

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Second Round - North Carolina vs West Virginia

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Chapel Hill, North Carolina, USA

Carmichael Arena

North Carolina Tar Heels Coach Courtney Banghart

Indya Nivar

Reniya Kelly

Lanie Grant

Media Conference



Q. Along those lines, you guys have had rock fights with Duke when they're a good defensive team as well. How will that be helping you guys in tomorrow's matchup in dealing with that sort of game?

RENIYA KELLY: Like Indy said, this team is very different from Duke. I think that I are very sporadic, like she said, but I think Duke also helped us just be prepared for the full-court pressure. As far as comparison, you can't really compare any team to West Virginia right now.

LANIE GRANT: We have been in a lot of close games that we feel confident throughout. If it is a rock fight, we're going to be confident. We have a lot of senior leaders, as well as these two sitting next to me, so playing under control, but, yeah.

Q. Different sort of question... when Lexi hit the fifth three-pointer, on the sidelines, there was a little resuscitation from two players of another player. Can you comment on some of that activity there? Some of the creative celebrations we saw yesterday?

INDYA NIVAR: I feel like that just shows the personality of our team. We love each other so much and want to see everyone be successful and I think what they were doing yesterday was just showing their personality and celebrating Lexi.

Q. Do you guys practice that sort of thing?

RENIYA KELLY: No. (Laughter)

LANIE GRANT: No.

Q. This one is for Lanie and also for Reniya. Obviously, Lanie, coming in, this being your first year, who are some of the people on this team specifically that you've leaned on for advice, things like that, and Reniya, you play a similar position as her. What type of advice do you give Lanie being a first-year player who obviously is all the way at the tournament now and has some experience, but just can you just talk about some of the, I guess, gems and things that you

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions. Raise your hand, we'll get you a Mic.

Q. For you guys, obviously you have West Virginia coming up tomorrow. I know that they're points per game wise, they're a really stout defensive team. Based on what you guys know about them so far, what are some of the early challenges that they present for any of you three?

RENIYA KELLY: Yeah, I'm going to say ball control, that we really have to take care of the ball this game, just limit the turnovers and try to score when we get to the quarter court.

LANIE GRANT: They have a couple really dynamic guards so playing really good group defense, making them play in crowds, stuff like that, piggybacking, limiting turnovers in the back court. They press a lot so just being and playing under control.

Q. A lot, of course, is made of their defense and how unique it is. Have you faced anyone similar to that or anything you can compare it to? Or is this truly something new for you?

INDYA NIVAR: I think somebody similar is probably Duke. They pressure in the full court man-to-man but West Virginia, I feel like they're a little bit different. They're very sporadic in the way we just don't know what defense they're going to do at which time but I feel like teams in our conference have prepared us for this.



try to give to her.

LANIE GRANT: Yeah, my buddy is Alyssa so for the entire experience of the tournament I've leaned on her a lot but I would say playing the guard position, Kayla has really stepped up for me almost as like a second coach while I'm on the court. If I have any questions, she always has something to say in time-outs and huddles so she always has a great job keeping me calm and for me personally, as my starting point guard, I would even say Reniya and I know she's only one year older than me, but she brings such a calming presence, so I know that if anything... you know, yeah. If I need anything, I look over at her and she's really good at grounding the team and getting everybody in the right spots, so.

RENIYA KELLY: Lanie, I'm really proud of you. I am, I know missing your senior year of high school is devastating. I think for Lanie just trusting the work she's put in. She's here for a reason and she's here at this particular time for a reason, so I think just trusting the work she's put in. She's working hard to this day and I think she's going to go far regardless of where she goes.

Q. This is a question for any of you... everyone focuses on West Virginia's defense, but JJ Quinerly and Jordan Harrison combined for 50 points. What do you guys see them doing offensively that could present challenges as well.

INDYA NIVAR: Both of those guards are very dynamic. They get to the paint. They hunt paint, paint touches, and they're very crafty as well with the ball, so making sure we're crowding them, putting them in a crowd I think is the best thing for us to do in this game, putting them in a crowd, making sure that our players are not on islands.

