

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Syracuse vs UConn

Monday, March 25, 2024

Storrs, Connecticut, USA

Gampel Pavilion

Syracuse Orange

Felisha Legette-Jack

Coach

Dyaisha Fair

Georgia Woolley

Media Conference

UConn 72, Syracuse 64

MODERATOR: Okay, coach. Just maybe a few opening thoughts on tonight's game.

FELISHA LEGETTE-JACK: Well, first, it's a celebration, you know? This game is about winning and learning and we learned so many lessons, we won so many fights that no one will ever know. We've conquered so much as a team and as a family. I'm just so smitten by my staff when I had to step away for health reasons and my staff got behind Coach KC and just never, we never missed a beat. It was almost hard to fit back in because they had it so iron-clad. I am so grateful for my boss, John Wildhack, for giving me the opportunity to be the head coach of the best school in the entire country. I am so grateful for these two right here deciding that it was better to be with me than anywhere else in the country, to follow me here to Syracuse and to leave it on the stage like they did time after time, day after day, game after game. I'm a blessed woman. Like we said to you yesterday about that song that me and Paige share, I think I'm for it all, good, bad, ugly, great and small.

MODERATOR: Thank you, coach. Okay. At this time we'll have questions for the student-athletes. Just raise your hand. Down here in front to start, please. On the left.

Q. (Inaudible) with the Associated Press. Dyaisha, you were one of nine in the first half two points. What did you say at yourself at halftime in order to put on the performance that you did in the second half?



DYAISHA FAIR: A shooter doesn't stop shooting. That's it. It was time for me to keep shooting the ball. Once I see it go down, that's all I need.

MODERATOR: Okay. Over here on the right to the far right first.

Q. (Inaudible) with The Daily Orange. Georgia, you started off really hot tonight obviously with those couple threes early on in the game. What was going right for you going into the contest and just what was different tonight opposed to the past couple of games for you?

GEORGIA WOOLLEY: I had a really good conversation with the coaches and I just needed to play free and just have fun and be myself. That's what I came out and did and it was enjoyable to play. Yeah, that's really what it was for me.

MODERATOR: Right next to him.

Q. Georgia, Justin with The Daily Orange. Alongside you in the first half, Sophie Burrows really stepped up. What was it like to see her get the chance to start in March and really take the most of her opportunity?

GEORGIA WOOLLEY: Yeah, I'm so proud of her. She really stepped up today. She had what? Six threes. She had to step up today for another player starting on the biggest stage. Like we're at UConn, playing UConn, and she hit six threes. It's just her future's exciting and I'm just so proud of the way she played today.

MODERATOR: Right down the line here.

Q. Andrew with Citrus TV. Dyaisha, what's it about this team that makes it so special and the grit they bring to the table?

DYAISHA FAIR: I think it's our unity that we've created thus far and I think that's what got us here, just us staying as one.

MODERATOR: Over here to the left.



Q. Chris Carlson, Syracuse Post Standard. Dyaisha, you talked a lot as this season has finished as sort of celebrating your moments. The game ends and Isabella hugs you and Geno hugs you and everybody everybody's sort of trying to sort of take the sting off. I guess what were you reflecting on in that as the final moments happened?

DYAISHA FAIR: I think that I was taking in the fact that it was over with this program for me. Other than that, I think I feel like we just, as we spoke in the locker room, we just ran out of time, and that was kind of my mindset at the end when the last horn sounded.

MODERATOR: Up here to the left, fourth row.

Q. Tyler, WJPZ. Dyaisha, as your time with the team is coming to a close, who has your message been to the teammates that will be coming back and what you want to see them accomplish and take care of over the next season and beyond that?

DYAISHA FAIR: I'm not that much of a talker, but I've been better over the years, but I've shown them that no matter what anyone says or doesn't say about you, you can do whatever it is you want to do. Me being 5'5" and everyone has what they have to say about that because I'm that small, I've done a lot at this size, so I think that I've shown my teammates for the last five years that they can do anything.

MODERATOR: In the middle here.

Q. Georgia, you played with Dyaisha your entire career. What is it you're going to miss most about playing alongside her?

GEORGIA WOOLLEY: I thought I was the one that had it together, y'all, what? (Laughter) Wow. (Tearfully) Everything. This is all I know, right? I came to Buffalo and I was welcomed and Dyaisha -- ah, man. Stop. She's taught me so much not just about basketball but just everything, you know? She's just amazing and she's just going to do amazing things at the next level and I'm so excited to see it and I just couldn't be prouder and that's all I have to say, really. I'm just so thankful for the time that I got to play with you and I'm excited for what's next. (Fist bump with Dyaisha) That was cute.

MODERATOR: Last one right here down in front.

Q. Alexa for ESPN. For either or both of you, just given what you all did this season, you were picked to finish ninth in the ACC, tied for second, made this sort

of run now. How do you think you'll look back at this season and what you're able to accomplish?

DYAISHA FAIR: For me, I think that this was the best year of my career, and, you know, that's probably the thing that I'll look back at. When I had the choice to leave, I didn't know that this would be the best year of my career.

MODERATOR: Okay. Thank you so much for coming up, ladies. You can go back to the locker room now. Okay. At this time, we'll open it up for questions for the head coach and we'll start right in the middle right here and then go to the side. Right here.

Q. Ethan Frank, WJPZ. Coach, when you hear your players get emotional talking about their teammates, what does that make you feel like as their coach?

