

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

Friday, March 21, 2025

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Schollmaier Arena

Louisville Cardinals

Jeff Walz

Olivia Cochran

Jayda Curry

Media Conference

Louisville - 63, Nebraska - 58

THE MODERATOR: We have head coach Jeff Walz and student-athletes Olivia Cochran and Jayda Curry.

A quick statement from Coach.

JEFF WALZ: I first want to start off and congratulate Nebraska on an incredible year. Amy has done a remarkable job out there. It's been fun to watch. Especially having coached there for four years and still have friends that worked in the athletic department. Jeff Griesch and Matt Coatney have been the voice of Husker basketball for a long time, and it was really neat to see them.

Jamie Kubik Hagedorn, you know, she's now one of their senior sport administrators for women's basketball was on that same team that I had the opportunity to coach and be a part of. It was really nice to see her as well.

It's a game where things go full circle throughout your career, and it's really, it's something special, and that's one of the things when you play a game like this, sure, you're playing out there to win, but I do feel for her because I've been there. I understand how hard the amount of time and effort your staff, head coaches, the players all put into it, especially this time of the year.

We are a sport where we don't have bowl games. You can still end the year on a win, even though you might not win a championship. For us, there's one team that's going to finish the year with a win. The rest of us are faced with a loss. So it's tough, but I just want to congratulate them.



And then our group here, just really, really proud of the fight that our kids showed. We had done such a good job the first three quarters of defending and making things hard. And then in that fourth, they scored ten points in about three and a half minutes, and that was our problem.

Called a time-out, and then we held them to four points the next 6:30, and that's why we won the basketball game. I'm proud of everybody. We had a lot of players play and a lot contributed. And especially when you're putting as many freshmen out there on the floor as we are, just really, really proud of them.

Sorry about my stutter. I've got a head cold. When a head cold comes, it's not good.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions to the student-athletes, please.

Q. Olivia, you were at the podium this time last year with a much different reaction and emotion. How nice does it feel to get back to what you're used to?

OLIVIA COCHRAN: It feels amazing. This group is so special. We don't know how good we are yet. That's why we're still dancing. We're keeping one foot in front of the other and prepare for the next game.

I know our coaching staff will come out with a great game plan for our next opponent, and we're just ready.

Q. Jayda, you had an eventful last couple minutes out there. When you made the basket, the tying basket, you looked like you were hopping a little bit. You stayed in the game, made the next basket and drew a charge that was key. Talk about all that.

JAYDA CURRY: Just a cramp. Clearly need to hydrate more. That's all that was. My teammates and my coaches talked to me, pushing me through that was a big factor. I was able to make big plays in those moments. Nothing crazy, just a little cramp.

OLIVIA COCHRAN: Tough.



Q. Jayda, you know the standard that is at Louisville. That's obviously why you came here two years ago, whatever it was. How much do you kind of put that on your shoulders, especially in this tournament, to keep you guys going and just how much does that drive you during those last few minutes?

JAYDA CURRY: Coming from somewhere where I didn't make the tournament, get to play and have the opportunity. Last year, that's not how we wanted it to go. Being able to come out, compete, and win this game and going to the second round is super fun, super exciting, and I'm excited.

You talked about the standard. That's something I came here for and I feel like we're upholding that standard and will continue to do that as we go through this tournament.

Q. Olivia, you mentioned the next opponent. The next opponent is TCU and a former teammate of yours. Talk about facing TCU and Hailey.

OLIVIA COCHRAN: They're a great ball club. They're undefeated at home. We're going to go out and compete, go for it with a game plan Coach Walz and the coaching staff have for us. It's just going to be a ball game. That's all I've got to say. Go Cards.

THE MODERATOR: Ladies, thank you for your time.

JEFF WALZ: Before a question, I'd just like to challenge ESPN on some different things because we get stuck on -- we don't change the narrative in women's basketball very often.

For people to not know more about Britt Prince, really sad. It's a shame. But she wasn't a big name -- well, she was to a lot of us in recruiting circles because we sat there and recruited her hard. If you don't start the year up there on a pedestal, it doesn't matter what you do. You ain't getting there.

That's the difference between the men's game and the women's game. We get stuck on a narrative. We'll spend our money and put a preview out there or whatever. God forbid if we spend any more money on women's basketball. She's good, but we'll wait 'til next year.

It's really sad because that kid's special. For a freshman, it's amazing how she played and how good she is. But it's unfortunate that we don't do a better job within women's basketball of just not sticking with one or two or three or five players. Expand it. When somebody starts showing how good they are during the year, God forbid if we do a special on them.

So I'll go with questions now. I'm sure I'll get yelled at by people, but I'm not even talking about my own players.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach.

Q. Like I was just talking about, the standard that you were talking about. Last year's obviously very uncharacteristic, never happened before. For you, did you see a different appreciation for today? Not saying that they didn't, but just knowing how last year went, did you feel like it was more special this time?