LANIE GRANT: Taking away their primary tendencies I think is big. Indy talked about making them play in crowds but also the shots they do get, make them contested and hard and maybe not their first option. Make them go to their second or third options. We talked about trying to get the balls out of their hands, stuff like that, but Indy pretty much covered the most of it.

Q. For any of you guys, what do you expect the crowd to be like tomorrow? Obviously it was good yesterday. How much does being here help you in games like this?

RENIYA KELLY: Oh, yeah, I think because the game is at 7:00 p.m. now, it's actually going to be a really, really good crowd tomorrow. And also it means a lot, obviously. We want to do this for the seniors, I think Alyssa, Lexi, Kayla, Maria, Grace, we want to do this for them so the fact that

they can play hear their last game at our home gym is amazing. I'm really happy for them.

Q. Lanie, you just mentioned moments ago about Alyssa being a buddy. Is there a buddy system for this team? What does that look like and how has Alyssa specifically guided you through March process?

LANIE GRANT: Yeah, everybody in the team at the beginning of the season was paired up with somebody and I was fortunate enough to get Alyssa and we brought in Taissa so we're like a trio buddy now that she joined the program. Alyssa has been very grounding for me as somebody who's going on her fifth season here and this is my first and I am a young player. She knows the ins and outs of everything. She's been a great calming and also motivating force. Kind of what Reniya just said, you want to do it for her and Lexi and all the seniors who poured everything they have in this program. As a younger player, I have no option but to give my best to every single possession on the floor because that's what they deserve and that's what I want to give them, so.

Q. I'm wondering if you guys can explain to me the season that Maria has had. There's obviously been games where she's dominated and then games where maybe foul trouble or other issues and injuries, obviously. Now she's come back and it looks like she might be able to play a very pivotal role for you guys tomorrow. I'm just wondering if you can sum up what she's meant to you guys throughout the year and the role she could play tomorrow.

INDYA NIVAR: It's hard because Maria is like my big sister and I have seen her grow so much from last year. She plays an important roll in our team. She rebounds. She makes crucial plays. Those days when she gets in foul trouble, she trusts in us that we're going to make up when she's not on the court, but I don't know... I just feel like she deserves so much more credit and, yeah. I don't know. I feel like she's done a great job this year in setting herself up for the future.

Q. And the role she plays tomorrow against West Virginia?

INDYA NIVAR: Yeah, a big role. I don't think anybody can really guard her in the country so just making sure we're feeding her the ball in the best position and she's just going to do what she does.

THE MODERATOR: Anything else for our student-athletes? All right. Thank you, ladies.

We'll go ahead and move along with Head Coach Courtney

Banghart. Questions?

Q. Again, on the topic of defense, how do you kind of go about preparing for something that you don't always see all the time... court press.

COURTNEY BANGHART: Yeah, there's a rhythm you have to play with each game, and it was very different than the rhythm we had to play against yesterday. There's an element of you can prepare through film and through understanding angles and then they've got to kind of play through it a little bit, right? We played against pressing. Duke did more man-to-man press where Syracuse and more of a zone press. And then we play against our guys. We had all last week to prepare for pressure. Sort of like a zone defense or a man-to-man defense, everyone's defense is a little bit different. Their schemes are a little different. You can't really practice it to perfection. You can prepare for it. That's what we've done through film and we did last week and knowing that we might play a team like this and then we've got practice time today to spend on it.

But the great thing about March is that you don't need to reinvent yourselves. Everyone talks about March being your new season. As I told them yesterday, I don't want a new season, I want this season, right? This is a continuation of the season, of work they already put in. Partly how we win this game is how we play on both sides of the ball together, regardless of what the other team is doing and play to our strengths, so we're just going to continue that, who we are and put ourselves in the best position to be successful.

Q. On that note, you must feel fortunate to have the experienced guard play you have. That has to help doesn't it?

COURTNEY BANGHART: Absolutely, yeah. Especially having Reniya back. Grace has played for five -- this is her fifth year. Lexi's fifth year. Alyssa's a ball-handling perimeter player as well, so we have a lot of experience, Indya's a junior at that guard spot. Yeah, helps us a lot.

