you remember about this team that's been different than your other three years?

ALEXIS MARKOWSKI: I think every team that I've played on here has been different, even though we've brought back some of the same pieces. But this year I think -- all I knew for three years was playing with Jaz, and Britt has just done such a wonderful job of -- I'm not going to say taking over Jaz's role, but being in that point guard position. She's been so fun to play with. As a freshman, she's just so confident. I swear I tell her every time she



... when all is said, we're done.®

gets the ball to shoot it. That's been really fun.

I think this season, there's been just a lot of ups and downs with injuries and players going down. Natalie started this season as our leading scorer and we lost that. Then with Allison Weidner finally coming back and playing and then losing that as well.

Yeah, I think our mentality this season and just to get to this tournament, a lot of people didn't think we would just with losing those two girls. We stuck together and kept getting better and leaning into each other, and that's something I'll remember about this team.

Q. Long break in between the Big10. What do you think Coach Amy had on top of the practice sheet or did she tell you?

ALEXIS MARKOWSKI: We worked on a lot of different things. Two weeks with no games is a long time. You don't really get that in season. We have four days for Christmas but that's a long time to have off.

Yeah, we said that our goal is to get better. The teams that get better in that stretch usually win games in March.

I think just rebounding and ball screen defense, things like that. I feel like we worked on a lot of offensive execution, handling pressure, and also just breaking presses, which Louisville will press us tomorrow.

Q. Britt, if you can remember back to October, if you could go back to October and tell yourself this will be your biggest surprise when you get to March, what has been the biggest surprise that you didn't realize about being a college player?

BRITT PRINCE: I mean, I feel like it's just being ready every game and, I mean, I already knew that like every game was going to be tough. Really you can't have an off night against any team, especially during the Big10 play and stuff like that.

Always being prepared, knowing the scout, what you're doing coming into the games, that's something that's really important. You can't take that lightly and expect to win games.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, just make a statement?

AMY WILLIAMS: Okay, sure. Just really excited to be dancing. And the weather right now in Texas a little different from what we left yesterday in Nebraska.

Thrilled and excited to be having the opportunity to pursue

another championship with this team. I just love coaching this group. It's a team that has overcome a lot this season, and we've kind of grown into kind of a special and tightknit group.

Just excited to have another chance to get on the court with them.

Q. Jeff was in here earlier and said he would still bet on you had any HORSE game.

AMY WILLIAMS: (Laughter.) That's interesting. I think I remember Coach Walz telling me to not shoot it. I don't know. I may or may not have been a defensive specialist in Jeff's mind, yeah.

Q. Reflecting back, I think you only faced him once as a coach; is that correct?

AMY WILLIAMS: That's correct.

Q. Talk about the relationship you have had and going back to when he was a young assistant; now he has been at Louisville doing it for a long time. You're trying to get Nebraska built and keep going. Talk about that relationship and what it meant back then and now.

AMY WILLIAMS: Yeah, well, I'm really appreciative. I feel like I was blessed to play for a couple outstanding head coaches when I was a student-athlete at Nebraska and the coaching staff there. I still do drills that Jeff Walz and Paul Sandford brought to Nebraska when I was a senior; several drills from those coaches that just helped mold me.

I really consider Jeff one of those. He's obviously gone on to have an incredible career in women's basketball, but what I'm so appreciative of is if I pick the phone up and call him to ask about some of the changing landscape, and maybe it's NIL stuff or how things have grown, he's always just been the first to be willing to just mentor me and talk through things, and I enjoy running into him on the road recruiting and just being able to share ideas.

I still continue to learn from him, even though I'm not his student-athlete anymore.

Q. Going off that, what was 1999 Nebraska assistant coach Jeff Walz like? Has he always been a very outspoken person or what was it like at that time?

AMY WILLIAMS: (Laughter.) Yes, he's always been just very outspoken, but just full of energy. The passion that you see, it's just so incredible to watch the way that that just has not diminished at all.

Certainly as a young assistant coach he had that fire. He used to -- when we weren't maybe doing something quite right in practice he would just grab the ball and come out and show us.

His, you know, I don't know, 25 year old self, he was really a young assistant coach at that time, but he could still hoop a little bit. He wasn't afraid to get on court and show us the right way to do things.

But just the one thing I'll always just remember is just he's incredibly passionate as a coach, but was really caring and we knew that he was somebody we could go to with anything that we needed.

Q. You said you love coaching this team. What are some of the specific things you love about this group that maybe isn't always the case 100% every year?

AMY WILLIAMS: This is a team that genuinely celebrates each other's successes at a high level. I think it starts with couple of our seniors. Just Kendall Moriarty, Kendall Coley, they've been in our program for a very long time. Whether their role has been playing a couple minutes here or there or starting and playing over half the game, they throw themselves into celebrating each other, celebrating their teammates, celebrating at high level.

It's just been addictive for the rest of our team. I think it's just influencing the whole group to really be excited. They say they want to play for each other. You can see that in the way they lay it on the line for each other.

