

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - UNLV vs Creighton

Friday, March 22, 2024

Los Angeles, California, USA

Pauley Pavilion

**UNLV Lady Rebels**

**Coach Lindy La Rocque**

**Desi-Rae Young**

**Kiara Jackson**

Media Conference

LINDY LA ROCQUE: Good afternoon. Obviously we're very excited to be here. We got here the other day -- what is today, Friday? Yeah, we got here the other day, so we're excited. We've got Desi and Kiara here with me, but our team is thrilled to be playing in the NCAA Tournament. Just what a great accomplishment that is in itself, but we've been here before, so we're eager to stay in the tournament, to win this first game against a very good Creighton team that we've studied really diligently the last couple of days trying to absorb a lot of information a little bit at a time, but our team is going to be ready to play.

**Q. How does this tournament feel different from previous years now that you guys are here and kind of the expectation being to win a game?**

DESI-RAE YOUNG: I mean, we and Kiara have been here before, so I don't think it really feels that much different for the both of us, but I know most of our teammates are very excited, especially the freshmen and those who haven't been in the NCAA Tournament before, but we want to come out, and piggy-backing off what Lindy said, we want to win, and Creighton is a really hard team to beat.

KIARA JACKSON: Like Desi said, I don't think it's really any different. We have some experience being here for the third time, so I just think we're going to try to do what we do and come out here and win.

**Q. With all that this group has accomplished, how big would winning an NCAA Tournament game be for a program that hasn't done it since 1991?**

DESI-RAE YOUNG: I mean, it would be huge, especially



because, like you said, 1991 was a long time ago, so being here in 2024 it would be great to have this NCAA win.

KIARA JACKSON: Yeah, piggy-backing off what Desi said, it would be huge. It would be amazing to get this first win as a team and get Coach Lindy her first NCAA win as a coach.

**Q. Were you shocked when the bracket came out and you found that you were matched up with Creighton, considering both teams are ranked in the top 25 and it's rare to see a first-round matchup with top-25 teams?**

DESI-RAE YOUNG: I mean, I didn't really know a lot about Creighton. I didn't know who we were going to get matched up with, so I mean, I wasn't surprised. I was more so happy to be back in LA and stay West Coast.

KIARA JACKSON: We were all surprised. I remember seeing our name pop up there --

DESI-RAE YOUNG: I wasn't surprised.

KIARA JACKSON: My side was surprised. Whoever was sitting next to me, we were all surprised. We didn't expect our name to be called up at that time, but we were happy, and we're excited to be playing in LA.

LINDY LA ROCQUE: We're happy to be playing. I think the anticipation of finding out your seed and who your matchup is, we don't have a say in that. Surprised, not because it's a top-25 matchup. Again, I didn't watch them a ton during the year, but I know they're very good, and they're very well-coached. We got to work right away. We're excited for the matchup.

**Q. Desi, you have a chance to win two tournament games out here in Los Angeles where some of your roots are. What are your thoughts about playing a tournament game here in LA?**

DESI-RAE YOUNG: I'm just excited for the turnout and for our fans to come and be able to come and support us. A lot of our family will be here and a few of our teammates



are from California, so we should have a nice big crowd. We're all excited to be playing in front of our team but to just also to be playing in the NCAA Tournament again.

**Q. Desi, what have you guys been up to for the last couple days? What is it like having a long buildup?**

DESI-RAE YOUNG: We've gotten to get a feel for the weather and things. It's been nice to be in LA. We practiced yesterday at LMU so we've been putting in the work and doing our daily routines that we normally do.

**Q. How does a game like this feel different from a regular season game from your perspective?**

DESI-RAE YOUNG: I mean, you lose, you go home, you win, you continue to go. That's probably the only difference. In conference you get to keep playing teams and you play teams multiple and you know who you're playing. We don't know too much about Creighton but we have faced some of their motion this year. They're not kind of a team we don't know; we've just never played against them. I think that's most likely the hardest part of going to the NCAA.

**Q. Does it make any difference for either of you just your attitude, what you're feeling leading up the game as opposed to a regular season game?**

DESI-RAE YOUNG: I mean, we've just got to play hard. That's like our whole mindset. Take this as a championship game. We've harped on that all year, so that's just what we've got to do.

**Q. Are your emotions any different than a Tuesday night game in January? How does this game feel to you leading up to it?**

KIARA JACKSON: Obviously it's a big game. Like Desi said, win or go home, so I'm just excited to play, and I can't wait to see how our team comes out.

**Q. Since you played at Stanford, any special memories being back in this building?**

LINDY LA ROCQUE: Yeah, I've played a number of games here. I've coached a number of games here. I haven't been back to Poly for probably three or four years -- I guess four for sure. I guess I've been coach at UNLV for four, so four or five years. It's just an awesome venue. I've won here. I've lost here. I don't know if any one game in particular sticks out, but it's great to be back in LA, and once you kind of get out on the court, then it's just a great basketball venue.