FELISHA LEGETTE-JACK: Those are my kids, man. Those are my daughters. We went through a lot together, and if they're hurting, you hurt, too. Even though it's a hurt that's a good thing, you know? Because they love each other. The things that we had to go through to get to this point to see that the fights were necessary to get to this love part of your heart, it just reminds me that we got to continue to push through, push forward with the culture that we're building at Syracuse University and the character that's necessary to -- even though you feel like you're wronged at times, you got to push through for that character. These ladies have done the work and they brought the standards from Buffalo to Syracuse and when they hurt, I feel their emotion, too.

MODERATOR: In the middle right here, white shirt.

Q. Justin with The Daily Orange. Coach, what was the thought process behind starting Sophie. Obviously Alaina was a big loss tonight. What did you see from her that led to the career night?

FELISHA LEGETTE-JACK: She just kept getting 1% better every day. We have practice at 8:00 in the morning and I'm in my office at 7:30 and there's just one person bouncing that ball and it's Sophie. She just really, really, really wanted to get better and really did the work and one person goes down, you say give her a chance. Some of them, others deserve that opportunity as well, we just went with her and we stayed with her because she earned every minute that she was out there.

Just so proud of her having a breakthrough day. This young lady has been shooting the ball so well in practice and in the game, she's kind of, you know, got a little stage fright but today, there was nobody else to help and she just channeled her nerves and just became the player I know



that she's going to be in the future for us moving forward.

MODERATOR: Right next to him.

Q. Coach, it's been quite the leaps and bounds from year one to year two for your team, so what's next for Syracuse Women's Basketball in your mind?

FELISHA LEGETTE-JACK: We want more. We always want more. The school, the community deserves more. What does more look like? You know, we got to continue to get better with our cap. We got to continue to get better with our character, get better academically. We only had eight people on the All-ACC Academic Team. Why not all of us? There's room at the top for all of us. We didn't win so when it came to the score, we want that score to say that we can continue on. We're going to have to start next season tomorrow to prepare for that.

So, we want more and we deserve more. They deserve more and this community serve deserves more and we're going to give them more. Whatever more is.

MODERATOR: In front here.

Q. Coach, two questions if I may. First, with Paige Bueckers. Was there anything just seeing how she performed today that either surprised you or just really impressed you that you didn't expect. And secondly, with your own program, is there anything that you hope especially with some of the younger kids on your roster that you can all take into next season from this post season experience and making it back to the tournament?

FELISHA LEGETTE-JACK: Geno said this and I want to echo. Paige was amazing her freshman year. You thought that was optimum of what you're going to get from her. She's way better. She's way better. The game in her head is a chess match. You know, she attacked that middle. If nobody came, she knew how to float it. We game, she knew how to kick it to either corner. Most guards either know how to pass down or out. She can pass it down or pitch it out. She can pitch it behind her. I mean, she's just a seasoned vet and her coming back another year for you guys, you guys, just like that young lady that sat next to her, you better enjoy her because you're not going to find a Paige walking through that door I don't care how good -- I've seen a lot of great players come through this door. A lot. I've known Geno since I was a freshman at Syracuse University. Paige is one of the top three that ever came through those doors if that can answer your question for that.

And things that we can learn? Yeah, we're going to show

this film to our guards that's coming in, our guards that's there. This is what excellence looks like. You see Dyaisha's side of it now you're going to see Paige's side of it. She's a teaching mechanism, that's who she is.

MODERATOR: We'll go right here and then over there.

Q. Coach, even though tonight was your last game sharing the court with Dyaisha, what did it mean for you to see the way that she battled back from those early shooting struggles to kind of lead that come back to nearly beat a team like UConn tonight?

FELISHA LEGETTE-JACK: She's always going to battle. That's just how she's built. She's from Rochester. Just have a bad day and just walk in the bad section of Rochester. You got to say locked on ready. Walk and break off, right? That's where she's from and that's what she does and that's how she plays. I just really wish that her struggle wasn't so enormous in the first half because she deserved to be celebrated a little bit more.

I just didn't understand what I could have done to help it get better for her when I thought touches were there, I thought double touches, triple touches. It's just one way six is half a dozen another. But when she started attacking and throwing her body around, that's when it was obvious and she got some calls that went her way, but at the end of the day, she's never going to stop trying. She's never going to stop believing in herself. She's never going to allow anybody to take her away from what grateful is supposed to look like for her and whether she made a point after the second half or not, her fight back was bigger than any kind of point that she's ever scored.

MODERATOR: Okay, last two, we're going to come over here. Yep. Go ahead.

Q. Coach, after the Arizona game you talked about going into next year filling Dyaisha's shoes in terms of on the court but in terms of off the court stuff, leadership within the locker room, who on your team and what do you expect out of your team in terms of replacing her leadership and making sure the team stays together as one?

FELISHA LEGETTE-JACK: She passed the torch just right in front of your eyes. Her name is Georgia Woolley, and she's ready.

Q. Chris Carlson, Syracuse Post Standard. As this year sort of comes to a close you take about this is a moment you never really wanted to think about, the young lady next to you. Did you have a private moment with her at all and did you pass along a



message sort of after the game to her?

FELISHA LEGETTE-JACK: Yeah. I just told her that there's a period for everything in this world, and there's a beginning and this is the period. This ends it right here. The beautiful thing is that she begins again (tearfully), and it won't be easy because you see how hard she worked, you want to keep protecting her from it all, you know? You want to let people see as a big woman I am, how aggressive I speak, I can protect her, and now she's getting ready to go out there as this little, young lady. Some people don't really notice, don't give her a fair chance and I know she's ready, but it won't be easy for either one of us. Thank you, guys for all you do for women's basketball.

MODERATOR: Appreciate your time.

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