

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

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Chapel Hill, North Carolina, USA

Carmichael Arena

Columbia Lions

Coach Megan Griffith

Media Conference

Q. How do you kind of -- obviously it's a quick turnaround -- how do you get your team to kind of refocus after the emotional high of winning your first tournament game and preparing for tomorrow?

MEGAN GRIFFITH: The first thing, obviously, was enjoy the moment. Let's be here, let's celebrate this. But we didn't come here just to win that game. They know that. We have been talking about that for a while.

Most important thing they could do last night, honestly, was just take care of themselves, get a good night's sleep. Obsessing on West Virginia last night wasn't going to help them; that's my staff's job.

Honestly this morning they got up, locked in, great film session. Obviously we'll attack the court later today. It's just being in the next moment I think. And being able to do that these next 24 hours now I think is really honestly going to be what prepares us the most.

Q. You guys have gotten pretty used to back-to-backs this season. You mentioned how you played in the Bahamas on purpose. Do you think in a quick turnaround like this you have the advantage compared to a West Virginia team that hasn't played since I think March 8th?

MEGAN GRIFFITH: I like to say that there's something about rhythm. I feel we're in a rhythm right now. Obviously coming off the Ivy League Tournament, that wasn't that long ago, not even a week ago.

But just having played -- I think there's advantages both ways, and obviously we're going to look at it as an advantage our way because I do think it's important having that ball in your hands, having the rhythm, playing a game, competing. I think we saw that a little bit second half with



Washington. We broke their rhythm up in different parts of the game.

I am expecting that tomorrow, but I'm also expecting us to be able to settle in and execute our game plan. And just with West Virginia's pressure, just having the mental and emotional kind of wherewithal as well, not just let's physically be ready to go.

Honestly, I do feel, yes, we have an advantage there. But I'm sure they're saying the same thing.

Q. Courtney was up here before singing the praises. She enjoyed watching you guys play yesterday sort of as a proud parent in some aspects, that having you here, having Carrie over in the area and having Lehigh here also, three of her former coaches together. Is there a camaraderie and bond that Ivy League you have Carrie, but also having Lehigh and Courtney here and the history you all have together?

MEGAN GRIFFITH: Definitely, I always say this, there's no secret in that sauce. Courtney is a winner and she's hired winners and she's coached winners. We've all bonded over our relationships as well.

Carrie and I never worked together but I was the director of operations for Addie in her last two seasons. There's something special about when you do hard things together. That's a large reason why I love coaching, why I love this profession.

I think we all really respect each other and respect what we've been through to get to these places and get these head-coaching jobs, the three of us now.

But Addie's parents were here last night in their Lehigh gear supporting me. Got a text from Carrie the day before. I do think we're definitely rooting for each other. It's fun to be a part of that tree, absolutely.

Q. I'm sure coaches don't want to have to play in the First Four, but is there an advantage? West Virginia hasn't played for two weeks. You played last night. You figure if they have any rust, you guys are going to



be ready to go.

MEGAN GRIFFITH: Definitely, you've got to look at it at every advantage you can get. That's why we always talk about finding your edges. And that's definitely one we've talked about with our program, with our team.

I think they're obviously going to be ready to go. I'm sure they're ready to play, but for us, honestly, I said we're a rhythm team. I like that we've been in rhythm. I like that we've had opportunities to be playing recently. We're going to attack that and use that definitely to our advantage.

Q. For a West Virginia team that not only presses the way they do but changes the looks they give you, is it difficult to prepare for that on a quick turnaround like this? I know some of the players mentioned Harvard, in particular, as somebody that you've drawn some comparisons to.

MEGAN GRIFFITH: I think you call back a lot of your experiences. I call back Duke. I call back Harvard. I call back a couple other opponents that we've seen with similar tendencies. Even Washington, Sellers last night, her and Quinerly do a lot of the same things. I think Quinerly is a hell of a player too.

We're not going to be surprised by anything they do. We spent a lot of time looking at this team as a staff and trying to make it a simple game plan.

So they might do a lot of different things, but for us, it's about let's play numbers up. When we get numbers up, we're attacking, we're playing freely, but when the numbers are even we're executing. Keeping the game plan simple so they're not overthinking in the moment.

