

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Norfolk State vs Maryland

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College Park, Maryland, USA

XFINITY Center

Maryland Terrapins Coach Brenda Frese Kaylene Smikle Shyanne Sellers

Media Conference

Q. Shy, now that you've have a couple days to look at Norfolk, couple things that stand out about them to you and couple things you got to make sure you take care of?

SHYANNE SELLERS: Yeah, they're super aggressive. We got to take care of the ball. Get out in transition. Try to make things chaotic.

So we just got to stay composed and keep our poise.

Q. Shy, Kaylene, you guys worked a couple years now with Coach Betsy Butterick on communication and stuff like that. How do you think her impact on the team or you guys has been felt?

SHYANNE SELLERS: Betsy has been a huge help for us. I love Betsy and I think she gives great insight in how to mentally prepare and keep yourself focused on the main thing.

KAYLENE SMIKLE: Oh, our team building.

SHYANNE SELLERS: Yes.

She's been overall super great for our team. I think we've been working with her for the last three years or so. Yeah, been super helpful, at least for me.

KAYLENE SMIKLE: Yeah, helped us with our team bonding. When we've had bad days, just teaching us how to bounce back from that and stay together during the rough times.



Q. Shy, you've had such a career here, so much success. What are your emotions like going into this week knowing what this means to you and your team with this game?

SHYANNE SELLERS: Yeah, I don't think it's hit me that these can potentially be my last two games at XFINITY. I mean, I'm excited. I'm excited for this group. It's bigger than me though.

I think these people deserve -- this group of girls deserve a great opportunity on this is KayKay's first time dance, so want to make it one to remember.

Q. Kaylene, Shy touched on how they force a lot of turnovers. At times you guys have been sped up when people press you guys, and that's led to turnovers and easy points. What's going to be the key to avoid that tomorrow?

KAYLENE SMIKLE: I think taking care of the ball and playing our game, not letting them speed us up when they're pressing us. We face a lot of presses, so I think we're prepared for what they're going to throw at us.

Q. For you guys, playing under a coach like Brenda Frese who has been here and had so much success, how much confidence does that give you guys with the trust of knowing her record here?

KAYLENE SMIKLE: I think it gives me a lot of confidence. I came here to play under her and under this program. I feel like having her -- and she prepares us, her and the staff prepare us for every game. I feel like we're very prepared and ready for the run.

SHYANNE SELLERS: Yeah, Coach B is tremendous and I think her and March Madness go together like a pretzel and salt. (Laughter.)

Q. Obviously Norfolk State is coming in on a huge win streak. How do you guys kind of think you're going to attack that or what weaknesses have you seen in that streak?

KAYLENE SMIKLE: I don't think we really focus on people's streaks. We're just going to play our game and focus on them as a team. I mean, they never played Maryland so it's a different opponent every time you step on the floor.

Q. For Shy, I guess you guys had to travel for the first couple rounds of the tournament last year. (Audio garbled.) Regarding first two rounds at home.)

SHYANNE SELLERS: Yeah, I think it's a lot better. We been talking about getting to stay in our routine. It's huge. Then we get to have the best fans in the world come out and support us.

So I think there is just a huge advantage to hosting and I think it'll be great for us.

Q. KayKay, now that you guys have had plenty of time to put that Michigan game kind of away, still curious, is there anything you guys take from that that you can apply to moving forward or is that one that you kind of just throw out the window and don't want to think about at all?

KAYLENE SMIKLE: I think we learned from that game. I think we know that when we don't come out playing hard first couple minutes, that the rest of the game is going to be slow for us.

So I think we're focusing on how we start the game and how we're going to punch first and attack them.

Q. Question for Shyanne. You are a veteran of this team; fourth time to the NCAA tournament. What have you learned about those experiences and how do you sort of get others on your team ready for this moment that haven't been here before?

SHYANNE SELLERS: Yeah, I think March is a crazy time. Rankings don't matter. Number in front of your name doesn't matter. So you got to be ready to play.

I think some of those schools are playing for something bigger than themselves and means a lot more though them. Sometimes they don't get the opportunity to go dancing every time sore conference only gets one team to go.

Means a lot more to them. I think you got to be ready and bring your A game every day.

BRENDA FRESE: Yeah, you know, we're truly grateful we're honored to be making another tournament run, to be hosting for our 16th time. We are very excited about that.

I love just the resiliency that this team has shown through their body of work all season long. We feel like our schedule has really prepared us. Our conference game in and game out has prepared us for this moment.

Having said that though, we understand the tournament. We have a ton of respect for Norfolk State. Terrific coach that has made them into a championship program. They've won 19 straight and three-time MEAC regular season and tournament champions. They beat two SEC teams. So led by Diamond Johnson and Wheeler. It's going to be a game we're going to have to come out and put a complete 40 minutes together.

