

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

Monday, March 24, 2025

Chapel Hill, North Carolina, USA

Carmichael Arena

## West Virginia Mountaineers

**Mark Kellogg**

**Kyah Watson**

**JJ Quinerly**

Media Conference

North Carolina - 58, West Virginia - 47

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement from head coach Mark Kellogg.

MARK KELLOGG: First and foremost, a ton of credit to Coach Banghart. That team, what they've done, their performance tonight. I thought it might be a game a little bit like that, to be honest. It was two elite defensive teams. I thought it might be a little bit of a slugfest. I certainly thought we had a better offensive performance in us, and it wasn't our night on the offensive end. Certainly they had a lot to do with that.

Certainly, congrats to them and good luck as they move forward.

Really I'm just so proud of our group. I'm proud of the seniors. I think we always talk about leaving a legacy, leave things better than what you found or what it was when you started at whatever place that is, and I think these guys did that.

We've had a heck of a run. We've had a great season. Did we fall a little short in some of our goals? Yes, we did, but that's sport. That's life. In this tournament in particular, only one team is going to finish with a win, and we're not going to be that one. Like I said, I couldn't be more proud. Special group of players.

To me two years ago when I got the job, you have a vision, you try to paint a picture, and you hope that those current players, which these two to my right were a part of that roster, would of course stay and ultimately buy into what



we were doing.

They did that. They've been so much fun to coach. We have a great environment. We've changed the way I think our program has been looked at. We've been a perennial top 25 team. Our attendance numbers have kind of shot through the roof. We have great players, staff, administrators just to do something really, really special.

I hope we can continue to build off of it, use this as a growing pain for those that are coming back. Again, super proud of them. Proud to be the coach of some really, really talented individuals.

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions for our student-athletes, JJ Quinerly and Kyah Watson.

**Q. JJ, obviously not the outcome or performance that you hoped for tonight, but when you look back on it when all is said and done, how you do you hope to be remembered as a mountaineer?**

JJ QUINERLY: I hope to be remembered as probably one of the best guards to play at West Virginia University. I think I did a lot under a lot of different coaches.

Honestly, like he said, I think I left a legacy here, and I left the program better than it was when I first came in.

**Q. For Kyah and JJ, can you just talk about, it just seemed like there were moments in the game that were tough matchups for you guys, whether it was Ustby or Maria when she was in the game down low. Can you talk about the struggles and defending those different matchups at different times in the game?**

KYAH WATSON: I would just say I think they did a good job of maybe finding mismatches. We just couldn't really like get stop after stop, and that kind of hurt us. I thought our effort was there. So --

JJ QUINERLY: Honestly, same thing as she said. We couldn't pull our stops. We couldn't get any kills. Like Coach Kellogg says, and it kind of just wore on as the game goes and the score got a little wider.



**Q. JJ, a lot's been made of you sticking around through three coaching changes at WVU, especially in the era of the transfer portal. What has kept you in Morgantown, and what has WVU meant to you during your four years?**

JJ QUINERLY: Honestly, the group of girls that I had around me like Kyah Watson, Jayla Hemingway, those girls that stayed, Kylee Blacksten, those girls who stayed, especially Jordan Harrison, I could have left probably any time in my career and probably could have went anywhere in the country, but I chose to stay at West Virginia just to make that legacy that I told you all about earlier.

Like I said, I think I've done that, and yeah.

**Q. Can you speak to the crowd and the noise and being an away game, so to speak?**

KYAH WATSON: I'd say it's kind of like any game. I don't think anything will compare to what we played in last year at Iowa. They had a good number of fans come out. So it's always awesome to see.

I think for the most part we just try to stay together, kind of tune it out and play our own game.

**Q. You weren't really able to get anything going. What was the mindset to flip the switch in the fourth quarter and get to the foul line a couple of times? What was kind of your mindset going through that?**

JJ QUINERLY: I'm pretty hard to guard on the perimeter, so just attacking them. I would say -- never mind. Yeah, that's it.

**Q. Kyah, we've talked about JJ up to this point, but you -- (no microphone). From your perspective looking back over your career at WVU, what are you going to remember about your time?**

KYAH WATSON: I would say that each year I was there was special. I can't thank Coach Kellogg and the coaching staff enough. I love all of them. They've helped me grow as a person both on and off the court.

My teammates all my three years were great, and the fan base in West Virginia is awesome. They love us. We love them. I think just that, I'm going to miss that.