I just think back to our overtime win at Iowa this year. You know, Alexis Markowski fouled out of the game but grabbed all those kids in a huddle and said, we're going to win this game.

She was still over on the bench celebrating. We got a shot clock violation in overtime and she was dancing to it and celebrating at a high level.

In that particular game there is close-up video of Allison Weidner grabbing Alexis during one of the timeouts and coaching her up and giving her instructions; and Natalie Potts grabbing Britt by the face when she came off the court making a huge shot to tie the game.

Just those clips, those moments, those things, those are the reasons why this group is special. It's why we're here in the tournament. It's why I absolutely love coaching them.

Q. As you get ready to face Louisville and you're

watching this team on tape, the Big10 and your non-conference schedule put you in a great position to face anything. With Cochran, with Berry, with Roberts, all the great pieces Louisville has, is there a team you faced this year that Louisville reminds you of in terms of the style they play with bigs and being deep and good three point shooting and defense?

AMY WILLIAMS: What a great question, Matt. I think they bring their own challenges, but when my husband was watching film with me at home over my shoulder, kind of like Ohio State in some ways. They like to be able to -- they're going to full court press, and all of a sudden they're trapping ball screens and really aggressive defensively and deep and lots of kids that can impact the game.

They like to push tempo and really get out and run in transition, so I think maybe that's the team that comes to mind from the Big10 Conference that we feel like resembles.

But I told our kids that Destiny Adams is an outstanding offensive rebounding in our league. When you watch them it's like Destiny Adams times five on every possession.

They have a lot of kids that will crash the glass like that. That's what we're expecting and what we really respect when we watch them and prepare for them.

Q. Obviously you guys had to make an adjustment when Natalie got hurt during the season and I think you've had another knee injury as well. How does the team respond when such a big piece gets taken out so early?

AMY WILLIAMS: Yeah, I think it can go multiple ways. We spend a lot of time talking about that and we do spend a lot of time in our program talking about response and how we respond.

I've already mentioned the way this team celebrates each other's successes and the way they respond to positive things when they're happening.

But the response to adversity, when things aren't going well, is something we take a lot pride in. We really focus on that and spend a lot of time talking about that. When Natalie Potts, who is your leading scorer and leading rebounder, the freshman of year in the Big10 Conference a year ago goes down after the fifth game, we spent time talking as a group about we can respond to this however we choose.

This is a team that chose to honor Natalie with the way we respond and try it channel and say, okay, Natalie is not out



there to get us ten rebounds but I can I get two extra in her honor.

Just trying to channel and find ways to bring the things that her. And then a little later in the season, Allison Weidner who missed all season last year with the knee injury came back. Fought so hard to get back. I think it's the reason we beat Michigan State at home.

Then all of a sudden she goes down about an hour before we get on the plane to go play Rutgers. Once again we find our same in the same position. How are we going to respond to this.

Felt like a gut punch in both cases, but most certainly the way our kids responded to that, I'm incredibly proud of. We wouldn't be here if they hadn't made the choice to respond the way they did.

More importantly than that, it thrills me to think about these young women and their future when they face similar adversity and situations and the way they choose to overcome.

Q. It's going to be all smiles and nice camaraderie pregame with Jeff. Going back to that relationship, how are you hoping your team focuses in, but then yourself as a coach flips the switch once the ball is tipped to really lock in for an NCAA tournament game.

AMY WILLIAMS: Yeah, I mean, I think this is something we been working for a very long time. We've got players like Alexis Markowski who have just left their blood, sweat, and tears into this program, the things they've been fighting through, our kids to be in this moment.

So, yeah, it'll be awesome to reconnect. Once that ball is tipped up it's all business, what needs to happen on ever possession for us to be successful. This is a group that's really motivated to want to extend their stay in the tournament and continue to fight together.

Q. Backing off Chase's question, I think about Alexis Markowski's freshmen year in Louisville, and then the experience last year, not only making the trip to Corvallis, winning a game, but going to the Big10 Championship game and taking Iowa to overtime. You have a group of players, not just the seniors but Callin Hake, Logan Nissley, people like that. How different is your approach if you think back to Alexis' freshmen year playing Gonzaga to where they were today in terms of not your approach, but what you sense in your locker room about their approach to this? Is it the same as it was three years ago or changed any?

AMY WILLIAMS: I think it's changed. I think it's changed. You don't win three games in the Big10 tournament and -- with a really close overtime loss to Iowa who ends up eventually in the national championship game a year ago. You are don't taste that kind of success or the win in the NCAA tournament a year ago. You don't taste that kind of success and then it doesn't change things for you.

It does. It's like once you get that there is a different kind of hunger and starvation to get it back I think. I won't say that when we went to Louisville Alexis' freshman year oh, we were just happy to be there. I'm not going to say that. But I think there is a different sense of hunger for this group because they've tasted a little bit of success and they want that back.

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