Q. My question is about last night's win. You're so good at messaging your team and getting them motivated. Last year there were a lot of new things and firsts that were accomplished, first-ever NCAA berth for the program. This year, first-ever outright championship. And now a first-ever win in the tournament. What's going to be your motivational message to the team as to why they just gotta win this game against West Virginia?

MEGAN GRIFFITH: I think this is a moment where you call back the journey that you set out on. I always talk about delayed gratification with our team. This is the ultimate form of delayed gratification is not just expecting to do something but going out and earning every inch of it.

I can tell you we're going to fight for every inch of the game

tomorrow. That's just our team. If anybody saw that last night on display, I think they know that's in our DNA. We'll do it with a lot of love in the room, too.

For me, honestly, it's just calling back what we set out to do, why we set out to do it and reminding them of that continuously throughout the game.

Q. If you could also talk a little bit about, of course, the big signature thing with West Virginia, the zone press, I got to see it up close last year in the tournament against Princeton. It is relentless. I'm just wondering how you think about sort of the tradeoff between, on the one hand, being tempted to attack that thing and score easy buckets on their double teaming and their overplaying and their trapping, versus risking playing into their hands by doing that because then they're speeding you up, they're making you make quick decisions. I'm wondering what thoughts you're having about that tradeoff and other dynamics of how to attack that zone press?

MEGAN GRIFFITH: Well, I would say this. As much as they're a team that creates a lot of havoc, they're an extremely disciplined team as well. There's strengths for each player in that pressure.

It's not equal opportunity. They definitely know their roles. They play them to a T. We're trying to help our team understand when to attack, when not to attack, when to set up, when the ball goes here, this is what we're looking for.

We're not looking at it as a, let's just beat the press. No, it's way more calculated than that.

I can tell from having watched it, from having studied Dean Smith's Run and Jump what some of their tendencies and characteristics are and what they're looking for. For me, it's way more of a methodical, this is the way we're attacking this. It's a bit more of a math problem.

But at the same time there's a feel to the game. You've got to feel the game. So, again, against a really disciplined, disruptive defensive team we've got to make sure that, one, our feel is on point; but, two, we're trusting each other, we're meeting the ball. There's just some basic basketball things we need to accomplish as well outside of just what is our structure.

Q. Yesterday before the game on TV they showed a little snippet of your pregame talk with the "dominate your next decision" phrasing. And players keep mentioning that, too. I feel like I've heard you say similar things before but not necessarily with that phrasing. I'm curious, is that something new or is that

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

something you've been saying all year and it's kind of just become a catch phrase right now?

MEGAN GRIFFITH: That's newer. To your point, there's definitely things in the same vein that I've said, but I'm just constantly searching for what's going to catch and what's this team -- everybody is.

With leadership and how you get messaging across to people, it's not a one-size-fits-all. Certain teams take to certain messaging. And this team really takes to in the moment and what's the next thing. We can say a lot of different things depending on who our opponent is and what the moment is.

And coming off of the Ivy League Tournament and just kind of where their heads were at. I felt a lot of it was we were playing not to lose. We try to flip the script back to, hey, we're going to dominate the next thing. We're not dwelling on mistakes because that's what led us to the outcome that we had.

And, again, I think Kitty said it well, we were way too outcome driven in that Ivy League final. This is a new way to look at it. I think it's simple, short, and sweet.

Q. I know you love a good revenge tour. Do you take on the mantel for the league here -- it was mentioned how West Virginia knocked out Princeton last year. Do you manufacture that at all, or even just watch that tape at all?

MEGAN GRIFFITH: I love obviously our league and I'm really proud of our league. I'm just really focused on Columbia basketball right now. That's where my head's at. I'm not taking on anybody else's revenge. We have plenty of it for ourselves. So I'm focused on that right now.

Q. The other day when talking about Washington, you thought speed and physicality were going to be the key. That may be harder to say that with West Virginia. What are the areas you feel you have an advantage going in tomorrow's game?