**Q. Question for JJ or Kyah. What's it like trying to handle someone who's so dynamic like Alyssa Ustby? How is that in game time just trying to limit her possessions, limit her shots?**

KYAH WATSON: I would say just trying to make it as difficult as we could for her to even catch the ball, kind of push her out to further away from the basket.

I mean, she's a good player. She scored, got to the free-throw line. We didn't do a great job, but yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, ladies.

Questions for Coach Kellogg.

**Q. Can you just talk about the defensive matchups. I'm sure probably didn't go quite how maybe you had envisioned on paper. Did their size and athleticism really kind of make a difference in this game?**

MARK KELLOGG: Yes, they scored 58 points. I don't think it was our defense. It was our offense. We shot 24 percent. What did we shoot, 24? We shot 24 percent and 9.5 percent from the 3. It's going to be hard to win when you score 47 points.

We can win games holding teams to 58. I thought our effort on the defensive end was really good. I thought we competed. I thought we held them down long enough to see if we could make a run. We never made any runs. I don't know the kills and the stops, but when we hold somebody to 58, there's going to be some pretty good defensive possessions.

Obviously Ustby got us. That was the matchup problem. We had one possession where there was four fouls, I think, all on her on the out of bounds. We had three or four different people trying to defend her. We tried man, tried zone. It was a little bit of a matchup problem.

I played against her, I think maybe she was a sophomore when we played against them in the NCAA Tournament. She's worked hard on her game and her ability to stretch it and shoot it. Always been a huge fan of hers from when we prepared for them a few years ago.

Fantastic player, but they're great. They're great defensively. They can spread you. They have different people offensively. I think that's the hard matchup from the offensive end is they have so many kids and you don't know who it's going to be on each night.

Maria gets 5 points, and that's their leading scorer. In certain ways you think you have a really good chance, but you let Ustby get 10-plus over her average. That was probably more disappointing from the offensive end than what we did defensively.

**Q. Mark, the second year in a row it seemed like the whistle got tighter in the second half. Is that just the way tournament games go? How hard does that make it down the stretch?**

MARK KELLOGG: Yeah, there wasn't a lot of flow, I didn't think, to that game. I don't know that I have another comment really. I don't think the whistle necessarily went our way, but we're on somebody else's home floor. Officials have human nature too, crowd gets into it, they feed it. But that had nothing to do with the outcome.

**Q. In the first quarter you switched from that man-to-man press to the zone. Did you do that to give your offense a bit of a spark since it was kind of stalled out there?**

MARK KELLOGG: We tried several different things. I don't know we went to it as early as you were thinking, but we did mix it up a bit, which is normal for us. It's not abnormal. It's just to keep them off balance and give them different looks and switch from man to zone, and those types of things.

We just never got in a rhythm. How could we help an offensive rhythm? We lose by 11, and they beat us by 12 on points off turnovers. That's typically a stat that we win.

We got to the free-throw line. We didn't shoot 3s very well. We did some things okay, actually beat them second chance points, which isn't a strength of ours. So our best strength of all is turning people over, and we didn't do a very good job of that in this game, and that's a credit to them.

**Q. Coach, you touched upon the seniors. I'm just wondering what they meant to this program because there's a lot that have played for a while. How hard can it be to keep the program moving upward when you lose a group like that?**

MARK KELLOGG: They've meant a lot obviously. All of their journeys have been really different. We talked about JJ's journey. Kyah's journey was different than Kylee's journey. There's other seniors that didn't get in the game tonight that were part of this basketball game that had a different journey. Tirzah had a different journey.

All different stories. Really close group. That's what I've enjoyed about my two years here so far. They're an easy team to coach. They're just really good kids. They do the right things. They work hard.

It's fun to show up to work every day when you have a staff and team like we've had the last couple years. That's part

of coaching now is trying to sustain it. Kids graduate every single year, so that's not abnormal. Finding scoring is typically okay. We're going to lose some quality players, and we understand that.

Now you go to the portal, I guess. That's how you go about it at this point.

**Q. Mark, there's probably not a single answer to this, but how do you think as a program you kind of get over the hump to hosting and into the Sweet 16 and make that next step?**

MARK KELLOGG: Well, win more games, I guess. Continue to play the schedule, win the games, the right ones. For us, we didn't win enough probably in the Quad 1 to get the home game. I think we're close. Obviously we're closer now than we were a year ago. I think we're at the doorstep.

