

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

Saturday, March 22, 2025

Chapel Hill, North Carolina, USA

Carmichael Arena

West Virginia Mountaineers

Coach Mark Kellogg

Jordan Harrison

JJ Quinerly

Media Conference

West Virginia 78, Columbia 59

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

MARK KELLOGG: Well, thank you. Yeah, excited to advance obviously. That's the name of the game this time of year is just find ways, whether it's pretty, ugly, indifferent, but I thought for the most part we were pretty good and led obviously for the entire night.

Congratulations to Columbia. That's a fantastic basketball team. We were prepared. I thought our game plan was good, but it was really -- we knew we had a challenge. I think last year when we played Princeton, it gave us a really good idea of what the Ivy League basketball is like and some of the physicality and some of their toughness. They have a great culture over there. Very, very well-coached.

I think that even means more when you get a win against such a quality program, but I thought our kids were ready. We were off for two weeks since we played last. Got a little monotonous maybe for these guys at times. I thought our preparation was really good since we've been here. They've been dialed in.

I was hoping for the start that we got. That was really important for us. I thought our pressure dictated a few things early. We turned it over too much, but we did turn them over quite a bit. I thought these two guys to my right were really, really good and kind of led the charge for sure, but I thought we had a lot of kids step up.



We just took what the game kind of gave us. We got a bunch of points in the paint. These guys were a big key to that. Didn't have to settle for too many threes. I thought we played hard. Told them one of the goals before the game was 59 points or fewer, right, I think we put on the board, and we got to 59, and I thought we had a great chance to win if we could do that.

Like I said, happy to advance. We'll go watch this one and figure out who we play, but proud to get to coach this team at minimum one more time, but hopefully we have a little more magic in us.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for our student-athletes.

Q. For JJ, 2,000 career points. You knew probably coming in that you had a chance to get that. What does it mean now that you have hit that mark just looking back on all those points basically?

JJ QUINERLY: I think it's just an amazing accomplishment. I don't think I dreamed of scoring 2,000 points probably my whole life, so just seeing it happen and then being where I'm at with these group of girls and the coach I have right now, I love it.

Q. JJ, a lot is made about scoring, but defensively that's something that you guys have made your trademark. What is it that fuels you guys in that end of the floor?

JJ QUINERLY: I think for us it's just fun honestly. I think we love flying around. We love getting steals, getting easy points. So it's just fun, and we love it.

Q. Jordan, you scored eight of the first 12 points, and Coach talked about how important that hot start would you for you guys coming off of the layoff. For you what went right in the first couple of minutes, and where did that energy come from?

JORDAN HARRISON: Honestly considering that we haven't played for two weeks, I think we were super excited to come out and play. I think I was just taking what the defense was giving me and not overthinking. Just having



fun with my teammates. I think that helped a lot for sure.

Q. For Jordan, the other Jordan, Jordan Thomas came in, and almost had a double-double in her first NCAA Tournament. How big is that? You played in your first game in this tournament at some point. To get that off and have a big game, what did she do tonight for you guys?

JORDAN HARRISON: Yeah, JT, she's very important to our team, especially in the paint. She played hard. I think she thought she could have did a little bit better, but we just kept encouraging her to keep on rebounding, keep on going up to the paint, going to the basket, getting easy buckets. I'm super proud of her. Especially for being a freshman, she did really good.

Q. JJ, do you know with that third-quarter shot, did you know that was 2,000? Did somebody tell you, or did you find out afterwards?

JJ QUINERLY: I knew I needed 19, but I really wasn't thinking about it. I just shot it.

Q. Obviously a lot lately has been made of scoring for you. Tonight there was some rebounds, assists, steals. Can you just talk about the overall game that you had, and was that important to you because, again, steals and rebounds, all that's great. Scoring has been the key for you lately. To put it all together, what's that mean to you?

JJ QUINERLY: I think our team played very well together. I think we all got great looks. We all got the looks we wanted. Of course, we took advantage of those looks.

Being for me, I love attacking the hoop, so that's what I did most of the game. I did shoot a couple of threes that I maybe didn't like, but I have to shoot them to get into a rhythm, but definitely stayed on the attack and just kept putting pressure on them.

Q. Jordan, you went up against kitty Henderson some one-on-one. Did you notice early in the game that you kind of had that speed advantage and you were able to take it to the basket? Did you notice that early, and is that kind of why you just kept attacking?

JORDAN HARRISON: Yeah, and I guess mainly because she was in a little bit of foul trouble, so I knew I was either going to score or she was going to have to foul me. That was really the main reason why I kept attacking her.

