

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Richmond vs UCLA

Saturday, March 22, 2025

Los Angeles, California, USA

Pauley Pavilion

Richmond Spiders
Coach Aaron Rousell

Maggie Doogan

Addie Budnik

Media Conference

AARON ROUSSELL: Just an incredible night for everybody associated with our program, with our university, family, friends. Just a really special night.

The kids on the court played so well. I felt we were so locked in for the few days going into the game -- the poise, calmness.

It wasn't a terrible start, but I think we felt like we missed some opportunities there to start the game, and I never felt anything about any sort of panic from our players. It was such a calmness from them, everything about them.

I could tell our fans were really, really enjoying it. I told myself I was not going to look up there. I didn't want to jinx anything. I wasn't ready until I think finally near the end.

But just a really cool moment, like I said, for everything associated with our program. We had so many parents that were here. And I'm talking parents of kids that have been here for four, five years. I'm talking about parents that have been here for months -- parents of kids that have played, parents that maybe weren't expecting to see their kid on the floor.

Just the jubilation, knowing how much people enjoyed it here. My phone was popular. I know with these guys too. There was a lot of people that reached out. The pictures that we saw from back in Richmond, the stories that we heard from back in Richmond, just a really cool moment. You kind of put it upon your coach to make sure, as a coach, to make sure that they have a fantastic experience.

I hope and trust that they have, but there was an empty



feeling for me after the A10 Tournament that I felt I let these guys down that I didn't have this moment with this group. I think last night exceeded that.

Happy for them last night but happy for this group to have that moment for the rest of their lives and something we can share together.

Q. Speaking to that moment, what's the last 12, 18 hours been like for you guys, just sorting through all your text messages, all your DMs? I'm sure people have been reaching out. How have you processed the history that you guys made winning this first game?

ADDIE BUDNIK: It's been really special, especially seeing -- he mentioned the watch party back at school; I think there were two separate rooms of people. We really didn't have that showing a few years back. So seeing that and seeing the support from everyone was really special.

And then also we've talked about it, just having a ton of people, even friends we haven't talked to in a while, reaching out because they've been watching the game. So doing that on a national stage and just feeling that support from everyone in our circle has been really fun.

MAGGIE DOOGAN: I would say the same. Just like old friends reaching out, family members reaching out just saying how proud they are of us and all that we've accomplished is a really cool feeling.

Back to what Addie was saying about everybody celebrating back at school, I've gotten a lot of text messages from classmates being, like, congrats and all that stuff. They're just really excited and want us to keep going. So, yeah, it's awesome.

Q. You still have another game to play tomorrow, after all the excitement of yesterday. What kind of mentality do you take into a game against the No. 1 overall seed, with the roster they have, with the player they have in the center of everything, what's your mental approach to this game?

ADDIE BUDNIK: I don't think anything really changes from



how we approached Georgia Tech or any other game this year, just really locking in on personnel and what we're doing both defensively and offensively.

As long as we play together on both ends of the court, I think we can make some noise tomorrow as well.

MAGGIE DOOGAN: I would say the same, just staying together. All being on the same page and knowing we're here to have fun, and we're here to play together and play with our best friends. So that's really all we're worried about.

Q. Addie, have you had to guard somebody 5 inches taller than you very often?

ADDIE BUDNIK: There's been a few people who we've crossed paths with this year and then also in the past. So some familiarity with that in terms of scheming and everything.

I think we're prepared. Watched some film this morning, know personnel. We're ready for the challenge and excited for tomorrow.

Q. Maggie, what do you think of their perimeter players, the ones who sort of keep things going on the outside, both sides? You are both teams that like to space the floor and get open shots. How do you combat what they can do at a really high level?

MAGGIE DOOGAN: Like what Addie said, we prepared. We watched film this morning. We know shooters. We know personnel. We'll play accordingly. Whoever is on the floor, we're going to adjust. And they're going to have to adjust to what we do, too. It goes both ways.