I keep saying, every time I get into this game, though, the advantage of playing at home is significant. If that's the rules of the NCAA, then we need to continue to work really, really hard to see if we can't get one of these in Morgantown because I think that environment would be ridiculously off the charts and be so much fun for our community and our state.

We're going to go to work on that and see if we can't, but it certainly helps when we're playing at home in the first two rounds.

**Q. Kyah the last couple years has been the unsung hero of this team in a lot of ways. Tonight kind of a vintage performance from her -- 9 points, 15 rebounds, a couple of steals, and she really sparked the run where you guys took the lead in the third. Just as far as her play tonight and over your two years with her in Morgantown, what can you say about what she's meant to the program?**

MARK KELLOGG: I've routinely called her the glue of our team. She's the kid I have the hardest time taking off the court because she does so much for us. It's not always scoring with Kyah. I thought she was a little more assertive tonight. The rebounds, which at one point I said just go get every rebound, please, because I didn't know what else to tell them. Just go get every one of them, which she has the ability to do.

The great part too, if you've seen Kyah transform her body into this elite athlete. She's so fast twitch and so explosive, a phenomenal defender. Reluctant at times to score. So that was always our push to her, if you could be a little more aggressive offensively, that would be perfectly fine

with the rest of us.

Fantastic kid, works hard, in the gym a lot. Just an easy go lucky type kid that's a pleasure to be around. We'll miss her and several of them.

**Q. (No microphone).**

MARK KELLOGG: I think what you just described, and I guess they can tell you a little bit more about what that game plan was, but from our end, which we knew, we really thought they were going to look really hard to limit Jordan and JJ, touches in the paint, they have bigger bodies. They're going to take up a little more space. They were playing off Kyah a little bit. That was her matchup, so she was not completely all the way at the 3-point line.

The other night, I thought we got to the rim about when we wanted to. That was going to be more difficult tonight. We spent time talking about offensively moving it, making it go side to side maybe first. We had some screening actions we wanted to get to. At times we did. At times we didn't trust it. Kept writing that on the board that we've got to trust each other.

I thought when we cut, we got some really good layups, but it just wasn't enough. We had some good looks from 3. Some were forced that were bad possessions. I thought we had some good looks, and we knew we were going to have to make some 3s to win this game. I thought we needed seven or eight 3s probably to win.

**Q. The WNBA Draft is a couple weeks away. What would you say to any WNBA team that might consider drafting JJ Quinerly?**

MARK KELLOGG: From what I know, they probably have all the information they need. They've been in communication with us. She's going to have a great opportunity. She's going to play basketball beyond it.

What I've said about JJ all the time is ball in hand, I think she's as dynamic as any guard in the country. Defensively guarding the ball, I think she's as good of an on-ball defender as anybody, which she's now up for the Defensive National Player of the Year. I think she's a complete two-way player.

She's going to be a little bit smaller, so somebody is going to have to figure out what that niche is in WNBA. Yeah, I hope she gets her number called on draft night and gets in a training camp and goes and makes us all proud, which she'll do regardless of what it looks like.

It's really hard in the WNBA. There's first round draft picks

that don't necessarily stick on rosters. The hard work is in front of her, but I think she's prepared, and the kid works at an ultimate level, always in the gym. She's put in the time. She wants to be great. She enjoys playing in the biggest games, which is probably why this one hurts the most for her.

**Q. One more on JJ, early on in the game, second quarter maybe, late first quarter, it just seemed like maybe she was trying too hard maybe. I don't know if you agree with that or not. You had to maybe take her out for a couple seconds to get her to settle down. Can you just kind of talk about just maybe how weird her beginning of the game was?**

MARK KELLOGG: I don't know that she was -- she maybe was a little bit, just probably excited and wanting to help her team. Trying too hard, I don't know. The kid was just trying to give us everything she could. Maybe things that worked the other night, she was still trying to go back to that a little bit early.

Yeah, take her out, let her calm down, catch her breath. I thought Jordan was a little wound up also there early, and they're fumbling the ball around and these types of things.

That's another thing. We've got to figure out the balls. These balls are like aired up way more than ever all year long. I don't know what the heck's going on here, but we've got to get that figured out.

Anyway, she was just sped up, like we all were, big game, a lot of emotion. We even wrote on the board to settle in quickly, kind of control your emotions. I thought we did that really well the other night against Columbia and probably not quite as well tonight at least to start.

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