Q. 23 points matches your career best at WVU. What did you make of your performance on the offensive

side of the ball tonight?

JORDAN HARRISON: Obviously I'm pretty proud of myself. I'm glad that I stayed aggressive. Like I said earlier, I was just taking what the defense was giving me. I feel like I didn't force too many shots, and I just kind of played with some rhythm, so I think that helped me a lot.

Q. For both of you, how much do you play off of each other, being back court mates? When one of you gets going, how much does that kind of free up the other to go?

JJ QUINERLY: For her being a guard that is probably about the same speed as me. We can play defense probably the same way. Offensively we kind of have a similar games. Just feeding off of her. If she scores, I'm probably about to get back on defense and guard the person with the ball, and I may get a steal. I think that happened in that K-State game. She ended up scoring and then we got a steal. We scored again. Just little things like that. I think we just feed off each other.

JORDAN HARRISON: Yeah, to piggyback off what she said, once you see one of us going, it just motivates the other to keep going like we kind of did tonight, but I know for me personally playing with a guard like JJ is my dream come true. It makes the game so much easier, and honestly it gives me a lot of confidence within my game too.

Q. JJ, they got it down to 15, and that was the closest they got in the second half. Then you guys kind of controlled the end of the third quarter. With you finishing it with the feed inside to Kyah to finish off the third and go up by 18, how important momentum-wise was that for you going into the fourth because they didn't get a lot closer than that the rest of the way?

JJ QUINERLY: During the halftime he spoke about how good they were in the third quarter, so we definitely came out making sure that we didn't have a game like they did against Washington, made sure that we tried to lock in on defense. They got a little run going, but we stayed settled in and figured it out.

Q. Huge Mountaineer fan base in the arena tonight. Can you tell me a little bit about how that affected your play?

JORDAN HARRISON: Honestly we love our fans. We're so glad that they made the time to come down here for us. We play really well off of energy, so having them there is very important. They're very important to us. We feed off their energy, like I said, so yeah.

Q. For both of you, you both said yesterday that against their pressure your ball handling depth, you felt like would be really important. When they did try to turn the pressure up at the end, you guys had one turnover in the last three minutes. Could you just talk about how important that was for you guys to be able to maintain composure against the press?

JJ QUINERLY: I think we had a couple of times where we turned the ball over just kind of moving too fast a little bit, but we definitely still handled it pretty well I thought. We got through it.

Like we said, we got a couple of guards who can dribble through. We got Kyah who can also bring the ball up. We just have a couple of people that are versatile, so we use them to our best advantage.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, ladies. Questions for Coach Kellogg.

Q. You talked a lot about the layoff and hopefully avoiding rust. At what point -- and maybe it was right from the jump -- did you realize that you guys were ready to go and that wouldn't be an issue?

MARK KELLOGG: Yeah, probably about a minute in it looked and felt right. I think early in the quarter, first quarter, and I've said this a lot. I don't really look at the score a whole lot early in the games. It's way more about the feel. What's the game feel like? What's the tempo? Are we moving it, sharing it? What's our defensive effort and intensity like? It isn't really look at the score a whole lot, especially in the first quarter. Maybe even some into the second. It's much more about feel and are we playing to the standard in which we expect.

I was a little worried in certain senses for the first three, four, five minutes of that game. I knew we were excited, but like I said the other day at the press conference, I thought we had learned our lesson a little bit from the Big 12 Tournament and maybe even a year ago when we had the long layoff before Princeton because we were down at half against Princeton a year ago in this game.

I just thought our kids had regrouped and came out with just fantastic energy, and we kind of used the word punch first a little bit, and I thought we got them a little bit there early.

Q. Jordan Thomas in her first NCAA Tournament game gave you quality minutes. She played 22, scored 12. What can you say about the impact she had in the game today?

MARK KELLOGG: She's gotten better all year long. She's a freshman, and typically they've got peaks and valleys to the freshman season. I thought she settled in the second rotation through. Her first rotation I thought she looked a little more freshman-like, and I thought she settled in and then really was good for us.

We needed more production. We needed offensive rebounds. We weren't getting very many of those for a long time. They were hurting us on the offensive glass. We just need to do stay even on those possessions, offensive rebounds, turnovers, points off of turnovers, and Jordan is a big key to that for us.

Q. Coach, you guys got a lot of points off of the press to start the game, and then it seemed like maybe closer to halftime in the second half it was kind of more relaxed and letting them dribble up the floor. Not that you weren't pressing, but was there a reason it went into that? And backing off, was it an energy thing with another game in two days?

