

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

Sunday, March 23, 2025

Columbus, Ohio, USA

Value City Arena

## Tennessee Lady Volunteers

**Kim Caldwell**

**Talaysia Cooper**

**Jewel Spear**

Media Conference



other's back.

**Q. What do you think it says that they were able to play at such a high level for so long?**

JEWEL SPEAR: They are willing to do whatever it takes to play for the team. Coop was out there, she had seven steals, which was crazy and she was playing both sides of the court, and then Sam was out there making plays, as well.

It says that our conditioning is really good, as well.

**Q. In that 16-0 run, for Ohio State Cambridge was leading the way. What did you do defensively to stop her and contain her for the rest of the game?**

JEWEL SPEAR: Yeah, just try and guard her as a team. We know she's a good player that likes to get downhill. We were trying to get in our gaps better, and force her to make passes and other people to score.

**Q. Your points off turnovers are 37-15. That is an incredibly high number to more than double them up. What fueled the defense tonight? It looked like it was very inspired out there.**

TALAYSIA COOPER: Just playing our game and getting up and pressing. Rotating in the back. Talking on defense. Doing the little things.

JEWEL SPEAR: Like Talaysia said, I thought we were very aggressive in our press up front and our back line rotated up and got a lot of steals. Also when we turned over the ball, we made sure that they couldn't score.

So I think it speaks a lot to our next play mentality when we turned it over, we were thinking of the next play.

**Q. At what point in the this season did you think the team was capable of making the Sweet 16 run?**

KIM CALDWELL: I think there was a period of time there right when we had that three-game home stretch, maybe four-game home stretch where we were playing really well,

Tennessee 82, Ohio State 67

KIM CALDWELL: I thought we played really, really hard probably, the hardest we've played all year, which is what we needed. And I thought we played as a team which is something we've really been working on.

Hats off to the Ohio State fan base. It was loud in there. For a period of time, and I thought we did a really good job -- our huddles were tight. We did a really good job of playing through the runs, which is something we talked about.

**Q. What does it mean to be in the Sweet 16 this year?**

TALAYSIA COOPER: It's great. We've been working hard to get here. Putting in the work day-in and day-out, this is something we wanted.

JEWEL SPEAR: It means a lot for the program and the people that are here right now with Coach Kim coming in for her first year and the people that stayed and the transfers that staple, it just talks a lot about the culture that we established from day one and that everybody is playing a part in what we're doing right now.

**Q. What does it say to come back after that Ohio State 16-0 run?**

JEWEL SPEAR: Yeah, we knew they were going to go on a run. They are a really good team. We went on our run. They went on their run. We just stayed together. Our huddles were really tight. We stayed calm. It was very loud in there, so we needed each other and we had each



and again, we all know what happened at the back half of the season.

At that point in time, I knew we could do it. That was something we talked about from the very beginning, is we wanted to make it to the Sweet 16.

**Q. When Ohio State went on that 16-0 run, it was some of the issues from earlier in the year when you get a lead and instantly lose it. What does it say about this team that that was not the case this time?**

KIM CALDWELL: I think that we're growing. I think we're playing as a team. We talked about that. We knew it was going to happen, and we have been through that a lot. We've been through it countless other games.

I told them that I don't want to have to bail them out with time-outs. I want them to just be able to work through it. I did not really realize it was 16-0 you I probably should have called a time-out. But they good a good job. I think we followed it with maybe a 14-0 run.

**Q. Yesterday you talked about how you could not just wait around for the shots and that you had to guard. How did that mindset helped you get this win today?**

KIM CALDWELL: Yeah, I thought it was great early. I thought towards the end of the third, beginning of the fourth, we did give them some uncontested looks, specifically when they went on their run and a little bit towards the end of the game.

So we could have kind of cleaned that up a little bit better.

**Q. Ruby Whitehorn, she's been maybe a little bit quiet the last several games but she just was electric for y'all tonight, 14 points, five boards, three assists, just one turnover. Just how key was Ruby in this game?**

KIM CALDWELL: Yeah, I think Ruby is locked in. She really wants to win. She's a player that's never been to the Tournament before. So she's excited to be here. She played so hard tonight. I think she was the hardest playing player on the floor, which is huge. We need that from her every single night.

**Q. That run, you went on a 14-0 run yourself. Does that make it difficult to get back to net neutral when you have reached that high and low right after? How did you approach the huddle?**

KIM CALDWELL: I didn't have to really say anything, and that's when our team is the best. We've talked about it all year, all year. They had it handled. They had it handled. I

didn't even need to be here today. I didn't.

They had it handled at halftime. They had it handled in the time-outs before I got there. They were saying things before I said it. I mean there were countless times that I was getting ready to say something and they already said it. So they kind of led themselves, which is big.

**Q. What are the emotions bringing this program back to the Sweet 16 in your first year as head coach?**

KIM CALDWELL: I'm happy for them. I'm happy to see how excited they are. I guess at point in time, I told them if we make it to the Sweet 16, they can wear whatever shoes they want, and they remembered that. They were telling me that when there was still time on the clock.

So just to see how excited they are and see what it means to them is nice.

**Q. The questioner online had the question to the players, you guys forced 23 turnovers, I believe -- I don't have the box score in front of me, but one of the players had seven steals?**

KIM CALDWELL: Talaysia did.

**Q. Talaysia Cooper had seven steals. Their point guard had eight turnovers herself. Your thought on getting this game at a pace and at a phrenetic frenzy to where mistakes were going to happen. I mean, is that kind of what you wanted to have happen, I suppose?**

KIM CALDWELL: No, absolutely. We wanted to turn the pressure up. We talked, too. I thought we did a really good job of playing through our mistakes.

We had a couple possessions where we turned it over and we got it right back. We turned it over and we got back and contested a shot at the rim and got the rebound. We would miss a layup, and then we would go get the rebound.

So we knew it going to be kind of a game of mistakes; that any time you have two teams that press and pressure and there's a lot of possessions, you're going to have some empty ones. And it's just making sure that the other team doesn't capitalize off of it.

**Q. They fought so hard to get the lead, went ahead by one point and eight seconds later, it was Cooper hit a three, eight seconds later, you guys go back up and you never trail again. For them to have worked so hard to get the lead and you grab it right back that, has to be a deflation for them and a big shot for you guys?**

KIM CALDWELL: I think that again when you have teams that go on runs, you know that they are going to take the lead. We talked about it at halftime. We knew that they were up by five. I told them that they were going to take another lead. I told them that the crowd was going to get into it. So we just had to play through it.

**Q. The three in the corner by Whitehorn to beat the shot clock, that felt like that was it at that moment, and they weren't coming back probably from that?**

KIM CALDWELL: Yeah, and we did a really good job. I think two weeks ago, we would have shot a shot at 28 seconds on the shot clock, and it probably wouldn't have been a good one.

So I thought we had two buzzer beaters that were -- the one more pass with the shot clock violation; that means we're just playing offense together for longer, which is something we really spent the break working on.

**Q. Hollingshead and Spearman were both hustling and applying a lot of pressure tonight in the faint paint. How is their contribution to that helped the team's success tonight?**

KIM CALDWELL: I thought Jill played great. I thought Zee played great, too. We calls of always get that from Zee.

But Jill really stepped up. She was being so aggressive early in the game, and she helped us realize that we could go inside, and Zee hit some big buckets for us late to seal the deal as well.

**Q. You mentioned the crowd a couple times, and you got a chance to coach and see the way they play, what are your impressions of this Ohio State state program? Second straight year where they fell short of the Sweet 16, and their aspirations are obviously to come back and get there eventually.**

KIM CALDWELL: It's a stacked roster, a great program. Great fan base. I don't particularly want to come back. It's really close to my hometown, so that was cool. A lot of familiar faces for me, which I appreciate everyone that traveled to watch us.

Our coaching staff is all kind of from this region, Cincinnati, Ohio, West Virginia. So it was nice to see some familiar faces in the stands, as well.

**Q. In the second half, they went for a shorter lineup. How did you guys capitalize on that especially in the fourth quarter?**

KIM CALDWELL: We wore them down, and I think in the end, they just didn't have gas to keep us in front of them.

**Q. You won the rebound battle, and second-chance points, 21-6, that is a lopsided stat in your favor. Just talk about how aggressive y'all were on the offensive glass. And second part, this team has been up and down, a lot of adversity; they have had some big wins. I know you're not done yet, but how proud are you of this team to get to this point right now?**

KIM CALDWELL: I'm incredibly proud of this team, and I'm proud of our rebounding effort. It takes rebounds to win in March and we know that, and we have to continue to do that.

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