

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

Friday, March 22, 2024

Columbus, Ohio, USA

Value City Arena

Maine Black Bears

Coach Amy Vachon

Adrianna Smith

Anne Simon

Media Conference

Ohio State - 80, Maine - 57

AMY VACHON: Congrats to Ohio State. That's a really, really good team. Really proud of our team. I felt like we battled the entire game. We had some turnovers, obviously. Not many teams don't have turnovers against that team.

But I felt that we did a really nice job on doing the things we wanted to do. I thought Liv Rockwood came out on fire and hit some big shots for us and Addi battling back from going down in the first half, and then I thought Anne was just Anne, especially in that second half, just really made plays.

Could not be prouder of our team, the season that we've had and the way we battled today.

Q. Amy, curious, when you see the kind of frenetic kind of defense that Ohio State brings, was it something you were expecting? What was kind of the game plan there to make sure you could get the ball up the court?

AMY VACHON: We knew they were going to do it. They might be the best in the country at doing that. But it's one of those things that you can't really emulate. You can't replicate it. And so it's hard when it's the first time you face it, but I really thought we did a pretty good job against it.

We had a couple of flurries there where we had a couple of turnovers in a row. But for the majority of the game I felt we did a nice job breaking the press. I felt a lot of turnovers were in the half court after we broke it, which isn't



surprising they speed you up and slow you down. Overall, we shot 53 percent from the field. Unfortunately, so did they. So but no, I thought it was a good game.

Q. Winning is not -- it's pretty normal for you guys, 11 straight winning seasons. NCAA Tournament may not be as normal. I'm curious what a performance like today does in terms of the, I guess, future growth of this program. What are you taking from it?

AMY VACHON: I think we said it in the locker room. That's the standard. The standard is making it to the NCAA Tournament. We know it's difficult. We haven't been here for five years. We are fortunate to come two in a row. We went on a little drought. We know how hard it is. We don't take it for granted. But that's the standard and that's the goal every single year to make the NCAA Tournament, and to compete like heck.

Q. And to come back to help your team, to lead your team to an NCAA Tournament, as you sit here, I guess, what are you thinking about in terms of the journey that this team has been on over the course of this year?

ANNE SIMON: Just so proud of this team. I've said it multiple times, this is why I came back for my fifth year because I knew we could do it. I'm just so proud of this team.

Q. What about this team, I guess, how does it stand out? What should be the story of -- what will you remember most about the story of this team?

ANNE SIMON: I think just believing and having the trust in each other. We talked about it all season long coming in that this year was going to be special, and we believed in it from the first game on and first practice. We just came out and really emphasized on our defense and everyone on the team is just willing to do whatever it takes for us to win. There's players that don't see the court a lot, but they're doing an amazing job of preparing us in order to get the wins.

Just everyone on this team is really amazing, and I couldn't



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be happier with everyone.

Q. Adrianna, obviously you and Anne have kind of been the offense for this team. Or had the ball in your hands quite a bit. I'm curious, with another season to go for you with this being Anne's game, I guess, what have you learned playing next to Anne and then what can you take, I guess, moving forward heading into next year?

ADRIANNA SMITH: I've learned a lot from playing with Anne. Like a lot of what works for the offense, a lot of pace of game. Anne's been really experienced with all of that. And there have been a few times this year where I've had to dial back in and, like, know the game and the pace that we're playing with and what's working.

Also her leadership is a big part. That's something, yeah, we're losing her minutes on the court but also what she gives to us off the court. So that's something that all of us that are going to be seniors and our grads are going to have to take over and really step up in. But I'm so happy I got to play this full year with Anne because last year she was fighting that ankle injury.

I've learned a lot. Sad to watch her go, but it's good.

Q. Adrianna, how is the ankle feeling, the ankle injuries?

ADRIANNA SMITH: It's all right. It will be good, yeah.

Q. Making the NCAA Tournament, basketball player of the year and MRPs what's it mean to be playing at Maine four, five years, what's coach Amy, what do your teammates mean to you?

ANNE SIMON: It means a lot. I'm just so happy and so proud that I chose Maine. Just coming here, freshman year, everyone was so welcoming. I immediately felt love from everyone, from the coaches, from the teammates. And I can't thank them enough for everything they've done for me. I wouldn't be in the position I am right now without any of them. And I'm just so thankful.