MARK KELLOGG: Probably all of it. I have said this to you before. There's times when you get these leads now, and we don't always have to continue to speed people up. You are up 17, you are up 20. Now you may be trying to get to half. There's a minute and a half left, and we're trying to get to halftime, and maybe we only want three or four possessions in that last minute and a half or whatever the game calls for.

There was some fatigue I think that set in a little bit too, so I was trying to get it to half a little bit so we could pull off of it just a hair to save them for the second half and obviously if we were fortunate to win for again on Monday.

Q. JJ moves into third place all-time scoring. The two women she's chasing, Parsons and Rosemary are maybe the two best players in program history. What's it mean for her to be up there with those two now?

MARK KELLOGG: If we had a mount rush more, JJ Quinerly should be on that list. I think she's solidifying herself with the steals and the points and the loyalty and staying for four years in an era where that's very unlikely, especially through three coaching changes. That's normally kids transfer three times, not stay through three coaches.

Really, really proud of her. We all knew I think she needed 19. We didn't talk about it. It was never addressed. I wasn't even paying one bit of attention in the game, but we celebrated her a little bit in the locker room because of that accomplishment.

Q. When your best player is up here saying she loves to play defense, and it's fun, that's pretty rare. How much do you appreciate that? What does that do for the rest of the team?

MARK KELLOGG: Well, I think both of them. I don't know that Jordan Harrison probably gets the credit for what she does defensively. Kyah Watson was on our all-defensive team. Sydney Woodley is a phenomenal defender. Sydney Shaw has worked herself.

JJ is the head of it because she's just been around a little bit longer, but Jordan Harrison is an elite, elite, elite defender, and Kyah Watson is as well. They've both been on the Big 12 all-defensive team. We have two-way players. Jordan and JJ will play on the defensive and play and compete on the offensive end.

Yeah, it's a coach's dream when you have those two guards. Everybody talks about our size or the lack of, but man, what's inside you and your heart and how tough you are, there's that athleticism and just their will to defend is what separates some of the elite, and JJ is absolutely one of the elite. Jordan is right there with her.

Q. Back with JJ, in a game like this, do you ever stop and just appreciate -- like when she scored her 2,000th point and what she's doing, what she's done in her career, or is that something you'll look at when this tournament is done and her career is over that you'll look back on and appreciate?

MARK KELLOGG: Not too much. Every once in a while she will make a move, like that's not coaching. That has nothing to do with me. That's just a phenomenal talent making a play. We had a matchup we liked, and we didn't have it. I just told her, Drive it, just go. She just drives in there and gets a layup. Yeah, that's brilliant coaching, right, when you do stuff like that. She's extremely talented.

I have no idea when she hit. I have no idea what shot got her to 2,000. Zero clue. But that was not my focus if any way, shape, or form was an individual accomplishment in a game like this.

Q. You stressed yesterday how important it would be to match their physicality, and you walk out of here with 48 points in the paint and double-digit offensive rebounds. How did you feel about the way that you were able to match them at that level?

MARK KELLOGG: I thought it was just okay. I didn't like it. I mean, we were scoring and getting in there early. I didn't like the rebounding and the defensive rebounding

particularly early. I thought we cleaned it up as the game went on. Maybe not early third quarter, but late third quarter, fourth quarter I thought we finally got some kids to go rebound. Jordan Thomas and Sydney Shaw went in there and got some big rebounds.

We had really challenged our guards because of their size at the guard and we know they like to post them up that they were going to have to get challenged. They might try to post you up. We went back and forth with the man and the zone just trying to not allow them to post up our guards as much, and then it became rebounding and if we could get some boards, I thought we would be okay.

Q. Same I guess situation as last year. You're one away from the Sweet 16. It would be the second Sweet 16 in program history. Just how meaningful is that to play for that?

MARK KELLOGG: Sure, the goal is to always advance. We want to advance as far as we can. We do have one in school history. I think it was in '92. I think it was a shortened field back then, so they won one game. What identify told them is if we can win two in the tournament, we would be the first team in our school's history to win two NCAA Tournament games.

Yeah, this is what we talked about a year ago. Obviously we were at Iowa and had a great game and a great game plan. It comes quick, but we'll go prepare and have another opportunity in front of us to leave a legacy, and that's what our kids want to do. It's what you want to do as a coach.

I'm really just excited for them and to get to coach them one more time at least, but certainly we're going to go into that game with an expectation that we can do something really special.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports