

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

Sunday, March 23, 2025

Columbus, Ohio, USA

Value City Arena

Ohio State Buckeyes

Kevin McGruff

Taylor Thierry

Madison Greene

Media Conference

Tennessee 82, Ohio State

Q. Ohio State goes on a 16-0 run in the third quarter. What did you see happen after that?

MADISON GREENE: You go.

TAYLOR THIERRY: Yeah, obviously it's a game of runs. They went on their runs. We went on our runs. We couldn't keep the momentum going and we couldn't lock in, focus after that. It was a great effort to get that run but we couldn't sustain it for the rest of the game.

Q. Talk about the conditioning and intensity of Tennessee's attack all night?

TAYLOR THIERRY: Yeah, they are a very athletic team and they pressure the ball really well. They have a lot of players that are athletic coming off the bench. Credit to them for locking in on their game plan and pressuring us. But we have to do a better job taking care of the ball and not having so many turnovers.

Q. This is usually the type of game you guys like, fast-paced and you mentioned the pressure Tennessee had. What do you think worked so well with their pressure to cause 23 turnovers for you guys?

TAYLOR THIERRY: Honestly on our part we just didn't take care of the ball. We didn't execute what we've been practicing for the past couple days. Honestly, the whole year, I think we just didn't take care of the ball.

Q. Can you talk about the strategy of trying to run



them off the line and stop them from behind the arc?

MADISON GREENE: They were shooting pretty well tonight. We just tried to do our best to contest as much as we could, but they were hitting today, so this is what happened.

Q. Obviously you guys have that run in the third quarter to retake the lead there. Was there sort of a letdown, I guess, when you guys jump back in front, kind of were finally back in the game and got the lead again and then they good back on that run to take you guys out of it again. Was there a letdown there?

MADISON GREENE: For sure. I felt like all season we've been doing that, or we don't start the game off really well and they catch back up and once we catch back up, we get comfortable or we get back down or something like that. It's been a common theme that I think I've seen throughout the year, and unfortunately it happened today, as well.

Q. You guys got beat up on the offensive boards and they had 21 points off second chance. You don't have Ajae Petty in the majority of the second half. Can you talk about the decision to keep her on the bench?

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah, we were just going with the lineup that we thought was most efficient in taking care of the ball because we were turning it over so much. And I think when Eboni was in there she was actually rebounding pretty well.

I think just when you look at the stats, and you see 27 points -- or 37 points off turnovers and 21 second-chance points, you're not really giving yourself a chance to win.

Credit Tennessee. I thought they played really well, and they deserved to win today.

Q. Can you just talk about the fourth quarter what you were looking for with the substitutions?

KEVIN MCGUFF: We were trying to get them a little bit of rest and trying to get to a strong finish because they were playing really hard, and just the nature of the game, they



were exerting a lot of energy.

So we knew we were going to have to rest them a little more than maybe we normally would. Still, Cotie, she played just about 35 minutes and Jaloni, 33. That's about where we wanted them today based on what we knew the game would be.

Q. When it came to the turnovers, do you think it was Tennessee speeding the team up? Because your team is known for being very quick. But today it seemed like that quickness is turning into a lot of errant passes.

KEVIN McGUFF: Yeah, certainly they sped us up, and we didn't handle it very well. I thought we were in the right spots, but really not making good decisions when we had to go to a little bit higher rate of speed.

Q. Can you talk about the letdown for the players, and how you get that run, you take the lead; that's when the turnovers started again. Were you just complacent?

KEVIN McGUFF: We had a stretch there where we really took care of the ball. We were rebounding and getting points in transition, and then we were breaking the press and getting good shots. But then we had just some bad turnovers there to ignite another run for them.

Q. It's tough having a freshman point guard. What can you do to support her in moments like this when they are really, really coming after her hard and muscling her, bringing the ball up the court and things happened for her. What can you do to support her in those moments?

KEVIN McGUFF: Yeah, it's tough. Obviously Jaloni is very talented. She's a great kid. This is one of the first times we've seen this type of pressure and pace. She got sped up a little bit. You know, we were trying to get people around her just to get her making simple plays and to get everybody around her shots.

She had some great moments but just got sped up a little bit and it didn't really end well for us.

Q. Difficult question to ask you 15 minutes after this game, but you're losing some very good players like Taylor and some folks. In your mind, the transition, last year you came through it with some great acquisitions. I guess you put yourself back in that same position again?

KEVIN McGUFF: Yeah, as you know, whether it's pretty

much any sport nowadays, that's the nature of it, and so you know, we are losing some -- the biggest thing is we're losing some great kids. I mean, these are two of the best kids I'll ever get a chance to coach. Just really high-character young women who are going to go on to do great things in life.

So hopefully, we can add a few people that bring the same type of competitive character that people like Taylor and Madison have brought to this program.

Q. Cotie scored 17 points tonight, but I think she only took three shots in the second half. Was that something that Tennessee did specifically to sort of take her away, or I guess did you want to see her shoot the ball a little bit more?

KEVIN McGUFF: Yeah, we were trying to get the ball in her hands a little bit more. A couple times she got fouled, and a couple times we just didn't execute to put ourselves in position to do it.

Q. Yesterday Cotie said she still felt like you guys haven't played your best basketball today. I'm guessing you don't feel like that was your best basketball tonight. What do you think was the hump this season of getting past that?

KEVIN McGUFF: I think it always came down to the same thing, and that in this game -- once again, this is very indicative of the season in that we had stretches that were really good. But we just didn't sustain them for close enough to 40 minutes to be, I think, at another level as a team. And so that was sort of our issue throughout the year.

It's one thing to kind of go, maybe you get in a bit of a rut in the season, a couple games in a row. Tonight was a perfect example. We started out the first quarter, good. Second quarter, not so good. And then we go on a big run in the second half, 16-0 run, and then we don't sustain it. That was kind of the thing that we never really found an answer to get that consistency out of the group.

Q. Can you talk about the frustration, moments where you guys would get the steal and Tennessee would take it right back?

KEVIN McGUFF: I thought, too, to their credit, they beat to us a lot of loose balls. We were battling the ball around and they were grabbing it. I bet that happened five or six times, and they would grab it and convert it into points.

So not only did we give up too many second-chance points and points off turnovers but just loose balls. There were

several times where they were getting loose balls. In a game like this and this intensity and this much talent, you have got to win the 50/50 balls.

Q. Another year of losing on the first weekend. What does this program have to do to make it back to the Sweet 16?

KEVIN MCGUFF: I think we've got to continue to evaluate where we're at, players we're bringing in that have a chance to add to the program and make sure we add the right people.

Q. Elsa, did she reaggravate her foot injury, or did it get worse when she came out?

KEVIN MCGUFF: I haven't got a chance to talk to the trainer yet, but I think that's the case, yes.

Q. What's the plan in the off-season for her? Is there surgery in her future? Is she going to try to recoup or what?

KEVIN MCGUFF: I don't know for sure yet. But the doctor's been evaluating it, and we'll make some -- he'll make some decisions on that in consultation with her and her family.

Q. Can you talk about the impact of your seniors? Is there anything you said to them after the game? I know you talked about Madison and Taylor, just how the competitive character they bring to a team. But about Eboni, about Ajae, is there anything you told the team after the game?

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah, same thing. We've had Madison for six years and Taylor for four, and Eboni for, what, four? Five? Four? I can't keep track.

So they have really been a big part of what we've done, and then Ajae came in and she's a great kid. I really enjoyed just getting to know her, getting a chance to coach her. They are all really good kids.

You know, we told them that, one, we appreciate all that they have contributed to our program, and as they move forward, we look forward to helping support them in reaching their dreams and goals and anything that we can do, and they are always welcome to come back and be around us.

Q. Coach Kim Caldwell said you guys maybe ran out of gas a little bit in the fourth quarter. Is that what you saw and what, if anything, contributed to that?

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah, certainly it was a high-paced game. We expended a lot of energy throughout the game. But I think as much as anything, we were mentally tired.

I thought physically, we were fine. But mentally, we were a little worn out and a little bit frustrated. I think like we went on a run to get the game tied, and then I just think like the mental fatigue when we turned it over a couple times, we didn't handle that real well mentally as much as anything.

Thanks, everybody.

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