

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

Sunday, March 23, 2025
Los Angeles, California, USA
Pauley Pavilion

Richmond Spiders
Aaron Rousell
Maggie Doogan
Addie Budnik

Media Conference

UCLA 84, Richmond 67

AARON ROUSSELL: First off want to thank everybody associated with NCAA committee, everybody that set this up. I thought everything that ran through this for our team and for this department through this tournament was top-notch. Kids had an amazing experience. Felt big time. Everything was awesome.

So to everybody, NCAA and UCLA, I think y'all knocked this out of the park and gave us an amazing experience. So very grateful for that.

Hats off to Cori and to her team. I think for them to play as well as they did today, and for us to still play really well and make it a game, and it was a game, we'll get to our kids here, but I give a huge credit to UCLA. That's a very, very good team. They had a lot of pressure. You know, would have liked them to have an off-night and go the other way, and they didn't. I think they are a very talented team.

Cori has done an amazing job over the years. Very grateful, and her kindness to all the other coaches out there. So proud of them. Happy for them.

But first and foremost, for me, very proud of our group. That was -- thinking about the last two weeks and probably even more than that, the number of times I've thought about having to say good-bye to this group was hard, emotional with myself and probably with some select others. Just could not imagine having to say good-bye.

But holding it together in the locker room. I think a huge part of that is how our kids persevered and played this



weekend. You know, that Friday night win, to have that first-ever win for our program in program history, for these guys to have that experience Friday night, to have them celebrate the way they did, to have this memory as a group together for the rest of our lives probably takes some of the sting out of it tonight.

But even on top of Friday, and you can do the coach thing, right, of like, hey, take the third quarter away. But that's the God's honest truth. Our kids battled tonight. Like they belonged on the floor with the best team in the country; No. 1 team in the country tonight.

We said as painful as it felt and looked, optics was -- I think from the optics of it, you're going through that second quarter and first half, and it's Lauren Betts getting a lot of points; Lauren Betts getting a lot of rebounds.

I felt like we weirdly could withstand that. If they weren't making threes. And then that three-point barrage happened in the third quarter, and she was still getting what she got. And on top of that the other kids were making threes, and we didn't right. Like I thought we played really well. I thought offensively we got a lot of great shots. Missed some layups, missed some threes. Like, that stuff happens. Seemed to coincide with those guys kind of playing at their best in the third quarter.

Tonight aside, I could not be more grateful to these guys for allowing me to be a part of this. And when I say "these guys," there's a lot of others, too. Our department, our administration; the pictures I saw from everybody back home on Friday night, the communication I've gotten, pictures I've gotten from all across the country, Spider Country, Spider nation, this was awesome, and there's more of this to come. So thank you.

Q. Maggie, you had a great game against Lauren, especially in the first two quarters. You definitely picked which shots you wanted to take. What was the breakdown in the third quarter when they held you to two points for the first six minutes?

MAGGIE DOOGAN: I mean, I have to give a lot of credit to them. They are very athletic, very disciplined basketball



team. I mean, I got hot early, and they adjusted at halftime. Only held me to two points in that third quarter. I mean, a lot of credit to them.

I think, I mean, we got stagnant a little bit in the third quarter, but that was just us not making shots and making shots. It happens. It's basketball. It's a game of runs. You can't think about that one too much. You've just got to keep moving on and take the next possession.

Q. Even despite the length of Lauren Betts just going for 30 points, you guys only were outscored by two in the paint, and offensively, you guys found a lot of holes in the UCLA defense that you were able to exploit. Do you want to talk about that and kind of was that something you saw on film, or something more that was faith in your offensive system?

ADDIE BUDNIK: I mean, they were pressuring us a lot and also switching and taking away the arc. So we knew that the post was going to be open. We are not necessarily posting up Betts down there. We don't really have an advantage. But we knew that was going to be open and I think we did a good job cutting, moving the ball. Maggie did a good job attacking the post, too, at the beginning.

That's just how we play when we move the ball and the post is open. We're going to get those cuts. We're going to finish around the basket.

MAGGIE DOOGAN: She's an All-American for a reason. But I think to say that we were only outscored in the paint by two points is a pretty cool stat.

Q. You guys have set the bar for your program; the fact that you got the first win for your program. Do you feel the same way now that you expect to see other Richmond teams make it to the NCAA Tournament?

MAGGIE DOOGAN: Yeah, I think it's a really cool thing. I don't think it's really sunk in yet what that means to the school, and to all of us and the university as a whole.

I think that this definitely sets a standard for where we want to be in the future. I think this is definitely a goal that everybody in this program, when I'm gone and Addie is gone, there should be a goal that everybody want to get to. You don't see mid-majors coming in and making it past the first round very often.

So I think that was really cool, and definitely just showed what we are and what we're capable of. So I'm very proud of everybody.

Q. Congratulations, first of all. What was the experience like playing against Lauren, a player like that?

ADDIE BUDNIK: She was really good. We really didn't have an answer for her, obviously. Like she had a huge size advantage on us.