JEFF WALZ: I was really happy and proud of them. I thought we did a really nice job. The first quarter was a little bit challenge for us offensively. They got up. We cut it to two at the end of the quarter.

Then we came out in the second, executed extremely well, and pushed it up to, I think, an eight-point lead in the third. And then just had some bonehead plays there to allow them to get back.

But we've played in a lot of close games. We've had a very, very good schedule. It's one where I always sit here, and I've talked to people about it because we're all trying to figure out this net. I would just like to have someone explain it to me.

So if you beat somebody by -- at least in AAU basketball, when I used to coach it, you always knew at the end they might do by point differential. But once you were up 20, plus 20 was as high as you could go. It didn't matter.

Nobody can explain a damn thing to me about what is it? Win by 50, or does it stop at 20? I've said this for years. I really think the last few years it's impacting our game in some ways.

As a coach, do you sub? Do you put your bench in? Because if you're up 30 and you put your bench in to give your kids a chance to play and you win by 12, does that hurt you because your offensive efficiency might not be as good?

So you look at that people are sometimes put in what their seeding is. You're saying, well, I shouldn't have played such a tough schedule. So there are things we're trying to learn too as coaches.

I've talked to my athletic director, and he's been great. I'm hoping we can have an opportunity where, as coaches, here's a Zoom call. We're going to put everybody on Zoom call to explain it to you. If you don't get on the Zoom call, it's your fault. At least give us a chance because then you

know what it's going to take. If I'm up 30, 15's the magic number where the cut-off is.

But I do believe the games that we have played have helped us throughout the year. Even in the ACC, we have an overtime game at Wake, overtime game in the tournament. Our game at SMU was a great basketball game where we got down in the last two minutes of the game. Figured out a way to come back and win.

So, yeah, I think our schedule has helped us, and I'm just really proud of how we continue to compete and execute.

Q. Jeff, can you talk about Jayda in last minute. She had physical and tough plays there at the end.

JEFF WALZ: I was proud of her. She didn't play in the ACC tournament after getting injured in our last regular season game, which is a big blow to us, but I was really proud of how she gutted it out.

We'll try to do as much treatment as we can because she got hit in the same area and she's pretty sore right now. Hopefully, we'll see how she can go on Sunday. Obviously, she won't do much in practice tomorrow except for walk through some things. But we've got to make sure that she's ready to play because she is a big part of what's going on with us.

Q. I do have to ask about Hailey. You had a lot of success with her. Talk about your memories of her as a player when you had her and facing her. She went to another Elite Eight last year.

JEFF WALZ: Oh, yeah. We sat there and had -- we won a lot of games. Very fortunate to have great players on those teams. Kianna Smith, Dana Evans, Emily Engstler. We had really good basketball teams. She was a big part of it. She had a great career.

She graduated college in three years, which nobody really talks about, and they should. Because that's our job as coaches. Sure, if you lose games, you get fired. But at the end of the day, it's to get kids to graduate from college. She did that in three years and decided to make a move, which is great. Everybody does it. It's no big deal. So yeah.

Q. And I guess you're not surprised at the impact she's made on TCU?

JEFF WALZ: No. I mean, hey, Sedona Prince isn't too shabby either. She is one that a lot of attention has to go to her at 6'7", being able to step out, shooting from 15 to 18, being around the basket. I'm excited for her because I

coached her in USA basketball in Mexico when she broke her leg.

I can remember going out there when that happened, and she was, like, Coach, I think I broke my leg. I was, like, you're going to be fine. When I looked down, I'm like oh, shit, no she ain't.

But I'm happy for her because that was an injury that was pretty darn severe. And I think she's finishing up her seventh year so she should be going for a doctorate, if not teaching a class or two here at TCU. But she's pretty darn special.

You've got other -- they have great pieces. It's not just Hailey. It's not just Sedona. You got Conners, who shoots -- I mean, she shoots like 45 percent from 3. So, yeah, it's a complete team.

Q. You often talk about the plays that don't get on the stat sheet. Jayda drawing the fouls, the charges, are those the kind of plays that you feel are more impactful than even just the points?

JEFF WALZ: There's no question about it. The charge she took because we actually blew our defensive coverage and Britt was wide open. I was like, my God, I was kind of surprised she didn't just pull up because she was wide open.

Jay did a really nice job of stepping over and standing there and taking the charge. And then I've got to say thanks to the officials for making the correct call. I mean, hey, because it's one where, shit, it's 50/50 anymore on calls like that. But she was there two feet. She was sitting there.

So it was a big-time play. And then the other things you don't see, just being able to get the ball inbounds. Riss took it out for us twice in situations where you've got to get it in. We had no time-outs left. She gets it inbounds. They have to foul, we make one of two free throws.

Those are plays too that a lot of people take for granted, but there's pressure taking that ball out of bounds.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you for your time. Good luck Sunday.

JEFF WALZ: There's one of my Husker friends in the back, Matt. Thank you. I appreciate you and have enjoyed listening to you over the years.

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