Q. Amy, obviously this is a national stage. You guys playing in front of millions of people. What did Maine show today? What is kind of the message you guys sent with this performance today?

AMY VACHON: Well, first, I said to our team in the locker room, I felt like all year this team, the way we played, the people they are, how they hold themselves, I think the state of Maine is really proud of them. And I think the university is very proud of them.

They represent us so well in every facet. I hope that when people see Maine, coaches, players, fans, that they see a team that's never going to give up, a team that just fights for everything, a team that's smart, that plays really well together and that has each other's backs, a team that loves each other through thick and thin.

Trust me, there are good times and bad times. There are ups and downs. It's hard. It's a long season, but I hope when they see the University of Maine that they know they're going to have a fight on their hands and also be able to cheer for that team, too, because they're just amazing young women.

Q. To bring Maine to three NCAA Tournaments and what you just said do that for Maine, what's this mean to you? A lot of us don't know anything about Maine women's basketball, but what does it mean for you?

AMY VACHON: It's special. Being from Maine, growing up in Maine, going to Maine, playing here, never thought I'd be back coaching here, but the world works in mysterious ways.

Being here and being able to be around these young women every single day and represent our state and our university so well is incredibly special.

Q. What does having Anne on this team, mean to this team and to the program?

AMY VACHON: Look, Anne -- I've said it a couple of times as the season has finished, gone down, but Anne's going to leave the University of Maine as one of the best all-time players. She is. And that's saying a lot because we've had a lot of really great players.

And it's her work ethic, her toughness. Like, she never takes a play off. She never takes a day off. And that's just not on the court. Like, she is so dedicated to her teammates and the program and her coaches, and she represents us so well. She represents her family so well. She represents Luxembourg so well.

And her and Anna, they've had a long five years. It's been tough. I think it's really important for everyone here to know about Anna. Anna Kahelin has been playing with no ACL all year. She has no ACL. That kid has been playing on no ACL all year long. Talk about tough.

Her and Anne just epitomize everything our program stands for. And when we found out she didn't have that ACL her first question was, can I still play? That just tells you what this class is.

Q. With the emotion, Coach Vachon, that Anne just showed, and the positive atmosphere that I seem to see every time I see you guys play, practice, how have you been able to play at least a little part in cultivating those types of emotions towards this team, that happiness to play for this team?

AMY VACHON: I mean, I'm not going to take responsibility for that. We have an amazing staff. We have an amazing group of young women in this locker room and, look, if those young women weren't in that locker room, I don't know if Anne would feel the same way. She may. But there are a lot of reasons for the way Anne feels, I think.

When you put your heart and soul into something, it means a lot. What it means to me to see her, it means a lot. But it's not because of me. It's because of our program and our university and our state and all the fans that we have and her teammates and all of that, a lot of things go into that feeling, I think.

Q. You talked about the team's toughness and them battling, and obviously we had a pretty scary moment there at the end of the first half. Despite that, Addie came out, played her heart out. I want to know from a coaching standpoint what you saw about the heart that she showed today.

AMY VACHON: Not surprised by any means. I went into halftime into that locker room and said to Coach Peyton, he told me she was going to go get an X-ray. So she's done? He said, yeah, probably. Two minutes later he said she's going to brace up and try to go. I said okay. So I'm not surprised. Addie is a warrior. Addie is a lot of people from the outside in might look at Addie and say, all she wants to do is win. She does not care about anything and she wants to do anything she can for her team to win if that meant sit on the bench. She would sit on the bench and cheer her butt off. I'm not surprised by any means, but it shows how tough she is.

Q. I know you talked a lot in this press conference about just looking back reflecting what the season meant to you. Just when you get that final moment there at the end where you're coming off the court, for the final time, and an immediate turn to the hugs from all of your team. Is there any way I can get you to walk me through in that moment what you're thinking?

ANNE SIMON: I don't know. At first I didn't realize it but then obviously I saw coach Amy and I was like, okay, wait, this is the last time I'm coming off the court for Maine. And it just hit me. Just seeing everyone and just being happy, like I mean I know we lost, but I'm so proud of how we kept

fighting in that game and never gave up and then just coming off the court, just again having this moment for one more time, just really happy but also sad at the same time, and then just having my teammates and Anna to do it together, it was sad.

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