But like Maggie was saying, she's an All-American for a reason. She's really good. It's tough to guard her down there. If you front it, she's going to throw it over; and if you're behind she's going to bury you. So she really took advantage of that. She had a hell of a night, and she's going to continue to do that throughout the tournament.

Q. For Addie, what have the last five seasons at Richmond meant for you, and for Maggie, what has Addie meant to you and the program in your time here?

ADDIE BUDNIK: I mean, it's been a great five years. It's been incredible to just represent this university and play with people I love. I couldn't imagine it any other way, especially getting to this stage.

Obviously we lost but I'm so proud of this group, and this program means everything to me. I'm excited to watch from the stands next year and see where else this program goes and I know this is not the limit. Hopefully they can make it to the Sweet 16 next year. Just keep building from there.

MAGGIE DOOGAN: (Tearing up) I don't know if I can really put into words what Addie has meant to me these past couple years. I'm so thankful and grateful that she decided to come back for a fifth year. Gave me one more year to play with her, selfishly said.

She's held me accountable when I needed it. She's encouraged me when I needed it. She's a one in a million teammate. I don't know what I'm going to do without her next year. But yeah, I mean, she's one of a kind, and I couldn't be more grateful and honored to play beside her these past three years.

Q. Coach Close was praising of the conversations you guys had earlier today, and she talked about having good colleagues. Would you care to share just what you might have said that you can share with us?

AARON ROUSSELL: I'll say this. I mean, I think obviously when you're coaching at the levels that I've been at, right, at Division III, the Patriot League, now here and starting to compete with some higher levels, I think we go about this in a way that we think is the right way to do it. I have no

idea how predominant that is at the higher levels, I don't know and I'm not making any accusations.

I'm very proud of how our administration handles things and how our players handle things, and from afar I've always thought that Cori does that exceptionally well.

So my conversation with her was just in admiration, maybe hopefully turned into a mutual respect, but just admiration how she carries herself, handles her program. But probably more so, again, I can't even say young anymore because I think you're getting a little bit older now.

But coming into this profession at the levels I've been at, you always try to find people that you feel like do it the right way and for her to have success, and be the National Coach of the Year I think is a cool thing. She's given back to young coaches a lot. That's kind of been her thing. She's given. She's a giver. She's seemingly the first one to step up and give back, and I wanted her to know that that was noticed and appreciated.

Q. I'm sure you expected UCLA to try and chase you off the three-point line tonight. When that happened what were the in-game adjustments you tried to make, and how did the team respond to those?

AARON ROUSSELL: Well, it's not the first time that it's happened. So I think maybe there's a little bit of, we can go back to our experiences throughout the year.

Obviously when you shoot the way that we do, and you know, especially early in the season, we were putting up some numbers and things were going really well, and then people started to take some things away from you.

You know, for us, it's knowing that you're still going to get stuff at the basket. I think we'll be the first to tell you as a staff, everybody looks at the three-point shooting, but we're a program that's looking for the exact opponent. We're trying to puncture the paint, and we're trying to get stuff at the basket and hopefully those three-point shots come from that.

I think it was the right game plan. I don't think it has anything to do with that. But I felt like we were still scoring and I felt like that was the big thing for us. Let's get easy baskets. If they are going to take away the arc, they are going to have to exert a lot of effort.

I commend Lauren Betts, man. I think just catching her, she's first off, an amazing young woman, but I was applauding her for her efforts today. Our goal was, I hoping she would get a little tired, and to her credit maybe she did, but she didn't show it. Today there's only so much

you can do from a defensive standpoint, right. There's only so much you can do when you're forcing a miss, and she still goes and gets it.

But I think she said that's the most insane defense I've ever had to play, chasing it. So I think that was our goal. It just didn't always result, and I think that's more of a credit to them and how hard they played today. Because I think when we are able to do that to other teams, you see that on the offensive end and it drains people.

They have some depth, which was helpful. Them playing for what they are probably playing for here over the next couple weeks probably drove them and was reminded to them at halftime. But I think our players did that really well. I think they found the holes in the paint. We still scored. I think somebody said it here, but for as much as Lauren Betts did in the first half we were outscoring them 20-16 I think in the paint the first half.

I still say that the story of it, and as painful as it was to watch her gobble up every rebound and have the numbers that she did, I still thought we could still survive everything, except for the arc, right. We knew they were going to take away the arc. We had to make some gambles to take away the inside which opened some things at the arc.

So it was one of those, they are taking away the three, we're giving you some, but we still had to win the arc. That's an uncomfortable position to be in. I think it was more so -- the tale of the tape lies there. You don't want to get outscored 27-6 on second-chance points, so maybe that's another story line.

But I thought our effort was there. Just she's really good.