MEGAN GRIFFITH: Well, one, size. It's unique to have a size over a Big 12 opponent but their guards are all smaller than our guards. Now they're extremely talented and athletic and fast. They also start a stretch player.

So it's a different match-up for us. I would just say our size.

I also think we're a team with multiple primary ball handlers. That's unique because they haven't really seen that. They've seen teams that have great ball handlers and

great decision makers, but we do play multiple primary ball handlers at the same time.

I think that's going to serve as a different challenge as well. Again, we're going to be different than what they're used to seeing. I can tell you that. But I think that's the beauty of March, is that the match-ups are what make this tournament so special, and we're looking to attack this tomorrow.

Q. I was talking to Riley's dad today about her recruiting process to Columbia. She said you guys were really aggressive. What was it that you saw in Riley? And how has she, two years into college career, either met or exceeded expectations you had for her?

MEGAN GRIFFITH: Thinking back to that, I've known this kid since she was in eighth grade. I knew, one, it's very rare that you see a player shoot the way that she does. Her against anybody in the country, I'm saying it right now, they're just shooting 3s at the top of the key, a hundred of them, she's making more than you. And that's just mechanical execution right there. Her mechanics are flawless.

Now the other part -- this is the part I knew would be her biggest growth step, was just the mentality to play college basketball at this level. And I think that's what I've been most proud of is Riley's level of toughness. I don't know if anybody knew -- she definitely didn't -- how far, how high she could grow, what her ceiling would be.

I just told her, I was like, listen, you're the only person who is going to put limits on what you can do. If you buy in, believe in, I promise you, I'm nowhere as skilled as you were, but I know how great of a motivator and a leader. I'm somebody that's really going to challenge you. If we buy into that together and our relationship is really strong, like, you're going to go where nobody thought was possible.

I've said this to her. Abbey Schutte, talk about the greatest player to ever play at Columbia, I think Riley can have a better career than that. It's just going to take her mentality and how she approaches the next two years.

It's fun to see what she's doing right now. And I'm excited for what's next.

Q. You were a great player at Columbia. You coached against Columbia at Princeton. You took over the job. Was there a moment in time in which you said, in any of those junctures, hey, Columbia could be a great national program?

MEGAN GRIFFITH: When I was a player here, I remember I was recruited by a coach that -- he left after my first year. Then I had another coach. She ended up leaving after that year. Then I had another coach. Then I had another coach. I had four head coaches in four years at Columbia, which is super not likely, I don't even know what the word I'm looking for. It's just not average. Nobody is used to that.

I don't know if there's any players anymore that had four head coaches unless they transferred three different times.

And I always just said, I don't get why we can't figure this thing out. To me it was just consistency in leadership, having the right leadership in place and having somebody that really believed in institution and could blend athletics and institution.

When Peter got the job, and obviously I was watching -- I was really close at Princeton watching from a couple miles away, different town in New Jersey, I just said, hey, that's going to be my job one day. And what we're doing here at Princeton, I know I can do back there because nobody's going to care it more than me, nobody's going to have more pride than me, nobody's going to stay and have stability.

When Peter gave me an opportunity to come back home, it was all kind of, like, all right, now it's time to do it.

I would say when I was a college student, I saw the potential but I just didn't see -- you don't see the leadership and all the things above you at that moment. Honestly, I'm just grateful that I was given the opportunity to do it now.

Q. You mentioned having four coaches in four years. For JJ Quinerly, Mark Kellogg is her third in four years. Seeing her career from afar and what she's become as a senior, what stands out about her game? And in your eyes what makes her special?

MEGAN GRIFFITH: I mean, there's no secret. Actually, I knew there was two, but I totally forgot about her first year.

She's a heck of a player. I can tell you that. And she's a competitor. And she keeps her cool. That's what I really like about her game. You don't really see her get rattled. Obviously she can get hyped for herself and the teammates and the plays they're making.

But extremely talented, and there's a dogged nature in her. She's not going to quit on anything, on any play. There's a relentlessness in her attack to the basket, which I love. I love watching that in guards.

She's special. If she's looking for a coaching job, she can call me. But I think she's going to have a long, great career after this. And it's going to be fun playing against her tomorrow.

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