Q. Just what makes you guys such an efficient 3-point shooting team? Is this a very cerebral kind of team, or does it really come down to skill?

MAGGIE DOOGAN: Coach had a little quote the other day -- it's actually a Taylor Swift song, "Death By a Thousand Cuts." When we cut and we move, we move really well without the ball, I think it creates a lot of open gaps and it draws a lot of defenders in which allows us to get a lot of open 3s.

We recruit really high shooter-percentage players and we knock them down when they're open. It's just getting each other open that helps a lot.

Q. Going back to yesterday, what was it like to see that sea of red right behind your bench?

ADDIE BUDNIK: I think we kind of talked about this with the A10 Tournament too. And that was local. So expecting people to show out close to home. But seeing it here -- obviously we had family and friends here we knew -- but having people driving hours away from California who have connections to Richmond, or who have been supporting us throughout the year, was insane to me seeing people come that far.

We're really grateful for that and hope to see that support again on Sunday.

MAGGIE DOOGAN: Yeah, I would say the same. Just seeing familiar faces in the crowd definitely gives us a calming presence and reminds us we have a lot of people who have our back whether we win or lose. I think that's really important.

Q. Addie, I was talking to Angela Dugalic in the back. She said you guys go way back. Can you tell me a little bit about your history with Angela and what's it been like being able to watch her at this level, and now you get to play against each other again?

ADDIE BUDNIK: We were in the same conference in high school. So we played against each other all four years. We played each other twice each year. Actually my high school coach was there when we played each other.

We definitely have experience going against one another. We were super happy when we heard each other, where we committed and wishing each other luck. And we were able to meet before practice the other day.

And she's had an incredible career especially playing on the No. 1 team in the nation. And we both had really good experiences in college. And coming together, especially in our final years, playing against each other in L.A., in the NCAA Tournament is super cool to see.

Q. The depth that UCLA has, is there any way that you can kind of simulate that in practice? Or can you compare them to any team that's got a deep bench that you've gone against this season?

MAGGIE DOOGAN: We've gone against teams, like Tennessee, who kind of does that hockey sub with four in or five or three in or whatever. So we've definitely seen teams with a lot of depth.

With their athleticism, obviously we don't have anybody who is 6'7" on our roster, so we can't really emulate that in practice but we try our best. We just go through their plays and things like that.

Q. We talked about it a couple days ago, those three games you played before Christmas, you hosted Texas and played two other powerhouse blue-blood programs in West Palm. How did that help you prepare for something like this, for the stage you were going to be on when you basically knew what your seeding would be and you'd face a top team in the first weekend?

AARON ROUSSELL: Obviously most of our focus, at least most of my focus was on Georgia Tech this week. They're a really strong team. I think the athleticism last night, expected the athleticism, but the first two minutes even for me was, like, okay, wow, it's hard to remember back. With all due respect in our league, have some really good players and really good teams, it had been a few months since we saw the speed that we saw last night. I think it took a few minutes to adjust to that.

You look at 6'7", and you're like, hey, we saw 6'5", "6'6, 6'7" with Texas. That was a ways ago.

I know it will help us, right? There's a certain -- "comfort," maybe not being the right word -- but I think there's an understanding that we've been playing against teams of this caliber before, been doing this before. We've been in this situation where this has all been new. And I didn't want that.

When we did the schedule this year, it was, hey, if we're going to get to the tournament, hopefully win a game, it's going to be a team like this. Texas was, like, why the heck not? If Vic's willing to play, let's do it. If we make a run in the tournament, we'll go up against a team like that.

Everything about the schedule was no surprise if we were able to get to the NCAA Tournament.

That being said, every team is different. Texas had some things. All those teams had some strengths. But, like, UCLA is really good. I know it sounds like a dumb coach thing to say. But Lauren Betts and Kiki Rice are really good. You look at the scout and Kendall Dudley was a stud -- is a stud, is going to be a complete stud. And you're like, she's a little bit farther down the list.