Q. To follow up on that, we talked a lot about how Lauren Betts was able to score but even outside Lauren Betts, they only had about eight points in the paint comparatively. Can you go into more detail how you were looking to defend all that because it looked like even when Betts was getting the ball you were throwing multiple defenders at her and trying to get the ball out of her hands as quickly as possible.

AARON ROUSSELL: A little bit of that. I think when we are trying to collapse a little bit and take away the paint, that also doubles to take away some penetration spots. Kiki Rice is an incredible athlete and incredible player. They are doing this right. So when I say this, they are doing this right. They are doing everything. They play off of Lauren. Like those kids are really good. They know what they are.

But obviously when you're centring your offense around

somebody in the paint it is hard for others to get into the paint and score.

So I think that's the nature of their offense. I don't think they did it wrong today because the other kids weren't scoring in the paint. I'm guessing that's kind of how it happens, right. She's got her stuff there at the basket. Her defender is going to be around the basket. So maybe there isn't as much room to navigate for other people.

I thought the other kids got some offensive rebounds, put-backs when the time was big. Some transition stuff. Kiki still got to the basket. I mean, there were still some pretty strong takes to the basket.

I thought we did it well. We just had to not give up the threes, and I think some of that was late rotations, and some of that was some gambles. Some of that was water find its level. They are good shooters; they are going to make some of those. We knew that was going to happen.

It was the perfect storm for them. They played really well. They got what they got at the basket. They got enough at the arc and that's hard to chase that number when they are putting up 84.

Q. Just the journey for you to this point and seeing this group develop, how fun has it been to take this team to this journey and making Richmond history?

AARON ROUSSELL: I think the history part is what's cool. You don't do this for other people outside the program necessarily. But seeing the groundswell of people that really paid attention to Richmond Women's Basketball this year was pretty awesome, right. You don't do it for that, but that's been great.

I think you have a group, and I think that came across of how much pride they have in the program, but how much pride they have in the university; how much they have enjoyed being a part of the build, and you know, how much pride they have in what's going to happen for Addie; what's going to happen after this.

Even talking to their parents out there, like, they were a part of building this, right. So now the next group is part of spreading their wings and doing this even more. I think there are still other goals out there. Just because this was the first time we won a tournament game doesn't mean this has to be Apex Mountain.

I think can we can build off that. Two years ago everybody thought this is a great season, but no, we've gotten better every year that we've been here. I still think -- hate to think about pressure because obviously there's some pressure

this year.

But I think we have established what we are and we have established expectations. Forever be grateful that this group exceeded and continued to build.

But the two things I'm most grateful for is just the experience I got to have with these kids. They are amazing, amazing young women. I said this Friday, and I hope this comes across as a positive. But like, the disappointment that we had drove what happened this weekend. But the fact that we were able to have Friday and Sunday is what this team deserved.

They deserved to have the adulation. They deserved to have the experience. They deserved to have the forever moment that they will think about this at every wedding, every reunion, everything else that this team had this.

And hopefully they are going to Sweet 16s to cheer on the next group that does it. But they are going to feel that they were a part of this, and that's all you ask for, right, is an amazing experience for the kids you're coaching.

Q. Can you just talk about the impact of the seniors, whether it's Addie who came in during COVID and has been with you for five seasons, the seniors that came in in 2021, the transfers that you have?

AARON ROUSSELL: I heard first part of impact of Addie and through COVID.

Q. Players that came in in 2021 and all of your transfers, as well.

AARON ROUSSELL: Yeah, that's the hard part of all of this, right, is obviously it ends. And probably the emotion that I've felt is you know having to say good-bye to Addie Budnik for everything she's done for me and for our program. That was always going to be hard. Very grateful, as I said for what she's done. But there's five others that probably played their last college basketball game today. I mean, who knows with the NCAA and everything else, but probably played their last college basketball game.

Some of those kids I knew for mine months, man, doesn't mean that it didn't have an impact on my life. Aly Jimenez, I think she committed to us at the end of May. Like there's a room full her teammates that know that none of this works without Aly-J being a part of this. Addie knows that. I think there's a gratefulness that college basketball has changed, okay, whatever. But like proud of Addie. Experience Anna, Katie, all of this. Anna Camden came back from a gruesome injury, and none of this works without them. Steph Ouderkirk was an important part of

what we did. Like Faith Alston, the history I have with her and get to go coach her. Like that's the hard part.

But I think as I said earlier, the sting goes away a little bit because of what we now have after this weekend. Grateful for them. We've talked about Addie for five years, right, and so she's a special one. Maggie said it; she's one of one with regard to teammates and so many other things.

A room full of grateful people that I know in this room, back home, everybody that's associated with Richmond, Addie has made a huge impact on their life and on that university.

THE MODERATOR: Any last closing remarks, Coach?

AARON ROUSSELL: No, again, just very grateful for this group. Held it together in the locker room. Commend myself for that. Didn't see that one coming. But I'm one lucky coach, man. I am one lucky coach. So very grateful.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you for your time.

AARON ROUSSELL: Thank you, guys, appreciate it.

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