Q. Courtney, obviously ball protection is a key for this game. What are some practical changes you can do to limit turnovers when they're so scrappy on defense? Coup I think part of it is, again, I'm not the one playing against it whereas there are times I might beat it with pace. Other times I might beat it with a dribble. Other times I might beat it by a pass back to quick reversal to up the floor. I have to show them the various... how to utilize the court through angles and through our bodies well and then they have to read that possession accordingly because as you take one dribble up the court, the angle is not as good in one way and better in

another way. If you take a dribble towards the middle of the court, you're shrinking one angle one way but you're increasing an angle another way, right? It's not as much that they do this, we do this. It's understanding how to utilize the angles on the court to use their pressure against them and get great shots for us.

Q. Coach, WVU in Mark's first two seasons, unprecedented. This is the first time they've won 50 games across two seasons. From a coach's perspective, watching from afar, what can you, I guess, add in terms of perspective to what he's been able to establish so quickly?

COURTNEY BANGHART: Yeah, we played him when they were at SFA one of my years, I think it was when I was here, but we played Stephen F. Austin when he was their head coach there. They were really good. I think it was the year we went to the Sweet 16. I think we played them first. They didn't press as much then. They played more of a five out, so it shows he can coach in a lot of different ways. The thing... what I really have to mention is how hard it is to win one game, much less 50.

As I always say, everybody gives scholarships, everybody recruits, everybody puts their time in. You don't just get to win because you want to. You have to go find a way and he has found a way 50 times in two years to beat the team on the other side of the ball. It's not easy and you have to win a lot of different ways, right? How we won yesterday, Oregon State, is going to be different how we have to win against WVU. He's had to do that 50 times. Especially at a new place, you've got to figure out that place pretty quickly, what's attractive to the student-athletes at that place, what are the pressures at that place? So he's navigated really well, which is what's so great about March. There's such small advantages because everybody's so good... coaches, players. That's what makes it so special.

Q. How do you on a short turnaround prepare for the two guards, in Jordan Harrison and JJ Quinerly the way that they can play defense and also score at a high rate?

COURTNEY BANGHART: You just thank your ACC counterparts, right? Try guarding Ta'Niya Latson and O'Mariah Gordon. Try that out for size, right? And then try to guard Olivia Miles and Hannah Hidalgo. Try that, right? And then go try to guard Aziaha James and Saniya Rivers and Zoe Brooks, right? These are, I just named ten first-round draft picks, right? It isn't that different, honestly. You have really good guard play in March. You have really good guard play on ranked teams and so they're hard to guard. You're going to have to be really good defensively

both on the 1-V-1 and 2-V-2 all the way down to 5-V-5. Fortunately I give a lot of credit to our ACC counterparts. I have had to play, I've had to prepare for elite guard play I feel like all year so it's another opportunity to do so.

Q. Coach, obviously games aren't always played on paper, but just looking at some of the roster, it seems like you have a pretty good size advantage going into this game. What kind of role could that play and certainly with Maria inside in the lane, what could her role be for tomorrow?

COURTNEY BANGHART: Yeah, we call Maria the problem because she's a real problem 1-V-1 so playing on a double-team means you're leaving other guys open, right? Also, if you're going to be really aggressive in passing lanes, you're not in gaps. Those passing lanes into the post should be easier. They weren't as easy against Oregon State because they played more of a sagging defense, right? So there was a crowd in there. They want to crowd the perimeter and make it really difficult. That means there's going to be space in the interior, and so that's kind of a little bit of the gamesmanship. Where our advantages based on how they want to play? Just like they're going to find their advantages on how we like to play, but Maria is a problem and she needs to continue to do so in order for us to be successful.

Q. The game at Chapel Hill with Duke was a big rock fight. How is going through a game and having that experience maybe help against a team that's probably as good defensively and how is their defense different than what you saw against Duke or perhaps other teams?

