

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Tennessee vs Ohio State

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Columbus, Ohio, USA

Value City Arena

Tennessee Lady Volunteers Kim Caldwell

Media Conference



But we are definitely on the road. Making sure that we keep our bench energy up, and our huddles tight, and we stay focussed when Ohio State goes on a run. They are going to go on a run. It's going to be streaky, and you can't too high or too low.

When you have a fan base that's loud and passionate you have to lock in and just look at your teammates in the eye and play through those runs.

Q. Is there anything you saw in the team last night in the way that they were playing or interacting with each other that gave you confidence about where they are going into tomorrow's matchup?

KIM CALDWELL: I think we had fun. I think we were sharing the ball a little bit better than we had been. We had more assists and played through mistakes a little bit better. Our next-play mentality was an improvement of what we have had probably the back half of the season.

But again, you have to see what it's like when you're in the middle of a run of another team and the crowd is into it and see how tough you are then.

Q. You touched on the substitution pattern a little bit last night. Just want to ask about that. Is this something that you had developed over time in your coaching career? And I guess the first important ingredient is you have to have ten people who are capable of playing to be able to pull that off, but just your thought about how this team has taken to it, and maybe how you developed it, I guess.

KIM CALDWELL: Yeah, I've always done it, and you have to have 10 or 11 players that you trust, and that's a big step for a coach is to have everyone accept their roles and lean into their roles and trust them and put them on the floor every night.

Q. Jewel mentioned last night that the team followed the scouting report, and I know that's a pretty obvious thing to do, but you've indicated this team doesn't always do it. You had to re-present the scouting report at Florida. I assume your fifth-year seniors are

Q. Both and you Ohio State employ presses. Can you compare and contrast the differences between your press that you bring and the press that you see from Ohio State?

KIM CALDWELL: Yeah, I think it's very similar, very similar type of systems if you want to apply pressure and you want to play in transition. I think theirs is more of a zone look where they are matched up and ours is more of a man look.

Q. You have players who came over from last year, how do you leverage their experience in preparing for a team like Ohio State?

KIM CALDWELL: Yeah, we always ask, that's the first thing I'll always do going into playing an opponent is ask what we know about that team; and listen to what they say, whether they have played them or watched them on TV.

Q. How important is it to take momentum from that first tournament game, especially with how the regular season tournament went and the two-week layoff?

KIM CALDWELL: Yeah, I think it's important. It was a good step for our program. We were hitting shots. It was good to see the ball go in, and hopefully we can do it again. I'm thankful for the day in between.

Q. We noticed how loud the Ohio State state crowd was. How do you keep that energy you felt last night into the crowd?

KIM CALDWELL: Yeah, we talked about that. It's just going to be us, and we are very lucky and blessed to be part of a program that has a good fan base, a fan base that travels.



perfectly capable at this point of following one, but how do you get the team all on board to do so, because it obviously makes such a big difference if all five on the floor are on the same page.

KIM CALDWELL: Yeah, you have to talk and be locked in, and it has to mean more. Again, it's going to be to do on the road, and it's always hard to do when you are playing 11 players. Because we scramble so much out of our press that you are not always matched up with who you should be matched up with.

So you just have to know actions and how to guard actions. We are late in the year. We have one-day prep going into this game. We're not really going to be able to learn new habits. So you have to rely on the way we have guarded actions all year.

Q. How have you even over the final stretch of the regular season where there were tough results, how have you seen the team come together and bond and have that result that you had last night that was a lopsided win for you all?

KIM CALDWELL: It's great but you can't have a win like that and see a win like that and pat yourself on the back and think it's done. Maybe that's a mistake we made earlier. We have to continue to work on our team chemistry. We have to continue to work hard when the shots are not falling. We have to continue to play through things. I think that's what's it's going to take to be successful in March.

Yeah, we have done it once, but we have to do it again.

Q. This team was on the upward trajectory of building, building, building and hit that stretch at the end of the season last night, looking more like where you picked up where you left off before that. How confident are you that this team is where they need to be right now and what helped them get right back to that?

KIM CALDWELL: I'm confident that our energy is better. I'm confident that our focus is better. I think that we have a better mindset coming into this game.

But again, kind of like I just said, I'm not going to be overly confident and think that I can take my foot off the gas as a coach just walking into this opponent that, okay, we are back to where we used to be. We have to continue to work through things.

Q. I want to ask about Ohio State. They had a couple of the better players in the Big Ten this year with Cotie McMahon who has been a real good contributor for

three years and Cambridge, the freshman. Your thoughts about both those players and how they like to attack opponents. You probably don't want to give away the scouting report, but the things you need to do to keep them under wraps of the?

KIM CALDWELL: Yeah, you've got to keep them in front of you. It's a stacked roster. We have to play team defense. I don't think we are going to be able to guard one-on-one in those position.

So just making sure we all locked in and playing together and we are not letting them have easy shots. I think that's one thing we've talked about is we can't give them anything wide open, and sometimes in our defense, we'll do that. We'll just stand there and look and hope the other team misses, and you can't do that at this point in the year.

Q. Your team has done well in this season against other defensive-minded teams. Why do you think that was and will it help you tomorrow?

KIM CALDWELL: I don't think that that necessarily applies for this game. I think the slower teams, the teams that spend the majority of their time sitting down on the halfcourt guarding don't spend as much time on offense. I think that's a little bit better for us. I think this team can go in transition, so it's not necessarily a matchup that I love.

Q. Players have talked about how they really feed energy off of the only team losing their energy, and how whenever you are seeing shots miss that they are getting more hyped up for the game, and that's when you see the runs like second quarter last night. Ohio State is really well-conditioned, too. What do you tell the team when the other side is not getting as tired as they are expecting them to be?

KIM CALDWELL: That's when you have to sit down and get stops. You have to play defense. You can't just hope -- that's what I just said. You can't look at them and hope the ball doesn't go in. You have to actually guard now.

So that's something we have to work on is get the stops. And I think stops for us are going to be really important, and that way maybe they are not going to be as quick as they get into their pressure. We are going to have to sit down and actually guard.

Q. With the sitting-down-and-actually-guarding, you talked about how you worked on halfcourt defense during the two-week break. What did you like about that and what needs to change going into this game tomorrow?

KIM CALDWELL: I thought we played with a sense of urgency yesterday in the halfcourt. Even when we had a big lead, something we have done all year is just kind of stopped guarding just because we saw a 20-point win. And we continue to sit down and guard to the final minute, and that was a really big improvement for us.

Again it's going to be very similar, a really good offensive-minded team. They run really good, as. They are a very deep roster. They have great players. So just having the discipline to sit down and guard.

Q. I know motivation, win-or-go-home, that's in place already. But the tip times in the tournament can be anywhere from noon to 8:00 or 9:00 PM. What's your approach to a team in a big game like this waiting all day to play? How do you manage that? Because teams get restless sometimes.

KIM CALDWELL: I think the only thing that helps us is we just had the exact same time slot. So our game day is going to be pretty much identical to what we just did, and that's in our favor. We watch a little more film, and we take a little more time to stretch. We try to keep them in and out of their hotel rooms and we try to keep the energy high.

But if you are not locked in and you get rest unless March, it's probably going to be a quick March for you.

Q. Avery had really good minutes for you last night. What did she show you over the last two weeks to earn those minutes?

KIM CALDWELL: She has consistently worked all year. She's always in the gym extra. So she'll hard in practice but she'll always be in the gym extra. She's a little spark for us runs around, plays hard. She doesn't necessarily do anything that hurts you us. She doesn't take bad shots. She's a selfless player, and you can put her on the floor knowing she's going to give it everything she has.

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