

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Columbia vs West Virginia

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Chapel Hill, North Carolina, USA

Carmichael Arena

Columbia Lions

Perri Page

Cecilia Collins

Kitty Henderson

Media Conference



KITTY HENDERSON: I mean, I think West Virginia, it's very clear they're a very good defensive team. So it's going to be a really good battle of two really good defensive teams.

I think from yesterday, just sticking to the game plan from the beginning. I think at the beginning we missed a couple easy looks and we let that dictate how we were playing.

So not being (indiscernible) or into being much focused on things we could control. Like I said, the defense is going to try to feel them so we have to be ready for that.

PERRI PAGE: I think absolutely not leading into what they want us to do, so making sure we're executing our game plan the way we want to and dictate our offense with their defense.

Q. On a quick turnaround like this how hard is it to prepare for pressure that West Virginia is going to throw at you?

CECILIA COLLINS: They're definitely a different team compared to who we played against Washington. But we've played against pressure this year, especially in our league with Harvard. It's a similar team in that way.

But I mean we have the best coaching staff in the country. So when we trust in them and we execute that game plan, there's very few people who can beat us.

I think we're just focused on the preparation right now and locking in especially against that pressure that West Virginia has.

KITTY HENDERSON: I mean, this is just what you prepare for all year. This is why you do ball handling every day. This is why you do all the little details. I think we're ready for it, and we just have to trust our work.

Q. This week leading up to this, do you spend any time on West Virginia or was it all Washington and now just in the last night and today it's West Virginia?

Q. What's the last 16 hours been like? Have your phones blown up and such?

KITTY HENDERSON: I think there's been a lot of support from our community, obviously. Last night we definitely took that in. And then this morning we've woken up, a new page turned, focus on West Virginia.

PERRI PAGE: Absolutely. Definitely a lot of celebration and community love. But definitely a lot of texts are going, on to the next, on to the next day.

CECILIA COLLINS: Agree.

Q. How do you balance the transition the emotional high of winning that first tournament game to refocusing on tomorrow's game and kind of just staying even keeled?

CECILIA COLLINS: I think it's very similar to Selection Show Sunday. Obviously you go through that emotional high with making the tournament when you don't get that automatic bid.

I think taking the same approach. Obviously we're excited about last night. Like they both said, there's been a ton of support from our community. But at the same time we're ready to go and start preparing for West Virginia. They're a good team. We're locked in on that right now.

Q. What jumps out at you guys about this West Virginia team? And what kind of lessons are you going to take from Washington yesterday, especially against a team with some larger players?



PERRI PAGE: Absolutely, I think we definitely just focused on Washington for sure. It's easy to just look ahead and see what your new opponents will be, but then you get lost in who your next opponent is. We definitely locked into Washington. And now we're on the next game.

KITTY HENDERSON: I think our coaches obviously looked ahead and saw them. But I think for us it was such a quick turnaround that we had to focus more on Washington first as step one, now we're locked in on West Virginia.

Q. You guys have been talking a little bit about the pride that you are getting from your own Columbia community there. But do you have any sense of carrying the banner for the Ivy League as a whole? Anytime the Ivy League gets a win in the NCAA Tournament, it's a really big deal. Do you guys carry that banner to some extent?

KITTY HENDERSON: I mean, I think a little bit, definitely. I think you're playing for Columbia -- obviously that's the thing that's in your heart while you're playing. But I think you're playing for something bigger than yourself as well.

I mean, I think the Ivy League, we're playing for them. We're also playing for all our community. It definitely means more than just our team. But at the end of the day, like, I'm always so proud of the name across our chest.

CECILIA COLLINS: I think Kitty said it really well. We're just all very proud to be part of this league. To get those three bids to the tournament for the first time ever, we were super grateful. Like we said a few days ago, we are supposed to be here. All three teams are supposed to be here.

So I think getting that first tournament win for our team is super important. Obviously we're just grateful that we were able to be in that position in the first place.

Q. I know the NCAA Tournament win was a long time coming as far as something you guys had dreamed about and planned toward. I'm curious, after the buzzer went off, when you were able to celebrate it, did it feel like you imagined it would when you visualized it or when you dreamed about it?

PERRI PAGE: Absolutely. We talk about and do a lot of visualization before the game starts, too, and then just envisioning yourself in those moments. A lot of reps we talk about, like mental reps, and being able to feel it before it happens. So it was definitely surreal to understand, like, how it happened after the game, once that buzzer sounded.

KITTY HENDERSON: I mean, I think also just the way it happened, fighting back from 13 points down at half, knowing we weren't giving it our best. I think once the buzzer sounded, it felt great, honestly.

It was really fun to celebrate with my team, people who work so hard every single day together. It's definitely exactly how we imagined it.

Q. Perri, with your dad's background at Pitt, has there been any kind of conversation about playing WVU and his experience against the Mountaineers?

PERRI PAGE: Yeah, obviously Pitt versus WVU is a very rivalry, backyard-brawl match-up. I'm very excited. I've never played WVU, and I'm really excited to have this match-up coming up.

Q. CC, you mentioned that not only do you all play a really strong press, but you faced Harvard. What makes West Virginia's press different?

CECILIA COLLINS: I mean, they're just a really scrappy team in general. Super physical. They'll go for a ton of steals, especially when they press you in the full court. So I think they're different in that way.

I don't think Harvard is as aggressive. But they're a very good team. They're very well coached. We just have to be disciplined.

Kitty said it a bunch, but we've worked on our ball handling all season, passing. It just comes down to being disciplined in that way and shot fakes, ball fakes will help alleviate some of that pressure.

Q. Kitty and Perri, how much do the Ivy League back-to-backs and the non-conference tournaments you've played over the years get you ready for playing two or three games in a short period of time?

KITTY HENDERSON: I think everything builds up to this. It prepares you so well. We've had so many games where it's either been the very next day or we've had one game in between -- sorry, one day in between.

I feel we feel really prepared. Obviously recovery was really important last night and today. But, yeah, we're ready to go. Our whole schedule is what kind of prepared us for this moment.

PERRI PAGE: All good. She said it well.

Q. The point differential in the third quarter this

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season has been extremely impressive, and clearly it was a turning point yesterday. Why have things clicked so well in the third quarter regardless of the circumstances of the game?

CECILIA COLLINS: I think a lot of it is adjustments coming out of halftime, especially yesterday. We knew that first half wasn't good enough.

Obviously we want to work at better starts. Obviously in the first quarter, second quarter, first half in general. But I thought we had great adjustments coming out of half.

I think we had an overall great response. We are, like Kitty said, very outcome oriented, outcome driven in the first. I think we pushed it to the side in the second half and trusted the game plan and trusted in what we were doing.

We always say dominate the next decision, dominate the next play. I thought that was really our mindset in the second half.

Q. CC, seeing Riley and the way that she's grown over the last two years, what have you thought about her progress and what do you think is her potential?

CECILIA COLLINS: Riley isn't even close to reaching her full potential. She's such an amazing player, an amazing person. It's been great even -- I feel like I've grown alongside Riley coming in as a transfer. She can just be so good.

And I think sometimes we joke about it. I don't think she knows how good she can be.

But her growth has been insane over these past two years. I'm just so excited to see how much more she grows. Obviously we're so proud of her for these past two years. But we also see how much more she can grow, like I said, and the potential that she has is definitely there.

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