COURTNEY BANGHART: Yeah, Louisville I was thinking on the road that was a rock fight. We played them a couple weeks ago it feels like and they've got Jayda Curry and Taj Roberts and they turn around and pick you up right off the ball. So I think it's probably a little bit more similar to Louisville maybe with some concepts of Syracuse. When they get into a full-man, that's a little bit more like Duke. So they're all a little different. Duke is more athletic in the post spot so they can switch out on everything. That's not what West Virginia is going to do, right? Louisville is more like West Virginia because Louisville is a little bit -- they're really guard-oriented. They're smaller. So I think it's more that our kids have had to navigate a variety of pressures, guard a variety of skill players. They have had to deal with a lot of different attacks. Just like I'm not as familiar with the Big 12 but I'm sure that's what West Virginia gets to lean on too. They get to lean on their body of work and their body of experiences. I didn't watch them and think they're that similar to Duke, quite honestly, because it's

Duke's post athleticism that allows them to switch out and keep bodies in front of the ball. This is more guard trappy, guard backtap, so more like a Louisville.

Q. You were probably too busy to see it, but when Lexi hit the fifth three-pointer, Blanca hit the floor with her back to the court and Sydney and one other player resuscitated her. What does that say about your team that you have these creative sorts of celebrations and everybody is celebrating each other.

COURTNEY BANGHART: Yeah, big time. That's how they are in practice, too. I don't know if they do exactly that, but they have a lot of moments of passion, right? And I hope that's something that they see the importance of. I always say that you have to out-team and out-tough to win in life. You have to be a good teammate and you have to be tough. Those types of moments are showing you that we're out-teaming, right? We're celebrating team success. Even if you're not directly a part of it. And so I think we promote that in practice. We shouldn't be doing things that are computing or doing things that are disappointing on an island, right? That's not the way life is to be lived. We talk about out-teaming with passion and out-playing with toughness a lot.

Q. Is that sort of celebration organic?

COURTNEY BANGHART: Oh, yeah. I haven't seen it. I heard about it when you guys asked the players. They're certainly not doing that -- they're not spending practice time doing it. I don't know what they're doing in the privacy of their own time, but, yeah, anything that involves passion, I'm a fan of.

Q. I asked Lanie a minute ago about the buddy system and how important that's been for her, especially how young she is. Is that something you implemented when you first got here? Can you talk on that and how you go about pairing people with their buddies?

COURTNEY BANGHART: Yeah, pretty thoughtfully. You have sometimes -- I think it's a good life skill to have to care about somebody else, especially in team sport, we make a lot of assumptions. We make a lot of assumptions that everyone understands the value of team. You come into the world alone and you leave the world alone, right? Except for my twins, ironically, so I think how you learn how to be a teammate is actually a skill. It starts with how do you take care of one person and once you learn how to ask about them... in other words, if you don't do well on a test, your buddy should know that. I should be able to ask your buddy what's going on in your life and they should know. We teach them how to take care of and care about and be responsible for one person and then maybe you

have double-dates with a couple other buddy groups to do it in group, but there's just value in that.

How we put them together is pretty thoughtfully. I knew how Lanie is wired is pretty similar to Alyssa, which is both good and sometimes has challenges. They hold themselves to a relentless standard that can suck the joy out of you if you're not careful, so those two have some things to navigate so it's good that they're together. Other people might have different similarities or differences where they can counteract each other. So it's not random. Like most of what I do, it's pretty thoughtful I know that's one thing they look forward to every year... who's my buddy? But, yeah, I brought that with me and it's been a big part of our team.

Q. A lot of elements will go into making the big run, but how important is making the perimeter shot? You basically only made a lot of them in the third quarter when you pulled away. Do you think you have to be really good from the perimeter to make a run?

COURTNEY BANGHART: I think against a team like Oregon State where they have three people with two feet in the paint in every single possession, your advantage, four on two on the perimeter. Against them, that's the shot they're asking you to make, right? I think against West Virginia, it might not matter how well you shoot. It's a high-risk/high-reward. If you handle their risk you get a high reward. So whether that's post feeds, layups, beating pressure, free throws. Any time the ball goes in the basket, it's a positive outcome. If that means you shoot well, there's going to be higher percentages of positive outcomes, but I think different teams provide different openings more freely and against Oregon State, they had two people where literally they never left the paint on defense. No matter if you went to the bathroom, they would stay in the paint. We had to stretch them out. I think West Virginia will be a little bit different. We would also like to shoot well. Any time you shoot well you win, right? If we shoot well with how we defend, we should win a lot of games.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you, Coach.

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