**Q. What have you learned about Creighton? What are you guys going to do well against them, a team that has a lot of experience just like you guys?**

LINDY LA ROCQUE: Yeah, I think it's their third tournament in a row. Very veteran team. They start five seniors. Coach Flanery has been there 22 years. He knows what he's doing for sure. I really respect and admire him.

They're very offensively potent. All of the players can shoot the three. They really space the floor. They kind of play a five-out offense. So we're going to have our work cut out for us defensively.

Offensively, again, just they know each other so well. They're really good at covering for each other if they want to double or if they get beat somewhere they do a great job of recovering just because when I watch them, sometimes I'm like, they're all thinking for each other. They just have great connections.

Just a really solid, very good team that obviously is very deserving to be here.

I think they're hungry for a win, too. We've got to bring it.

**Q. How big would a win be for this program? Would it be kind of like a special type of validation, everything that you've put in and your staff have been building?**

LINDY LA ROCQUE: Yeah, you know, this group, these two in particular and kind of their classmates and teammates, we've broken kind of a lot of records, so to say, have done a lot of things in the last couple years that haven't been done in 20 years and this and that. 1991 I was two years old, the last tournament game victory for UNLV. They're laughing. And I'm not that old.

But it would be big just for our program to continue to take the next step. I think we've made great strides in the last couple years and are continuing to build on that.

This is the next step of the ladder. We're not at the pinnacle or where we want to be when it's all said and done, but the next step is to win a game in the tournament.

I think we're more prepared now than we've ever been.

**Q. From a situation like this, you're on the road for three days before the game, as a coach what are you doing to keep your team focused? What are you doing to fill up their days? What has this half a week been like for you?**

LINDY LA ROCQUE: We got here pretty early, Wednesday night, so it kind of has felt like a long time just getting here in front of you guys and kind of officially starting some of this March Madness hoopla, seeing the cool logos and getting to the actual venue and stuff.

But I think part of it is just enjoying the experience. We're at a great hotel. Again, it's great to be in LA. Obviously we're keeping them fed. We are in school, so making sure we're getting some study hall hours in and they're staying on top of their schoolwork. Then giving them time to just kind of explore around and enjoy being around each other.

The men's games started the other day, so we've had those playing in our team room.

So it's a combination of being relaxed, keeping some of our same routines, enjoying the experience, and really prepping for our opponent, treating this like -- we don't want this to be our last game, so we're giving it everything that we've got.

**Q. Are you a big pregame speech giver? Do you deliver some remarks to your team on the floor before they go out or the night before? What's your approach to that?**

LINDY LA ROCQUE: You should have asked them that, I guess.

My halftime speeches are probably more memorable than my pregame ones maybe.

No, I mean, I'd like to think I motivate them, sure, and remind them of who they are and what we can do before the game. I'm not a total storyteller and bring out some old things, but I think -- I don't even mind telling you guys, my message a little bit for some of the questions that you're asking them, we have to play the game. We're not playing this moment. We just have to play the game.

To be honest, that's going to be my message before the game tomorrow. It's another game. It's a big game, sure. But we don't have to do anything that we haven't done all year long. We have to play hard. We have to play together. We have to fight for and with each other.

The moment piece of it will take care of itself.

**Q. You've talked about players in different roles this year, obviously, but the characteristics of this team, what's different about this team than the previous two that got this far?**

LINDY LA ROCQUE: I think a combination of experience.

We've got some players in some different roles that have experience. Kiara is up here. She was here the last two years, and she has two tournament games under her belt.

I think it's a more veteran group. Obviously the older they get, the more -- hopefully the wiser they get.

We're not surprised by getting caught off guard with things. Even I think last year in Baton Rouge, it was our second time, but still, that was a lot of travel and different things. I felt like we were kind of still going through things the first time.

Now we've traveled far. We've traveled close. We've played a familiar opponent. We've played an opponent we've never known, all in the last two years. This year we've kind of got a combination of a little bit of everything we experienced over the last two.

We're pretty comfortable. Not in a bad way, but that we know we belong, and we want to keep playing.

**Q. Creighton is a very good three-point shooting team. They average roughly nine three-pointers each game. How much emphasis is there to limit good looks from them from beyond the arc?**

LINDY LA ROCQUE: Yeah, they're such a good three-point shooting team, we're not going to hold them to zero attempts. That's not going to be our recipe for success because then I think they can just beat you in a number of other ways.

So we want to make some of their looks tough, but if they make a couple, we're not going to totally panic or change our game plan. They are a very good three-point shooting team -- they shoot a lot, though, too, and they're efficient there, so it's not like -- that's a huge piece of who they are.

But I think more than anything, I don't want to give up lay-ups because if you get way too spread out, then they can make lay-ups easier than they make three-pointers, too.

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