Q. There are a lot of players on this team who haven't had a ton of March experience. Kind of with this particular group, kind of what's the message as you kind of hit this postseason and hit this time of year when you've got upperclassmen but not necessarily a ton of experience in this tournament?

BRENDA FRESE: Yeah. It's been a blend of both. I know with the mortal we've checked in with some of our kids we thought didn't have the experience. Mir and Say that have played in the NCAA tournament. Mir was sharing with me her freshmen year she went to the Final Four. Chris has gone to a Sweet 16. So fortunately for us there is some of that experience. Our freshmen it's their first time.

You have to make them understand, when the bright lights turn on, nothing changes from our end. We need to continue to be the team we've been all season long. Nothing changes to what our identity is and to how we've performed all season.

Q. You guys have had some early exits in the past; had some great runs in the past. In terms of what stood out about those teams that had the great runs, what similarities do you see about this team going into this tournament?

BRENDA FRESE: There is a focus level, a confidence level that you're ready to go from the tip. There is not -- clearly you'll have some nerves but you got to work through those quickly.

It's just a confidence factor that you stay true to your identity and play what's gotten you to this point.

Q. What is the characteristic of this particular team? Every team is different. What's the characteristic of this team that you kind of appreciate? What stamp do they have that you appreciate?

BRENDA FRESE: I would say the two things they've shown from day one really, really competitive group. Starts with Shy. She's kind of like our bread and butter when you talk about her leadership style.

Then you talk about just their resiliency. When they've had injuries throughout the season they've been able to understand. Like when we had the setback with Bri, just next player up.

We've had setbacks with Shy and Saylor and different things through this season. They've just stayed true to who they were and really resilient.

Q. The pretzel and salt comment about you and how you go together and March goes together, the acronym she used is almost kind of in a big picture how the players feel about you, how they bond to you. Could you talk about the bond that you have with this particular team and teams in the past?

BRENDA FRESE: Yeah. You know, I will say the bond I have, the staff has, is we're super relatable, I think a really connected group. Our staff really enjoys every single day with them. They're a lot of fun.

You know, they feel really comfortable around us. You know, it's been a lot of great memories we've been able to make together all season long. I think for all of us we don't want this season to end. We want to continue to go as far as we can take the five seniors we have in or locker room.

When you get to that time of year you start thinking about like how many practices are left. We want to have as many practices as we can have because we want to continue to be with this group.

Q. Couple things you got to make sure you take care of against Norfolk State and couple things they do that stands out to you?

BRENDA FRESE: We have got to value the basketball. It's a team that likes to turn teams over. They're going to press. They're going to mix up their defenses. They're going to want to slow the game down.

For us it's being able to value the basketball so we're getting shots at the basketball. You know, continue to be who we are as a team and stay true to it.

Q. Kevin Lord spoke at length yesterday about the conversations with Damon Evans. Have you had any conversation with him throughout the last couple days, and how do you make sure that's not a distraction for yourself and you team?

BRENDA FRESE: There were reports yesterday? I've been focused on film. (Smiling.)

What are you asking? You're asking...

Q. Have you had any conversations with him about what's going on?

BRENDA FRESE: Oh, the reports. No. I mean, for Damon, for Coach Willard, those are their own individual things. If they're evaluating their situations, that's on them.

For us we're focused on the task at hand. I will say that I've been here 23 years and the amount of support that I've been given from Damon Evans and the whole administration is nothing less than superior.

It hasn't changed the way I've been able to do my job in 23 years. You know, clearly we've a standard of consistency and excellence and doesn't just come down money.

But we're fully supported in that way. So just can't say enough for what -- I wouldn't have been here as long if I didn't have that kind of support and have been supported the entire time.

Q. Coach, can you talk about just take me through the thought process and luxury of hosting games here and the balance between not getting too comfortable on the home turf?

BRENDA FRESE: Yeah, I don't know that we would get too comfortable. I think it should give a great confidence level that you know the facility and have practiced all year in it.

For us it's a great routine. You get to sleep in your own beds and you're not in a hotel room and traveling. You have your ice baths and the resources that you need to be comfortable.

We want to use it as an advantage. Doesn't guarantee you a win, but we want to take advantage of sleeping in our own beds and having things at hand that just allows us to prepare in it a better way.

We're not getting on a plane or riding on a bus. We can stay really focused and locked in.

Q. Coach, you've been known throughout your career as a great motivator. Does that process change in March at all?

BRENDA FRESE: No. Like I said, you are who you are.

It's not like I'm going to come up with this magazine magnificent speech that's going to allow us to win the NCAA tournament.

I'll have my speeches prepared, but it won't come down to that. It'll come down to them executing. Like I've said, all the success we've had in March I haven't made a basket. It's come down -- you know, our staff will have the best scout put together for them but they have to be the wins that got to go out and execute it.

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