

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

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Value City Arena

Montana State Bobcats Coach Tricia Binford

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much. We will open up the floor for Tricia Binford.

Q. Ohio State, as you probably reviewed their games, I think they opened 20-1 but just 5-5 here down the stretch. Played some pretty good teams, obviously. What's maybe the difference in your mind of what they were maybe able to do earlier that's kind of been a struggle for them here at the end.

TRICIA BINFORD: I think you made a really good comment on the level of opponent that they were playing down the stretch. Obviously they're in a great conference, great league, and I think the key is going to come down to who takes better care of the basketball, to be honest. I think they do a great job of turning teams over and rebounds and turnover margin are going to be a factor.

Q. How would you compare and contrast your press and the one they have as well?

TRICIA BINFORD: Yeah, that's a great question. Their pressure on made baskets is a little bit different. There's some zone concepts, there's some man concepts and I think you have to be prepared for the fact that their pressure is never going to stop. They're really going to disrupt a lot of entries so our ability to take care of the basketball and attack it the right way fundamentally. It's going to be a 40-minute game of fundamentals and I think for them they have great depth to maintain that and we also feel like we have great depth on our end too.

Q. Esme said she came to Montana State to cork on defense. What have you seen her grow into defensively over her season with you?

TRICIA BINFORD: First of all, just to say she has tremendous instincts. She played three years in a



2-3-zone, 2-2-1 and really there's a lot of similar concepts but when you have great instincts and you're a willing kid, you can learn defense very quickly and she's got a tremendous IQ. Really she started getting a lot of steals. I know she finished pretty well in the Big Sky in steals her game, but communicates extremely well. She also has some veterans on the defensive end with our returners who helped her pick those things up quickly and she probably had it down within the first couple weeks of practice.

Q. And then offensively, how does she set the tone for your team?

TRICIA BINFORD: Composure, steadiness. She was kind of our missing piece. When we had our first phone call, we had a lot of pieces returning. We had a lot of injuries last year. We had a really fantastic freshman class also coming in, but we needed somebody who could put the ball in their hands, be our leader on the floor. She just brings out the best of everyone.

Q. Fourth NCAA appearance for your school and just in your mind, what would it mean if you guys are able to come into Ohio State on their court in their arena where they haven't lost a game this season and not only make this a competitive game but pull it out. What would that mean for yourself and the program, I suppose?

TRICIA BINFORD: Well, it's a tremendous question and my goal is to get the kids focused on being nine out of ten on their principles and 1-0 tomorrow. We know it's going to be a challenge, a task at hand. This team is very good on their home floor but our kids believe in what they bring to the table and that's all I care about right now, for them to play their basketball and trust their potential and what they bring to the table and make it a great game for the crowd.

Q. Jaloni Cambridge, their freshman guard, just an outstanding season for her. As you've gone over their games and their tapes if you could discuss what her impact on a given game can be, I suppose. Seems like she can do a lot of different things.



TRICIA BINFORD: A lot of different things and for us, this is more about us not having to guard one player. We've defended as a group all year long so we just want to focus on our entire team knowing where that ball is on the floor. I think you've got a lot of tremendous athletes, a lot of tremendous potential on that side of the floor and we got to make sure we're focusing on just as a unit doing our job defensively.

Q. Speaking of defense, you don't always have a freshman win defensive player of the year. What does Taylee do so well that makes her such a potent defender?

TRICIA BINFORD: Well, she never gets tired. When you think about your gifts and what you bring to the table, you can do those every possession on the floor, that's Taylee Chirrick. The kid has a tremendous motor. She's a cross country runner. She's a track champion. She's won a lot of state titles and she's relentless so for us, she just gets her hands-on a lot of basketballs defensively. She's never going to give up. She's going to keep attack-minded and that's what we want to see from Bobcats tomorrow. We know it's going to be a very loud arena. It's going to be very filled with a lot of white and red and for us, it's more of what Taylee brings to the table. That's a lot of our heart and soul of who we are as Bobcats is making sure we play with great energy.

Q. I asked the girls how much they channeled the FGCU win and ending that home streak. They obviously haven't lost on their home floor, so how much do you as a coach channel that win from earlier in the season?