I say that because obviously being out East, some familiarity with that.

But watched these guys a little bit just as a fan throughout the season. They're really, really talented. I think they play well together, complement the game down low really, really well.

But I think you look at what the staff has done, right? Look

at what Cori has done. She's had a lot of success here. Now she's got some really special pieces. I think there's a lot of coaches out there, and I don't know Cori really well, but I think there's a lot of coaches out there that hold her in a really high regard and are happy for her that she's having this level of success after everything she's done for our game.

So it's been cool to watch her as a fan and really about both teams out here in L.A., being able to watch them. Get to see them a little bit more now that the Big Ten Network helps some of that.

That's not a plug for anything. That was just, like, I feel like I missed a lot of really good basketball. My Buddy's at Oregon, Oregon State. And I feel like I haven't been able to see these guys on the right coast. Happy for them as a fan, but now all of a sudden you're preparing for those guys.

Going back to your question, I think it helps to a certain extent, but this is still a different team. We talked about the depth this team has -- 6'7", be able to shoot the basketball the way they do, move the basketball, the style of play. This is a tough prep.

But also happy that we get the opportunity, no doubt.

Q. Branching off of that, UCLA has some players that can provide a spark off the bench and could realistically be a starter on any night. When it comes to that depth, how do you prepare your players, not just physically, but also mentally, knowing that there's just going to be kind of a wave after wave?

AARON ROUSSELL: I think it is more of a mental prep. I mean, not that it was any easier with Texas. It wasn't like it was fun preparing for them for five days. But with a team of this magnitude, this is a quick prep.

You can say I'm not sleeping. You can say all of this stuff, but at the same point you've got to watch last night's film. You've got to prepare your players. You've got to make sure we're thinking about the things the right way with our own scouting report, our own self-assessment, our own understanding of what we think works against these guys.

Then you've got to spend some time diving in what has worked, if anything has worked.

When you win 30 games and the only team that's beaten you all season is a team that has JuJu Watkins on it, you're pretty good. So a lot of things have been tried. Probably a lot of things haven't worked. You try to find some teams that maybe are somewhat similar to how you're doing. But

you first go through their list of games and there's not a whole lot of close games either.

I don't know what has worked. Obviously in the middle of kind of a deep dive right now.

But with regard to the depth, I just don't know that that's something we could simulate if we had all week, anyway. You have to have your kids be fresh. You have to have maybe a deeper understanding of personnel than just the top four to six. You really have got to go nine through 10 and really understand it.

But the flip side of that, too, you've got to kind of trust yourself. We've also been through this for 33, 35 games, whatever it is. Our kids have played well together, too, on both ends.

I mentioned this the other day. Everybody talks about our offense, and we're really proud of that, and I thought we played well last night. But I thought our defense was pretty good last night, too. I think that's something that's been strong for us all year.

It's a different challenge tomorrow. But I think we can rely on some confidence that we've been pretty good on the defensive side as well.

Q. What's it like for you as the head coach of Richmond coming into a building like this where there's just so much history of college basketball. You look up at the ceiling, you see the banners hanging from the rafters. You're going against a team that's lost one game at home all season. What's it like for you to come into Pauley Pavilion like that?

AARON ROUSSELL: It's been a cool experience. You try to keep it business to a certain extent, but I think we've talked with our players of, you've got to enjoy where you are. There's some point in time you get to tell your kid, you get to tell people in your family, you're watching UCLA game, oh, yeah, I played there. Now you get to say you won a NCAA Tournament game there.

The people here have been phenomenal. This has not been territorial. The UCLA folks, maybe just people are nicer out here, I don't know, but it's been kind of cool. Opening up the hall of fame for us to go look at, that was a cool experience for us.

