

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Maine vs Ohio State

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Value City Arena

Maine Black Bears

Amy Vachon

Media Conference

Q. Looking back, Indiana comes to Maine earlier this year, Mackenzie Holmes, homecoming became in her final season. Looking back now, how helpful was that? Despite the defeat from Maine, how helpful was that seeing that our playing Ohio State tomorrow?

AMY VACHON: Yeah, I think Ohio State is definitely a different team than Indiana but playing a Big Ten team and playing them, being competitive and playing really well and having it be such a close game, I think it gives our team that experience to know that we can compete with a Big Ten team and teams that are nationally ranked.

Again, they are a very different team but just having that experience, hopefully can be helpful for us.

Q. And one of the differences Ohio State's press is very well-known. Has there been anything close to being able to prepare for that this year other than this week?

AMY VACHON: No. We have played a lot of different teams and a lot of different styles. You know, it's what we try and do in non-conference, try and prepare us if we are fortunate to get in the situation. But that's one thing we haven't really faced and even if we had faced a press, I don't think it's comparable to Ohio State's press.

Q. You have notable history with Maine and how successful you were, the lone win for the Black Bears in the tournament upsetting Stanford. But hearing your players talk about it, you don't bring it up and you're focused on them having their own experience. How is it for you to not kind of use that?

AMY VACHON: Yeah, it was a long time ago. It was 25 years ago, and it was a whole different lifetime. While it's part of our history, it's not going to help us win tomorrow,



you know.

So it's important for our players to have their own history and experience and to create their own history. I think just preparing for what we can do and enjoying this. We talked a lot about when we are on the court and in the film room, we are going to prepare like heck to win tomorrow; and when you step out of the line, to really enjoy this experience because it's special. And not everyone gets to experience it.

Q. There's the experience of winning the Conference Championship but that moment when you're in the room together and finding out where you land on Selection Sunday, and obviously it was known, but that sense of officialness of being in the tournament?

AMY VACHON: Yeah, there's something to be said about seeing your school's name on the TV, and on the bracket and being revealed. You know, you can talk about it and people can tell you how it feels but until you experience it yourself, you know, it's just this feeling that you can't describe.

And so I was just so pleased that our players were able to experience that. You know, they have been through a lot and you know, no one on the team had had that experience prior to Sunday.

And so for them to experience -- to see them experience that was just pure joy.

Q. You played a Big Ten school and you're coming to an atmosphere that's really grown in size over the past few years, and just I know your players were talking about, too, you guys have sellout crowds, but as someone who has been in women's basketball, seeing that growth?

AMY VACHON: It's incredible where women's basketball is right now. You know, all over the country, in every pocket, just the fans, everyone is talking about it everywhere you go.

My brother said a couple months back, they were watching



the Duke/Northwestern men's game and it was the same time as Caitlin Clark was playing and he changed the channel to watch Caitlin Clark. He said, ten years ago, you would never change the channel from a Duke/Northwestern game to go watch a women's game. That's where we are at. Caitlin has obviously done so much for our sport but it's beyond that. It's widespread and all over.

To see the growth, you know, I was listening to something the other day and we were talking about when I played, the game was on our local TV station. Went down to broadcast the game. So it could be broadcast.

Like now it's nationwide, every game. And it's just incredible to see the growth of the game, and it's really cool.

Q. I wanted to ask about status and availability. Are they all going to be good tomorrow?

AMY VACHON: Yeah, I think so. Unless something happens, I think they will be, yeah.

Q. We talk about the Iowa offense, Ohio State offense, they like possessions. You guys are under 60 possessions a game, I think.

AMY VACHON: Pretty close.

Q. Tell me about the style and what the ideally stick offensive set is for the main Black Bears?

AMY VACHON: Yeah, well, we can't run with Ohio State. I mean, not many teams can. But that's something that you know, our team is built on efficiency, and built on running our offense and getting great shots and making other teams defend us.

We know it's a challenge. We know how well Ohio State defends. But hopefully we can get them in more of a halfcourt game and keep those possessions down. If we are up there with 75, 70-plus possessions, that is not in our favor by any means.

Q. You guys have been really good defensively all year, gave Indiana some trouble earlier in the year. I want to ask you, when you look at film for Ohio State, specifically Celeste Taylor, she came along a lot more in the Big Ten play offensively. What have you seen from her offensively and how she's fitting in with this Ohio State offense?

AMY VACHON: Honestly, it's hard to pick just one player on their team. She's a fantastic player, as is Cotie

McMahon is incredible. That kid is really good. You know, I mean, I could go through their starting five and their bench. You know, I think with Taylor, she just could score at all three levels and she creates so much havoc on the defensive end.

So her offensive game has, I felt, really come on as of late, not just relying on her defense. But look, they are a Top-10 team in the country for a reason, right. They have weapons all over the court and so we'll try some different things. Just like we did against Indiana, try some different things, and see what we can do.

Q. Back on Sunday, you told me this is a team that does not back away from a challenge. What have you observed from your entire team collectively about their mindset as they prepare for this game tomorrow?

AMY VACHON: Yeah, I mean, it's similar to, we referenced the Indiana game a lot, but I think that's important, too, with our experience because no one gave us a shot in that game. You know, and our team believed that we had a chance. No one else did and our team did. And they came out and they just played and that's one thing that I really appreciate about our team.

It doesn't matter who we play. They are going to give it everything they can. They have been selfless all year. They compete and they are going to represent our university, our state, and their families extremely well. And so you just -- they will be ready and whatever happens, happens, but it won't be from a lack of effort, that's for sure.

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