TRICIA BINFORD: Yeah, I think it's more of a mentality of just road warriors. We've said all year long defense travels. Offense can come and go as far as being in and out and if you're going to win championships, you have to be able to win on the road and they've certainly done that with great veteran leaders for us. We've got great experience in our underclassmen of kind of just let them lead so that's that's going to be as important as anything tomorrow.

Q. On a similar note, Utah, that game, how much have you looked back at that game and taken from that one into this one?

TRICIA BINFORD: Yeah, I think we just kind of brought up obviously the name on the other jersey, right? So Ohio State. This is the alma mater of June Daugherty and Mike Daugherty, two of my favorite coaches that have had a major influence on me and it's a big-time program. Kevin McGuff has done a tremendous job here, and what we

reflected back on Utah, that was kind of our first big conference game that we had and after that game, we watched film before we went to Las Vegas on just really focusing on doing what we do well and getting back to habits, there were a lot of things that we felt like we did internally that we moved the needle in the right direction the following week so that's what we got to do tomorrow.

Q. You don't see togetherness on a stat sheet but it's something that seems so pertinent to this team so how important is that on the biggest stage and just the trust these women have in one another.

TRICIA BINFORD: Yeah, it's huge. When you can control your intangibles, there's going to be possessions that we know we are not going to play a perfect game tomorrow. They're too good at turning teams over. We're going to have a mistake and we're going to have to get to that next play. We're going to have to get into a huddle and get ourselves to the next play. We're going to have to go to the time-out, get ourselves to the next play and what we can control is what that looks like. We just want to look like a champion in every response, staying together, making sure we're learning from those situations, moving on to the next and I have no doubt this team will do that.

Q. Can you take us through what drive and motivation you have seen, maybe specifically from your younger players, your sophomores and freshmen to come in here and have this kind of opportunity but throughout the year to work as hard as they have? What have you seen out of that group specifically that has added so much to this team?

TRICIA BINFORD: Well, first of all, they're everything we expected them to be. We recruit competitors. I learned that from one of my favorite and best coaches of all time right here that's sitting here. We've recruited competitors and those three on the freshman stage, those kids came in and have been everything we have expected as far as how they step on the floor. They're going to give you everything that they have and then you bring in somebody like Esme that we've seen for the last three years against us, kind of light us up on our own floor in Big Sky tournaments. When you know what you're going to get and then you build a culture around it, it's going to show up every day, but we definitely work at the culture piece. We want to make sure when we get to January, February, March, it does not feel like a grind. You want to love the people you're showing up with and that's what you're seeing right flow. Their energy is tremendous. I couldn't get them out of the gym last night. They were excited about the practice facility. It was phenomenal. It was beautiful, but this group, they want to play a lot more basketball and they're enjoying playing together.

Q. Third trip for you, fourth for the program but how is this team special compared to some of those other teams?

TRICIA BINFORD: Well, not going to take anything away from those other teams. They're really special too. I also do need to make a note of the COVID year. That team was very, very special that didn't have the opportunity to play in a championship game. What I love about this team is we're super deep. Everybody impacts. This team is very, very selfless. We have a lot of kids coming off the bench that are good enough to be starters but it works for us in our rotation and they're just having a lot of fun. I think they're loose, obviously. I go back to we know we're on somebody's home floor and they're very, very good and at the same time, we get to play basketball tomorrow and we get to play together for the people that are in that locker room. They love each other.

Q. You mentioned your former coach, Dan Hughes and he's here right now. What does this day, last couple days and this whole experience been like with him right next to you?

TRICIA BINFORD: Well, he just got here, so, but when I saw out immediately on ESPN, obviously, my husband and my daughter are here too but when we saw who we were seeded against and where we were heading, it was my first reaction to grab my phone and text Dan and see what him and Mary are doing Friday night because he was just in Boise watching an unbelievable week with us, so and Dan came in during the summer. We talked a lot of basketball. He got to self-scout us, gave us a lot of grade feedback so it's been really fun just to kind of pick his brain as he's watched our team over the course of the season and be able to come here right in his backyard... and also my second backyard. Used to play with the Rockers, so it's been great to be here.

THE MODERATOR: Any other questions? Great, coach. Thank you very much. All the best tomorrow.

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