

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Nebraska vs Oregon State

Sunday, March 24, 2024

Corvallis, Oregon, USA

Gill Coliseum

Nebraska Cornhuskers

Coach Amy Williams

Alexis Markowski

Jaz Shelley

Media Conference

Oregon State - 61, Nebraska - 51

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement from Coach Williams.

AMY WILLIAMS: This is not how we wanted today to end, no doubt about it. I think before the game, if you would have told us that we were going to hold Oregon State to 61 points, is we probably would have taken that. I think we had a pretty good defensive game plan and defensive effort today, but just they made things very difficult for us on the other end, and it was not our best offensive showing of the season. That makes it really tough for it to end that way, but I'm so proud of this team. I've enjoyed the ride with them so much.

So this is bittersweet. I told myself I will not get emotional in this press conference, so I'm going to try to stick to that. Just the thought of not going back and practicing on Monday, it's breaking my heart a little bit. Love these girls so much, and just so proud of the mark they've made on our program and set the tone and bar for us moving forward.

Q. Alexis, they got up 19-6 in the first quarter. What did you learn early in the game that was going to be really hard to do against Oregon State?

ALEXIS MARKOWSKI: Yeah, I think we talked about throwing the first punch and playing from behind, especially on their home floor is super difficult.



I felt like we really fought until the end, but just that lead, we would have cut it smaller, but it was just too big from the jump.

Q. Jaz, what did you guys do defensively that allowed you to get back in the game there by the start of the fourth quarter?

JAZ SHELLEY: I think we just played a little more aggressive. Our communication was really good on the defensive end, and I think we locked into the scout and knew what was coming, where we could help from and where we could take two, and I think we just communicated and executed well.

Q. What's your time at Nebraska meant to you?

JAZ SHELLEY: It's meant everything. What kind of question is that? (Laughter) I'm so happy that I got the chance to play under Coach Williams, to play with these girls. Everyone that I met along the way has been an incredible person. She's helped me believe in myself. It's meant a whole lot. And I really found who I was, and I've benefited so much from being at this university.

Q. What do you respect about Oregon State and what they do athletically, inside and outside?

ALEXIS MARKOWSKI: They're pretty deep. Really athletic. I felt like they were blocking a lot of shots, making a lot of things difficult. I felt like today just -- I think in our wins we average 18 assists. I think that was a little bit lower today. They were just not over-helping. They're a good team.

Q. What was it like to be Jaz's teammate for the past couple of years?

ALEXIS MARKOWSKI: I'm really going to miss her. She is just an amazing person. She's so humble. Thank you for taking your fifth year to come back. I know this team and program are really going to miss her, especially the fans.

I mean, she is so talented on the court and a really great



passer, which I benefited a lot from, but just a better person off. She just is a really good person and I'm going to miss her a lot, but she's going to kill it. I'm excited to watch her on her next journey.

Q. What specifically, with Oregon State's defense caused you problems?

AMY WILLIAMS: Well, I think, like Alexis said, they had 10 blocked shots in the game. They have a kind of versatility because they have power and size inside that can really bang you around and be physical. They have length where it's kind of tough to go up over the top of them, and then they can bring in and mix in some speed.

So I think those things, all in conjunction, it's really hard to get used to because of the versatility and they can run different lineups in, on both sides of the floor.

You know you're going to get powered in the paint with Raegan Beers and all of a sudden they can play Gardner at the 5 and she can pick-and-pop and score 3s.

That same versatility on the defensive end, I thought, was really disruptive for us today, and they just kept kind of mixing some things up. I think the 10 blocked shots made us a little hesitant to go in the paint and do what we do, and we try hard to get paint touches.

Q. You guys also held them to long scoreless stretches. They went six and a half minutes in the second quarter, somewhere around three minutes in the third quarter. And a 3-point shot popped open there at the beginning of the fourth. Did they make an adjustment that you saw that allowed them to get the shots off and get it rolling?

AMY WILLIAMS: We got some defensive stops there in the third quarter. We really needed to capitalize on the offensive end. We just couldn't get the ball in the basket to really capitalize.

There were stretches in there where they took shots that were open that we did not want them to have; they just missed them. But in the fourth quarter, I thought -- I don't think our defense was off. We didn't have a ton of missed assignments but maybe just got a little separated from a couple of their shooters further than we wanted to, and they hit like three in a row, it seemed like, right there, and gave some momentum.

Q. You've played teams like Iowa and Ohio State. How would you compare Oregon State to some of the better teams you've faced this year?

AMY WILLIAMS: Yeah, I mean, this is obviously on their home court. They're a really dangerous team. It's just a tough place to come in here in this type of environment and be able to play.

So we've been in some pretty hostile environments this year, and I think just going on the road like this, really difficult team to beat.

Q. What are some of the lessons you take from tonight as you look to next year?

AMY WILLIAMS: I don't know. I think we'll have plenty of time for that to really look and kind of take the things that we think we can really pull from this experience and be able to use that to motivate the players that are currently going to be returning in this program.

But right now it's just so sore, it's just so tender. Just thinking about the ones that are not going to be able to continue that journey with us, and so that's kind of where our focus is at.

Q. Last year, your program went to the WNIT. Can you speak of when during this season, with all that tough Big Ten play, that you knew the team was experienced and battle tested enough to make a run in the Big Dance?

AMY WILLIAMS: I know this is not going to sound like the normal answer. I think most of our players point to the Iowa win at home when we beat Iowa as a big turning. But for me it was on the road at Kansas, before Christmas.

We had a tough, tough loss to Kansas. Ironically, it was the place where our season ended one year ago in the WNIT. And we sat in that locker room for quite a bit of time after that game, and the comments that were coming out of each one of my players' mouths, at that moment was when I knew this was a special group that was going to be fighters and fight through this entire season, and that we had a chance to be something special.

So for that to come from me after a loss is special. I think it's tell-tale about this team and the character and what type of people they are and what type of things they will become as they face adversity in their lives moving forward.

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