I don't want to sit here and say, oh, we're in awe or anything like that. But as somebody who has been a lifelong fan of the game, to have my kid, who is rabid about this sport, rabid about this game, he'll tell you, Indiana guy, Indiana this, Indiana that. And I'm, like, UCLA has won a

few national championships too. Let's appreciate what this is. It doesn't have to be a rivalry here.

But I think that part's been cool. I think we've taken the proper amount of like understanding what this is, but I don't know that any of our players thought about that once we started playing games yesterday.

It wasn't anything of Doogan's step-back, wasn't like if I could do this shot in Pauley Pavilion, that would be really cool, you're just playing.

Even tomorrow. I think there's a little bit added, what Cori and Lindsay have done out here with selling the game, that was a pretty cool fan base last night. They were into it. That was loud.

We need to make some adjustments. We knew that coming into the week, if we got to this point, we'd have to make some adjustments. We'll talk to our players about it. I think it's been cool. But at the same point tomorrow, not that it wears off, because it's still an appreciation, but it's going to be basketball tomorrow no matter the site.

Q. Speaking to that, how do you celebrate the moment that was yesterday, process it and then move on? Because obviously you guys aren't done. You still have things that you want to achieve here.

AARON ROUSSELL: Again, I think we've been able to do that all year. I don't mean to think that winning ten games in a row and putting it behind you is the same thing as winning the NCAA Tournament.

You saw it last night. Our kids are, whoa, we get to talk to Holly Rowe. That was a cool thing. We got to celebrate on the court. We're not celebrating like that every game. I'm not getting doused with water after every game in the locker room. It's a really, really cool experience, but we've said all year, man, enjoy it tonight and tomorrow we're back to work.

And I think maybe somewhere along the line this season I kind of got concerned that we were looking too far down the road and not appreciating what we did, and all of a sudden took us, 13-, 14-game winning streak before any of us realized we're on a winning streak because we were just looking forward.

I think our approach all season, even last night, I remember telling those guys, the start of the fourth quarter, this is going to be a really long quarter. I don't know what's going to happen. They're probably going to make a few runs. Do not look at the time. Do not look at not trying to bleed time, just play each possession. I think that's what

we focused on.

We've said last night, enjoy it and then today has been prep. And then at some point we look back and say that was really cool. March 21st was a really awesome date that you get to share with each other for the rest of your lives but nothing about that needs to carry over to March 22nd. At some point we're appreciating that down the road. This is a really, really mature group. I've been so impressed with how they've approached all season, that it's really just not a concern of mine. It's been a little bit in the past. There's a little pep in our step from yesterday. But it's in the past as well.

Q. There's a pretty cool photo of you in the middle of the huddle and shouting up. But what did that shout contain? And how were you able to share that with the players that have been with you for a long time and your family?

AARON ROUSSELL: Yeah, talk about trying to pride yourself about being poised and all that stuff, focusing on the next thing. But just seeing the jubilation from our players yesterday -- again, I hate to bring it up again -- but just the personal responsibility I felt for not giving them the moment during the A10 Tournament and feeling like they finally could have that moment.

We celebrate things throughout the year, great accomplishments this year, but the ultimate -- they really wanted that.

It took me a long time, like I said earlier, before I wanted to look into the stands, but you see the parents, see my friends and family there, had a friend fly in from high school flew across the country because his brother lived here, wanted to be here.

The history I have with our athletic director and his wife. He's hired me at two different places. This was blueprint times two and it's now it's mission accomplished, seeing him.

Our president was here -- he's been here all week. The guy's got a million things to do and he's here having intimate conversations with my family and in-depth stuff. He's been present. His wife put off a surgery to come out here and be here. Those guys, if you see the pictures, they're like front and center celebrating.

It was just when I finally looked up in the crowd, it was a "heck yeah" moment and seeing our kids as poised as you try to have them be and be around them, their excitement kind of got me going a little bit last night. It was a great picture, whoever, needs some huge credit. There were

some great pictures last night. It was a cool moment, no doubt.

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