

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Princeton vs Oklahoma State

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Pauley Pavilion

Princeton Tigers

Carla Berube

Madison St. Rose

Skye Belker

Media Conference



I think in the fourth quarter, it ended up being more trading baskets, and by the end, a couple turnovers that led to them pulling away.

Q. Madison, this is your last game in Princeton uniform. It's been a sensational career at Princeton, more than a thousand points, four teams to go to the NCAA Tournament, First Team All-Ivy League this year. Can you reflect on it all?

MADISON ST. ROSE: I had an incredible season and incredible journey with this program. I found teammates and made them my family, just outside of basketball, I love these girls so much because we have so much joy in everything we do, and we are so passionate about basketball in general. So when we get out on the court, we all have the same goal; that's what I love about playing with someone that has the same values as me.

I'm just so grateful to be around them. Skye, especially, she's been such a great leader. She's always encouraged me when I was in doubt of myself and coach at the same time she was encouraging me as well. I had a great supporting system around me, and that's what I'm going to miss together, the togetherness and closeness that I love so much.

Q. This was not your last game. You have a whole year to come back for the orange and black. You hit your stride late in the season, had a good game today, 14 points and looking ahead, a lot of teammates coming back for this team. What are your thoughts about going forward with Princeton next season?

SKYE BELKER: Really excited with a lot of people coming back we're going to use this season and this season's experience and have that under our belt, and losses like today are what motivate us in the next season. And we have experience now winning in Ivy League regular season and an Ivy League title, as well. I'm excited to play again with my best friend and going to miss playing with Maddie and Taylor, as well.

Q. For both Maddie and Skye, looking back on the

Oklahoma State 82, Princeton 68 is.

CARLA BERUBE: Yes, not the outcome we were hoping for, of course. Ton of credit to Oklahoma State. They were really tough. They made things really, really hard for us on both ends of the floor. Specifically Akot and her finishes at the rim, and I thought her guards around her really set her up well.

But I'm really, really proud of my team and the season we had. We're not hanging our heads. I think we all feel a lot of pride in the season and webbing the Ivy League and Ivy League Tournament and representing the Ivy League and our university, Princeton University really, really well.

I told the team in the locker room how proud I am of them.

And yes, this day didn't go well for us, but you know we fought. We got back into the game when it looked like it was bleak and that just shows the heart and the grit and the toughness that the women that wear this orange and black.

But like I said, a lot of credit to the Cowgirls and Coach Hoyt, and she had them ready and I thought they played a really, really great game.

Q. What was the difference, do you think?

MADISON ST. ROSE: Biggest thing in the third quarter is we were able to knock down our shots and they get a stop on the other end and use that to fuel our offense, which we have been doing all season in every comeback that we've had.



season, going 26-4, what are you most proud of the way you've grown over the course of the year? And Skye, what you're going to miss most about playing with Maddie?

MADISON ST. ROSE: I would say everyone came into the season prepared. We fell short in the Ivy League last year and we came in ready knowing. Like everybody I think proved their skills drastically and came in confident, and throughout the season, that confidence showed every single game.

Like you said, the fact that we only lost to three teams the entire season is incredible. I'm proud of the outcome we had as a season even no matter -- since we lost today, it sucks.

But looking back, I'll all remember how much grit and how much fight we had in every single game.

SKYE BELKER: We emphasize grit a lot as a team and he emphasized that throughout the season, and I'm proud of us for that. And our ability to trust each other in big moments, and when we are up and down, in every moment, trust each other and rely on that.

As far as Maddie goes, I'll miss her love for the game. Her work ethic is so inspiring and her love of the game is so contagious. And I'm not going to dive into it or else I'm going to cry, but I'm really going to miss everything playing with her.

Q. They outrebounded you by a lot and scored a lot of points in the paint and Akot was indomitable. They kept getting mismatches down low. What freedom her up for so many easy looks in the paint?

CARLA BERUBE: They were setting a lowball screen that we at times tried to go over and stay with Wooten and Whiting and Timmer and then Gray, and sometimes we were trying to get underneath and sometimes we tried to switch it. We were trying all different things.

Wooten is a really good pull-up jump-shooter. They made it really, really difficult. That is the bulk of their offense is ball screens, and they are really, really good at it. We struggled. We're undersized. We know it. That's who we have been all year. That, and I think Akot got on the boards a bit, too.

I think they capitalized on their offensive boards really well. So we struggled in the paint for sure. But I think we still showed a lot of heart, and yeah, I think their inside presence was just a bit too much.

Q. You have a really wonderful nucleus of players coming back hopefully next year, and some available roster spots with two seniors graduating that could add as many as five or six new players. Can you talk about what you're looking forward to next season with this team?

CARLA BERUBE: We have four players coming in. So there will be a good, you know, first-year and second-year nucleus. But I think with these four juniors coming back as really, really experienced players and great leaders. Maddie and Taylor were incredible captains and leaders.

But I think this next group is going to be just as good. I think Maddie and Taylor left an awesome legacy of what the standard is for Princeton basketball, and yeah, looking forward to coaching this group and like they said, they just love the game of basketball and they love playing it together. And I think you can see it on the court, win or lose. They always stay really connected and supportive of each other.

Q. How difficult was it to play a team like Oklahoma State that Princeton has never played in its entire history from a different league?

CARLA BERUBE: It's three years in a row we've come up against a Big 12 opponent. Yeah, there's a toughness about the Big 12, and they played with great toughness and made things really, really difficult, especially in the first half, for us to even execute an offense well.

But I think we knew. We knew what was ahead. So I think we were, you know, we prepared as much as we could. But yeah, you don't see that length and that strength and that toughness as much in the Ivy League. That's why we play the nonconference schedule that we have, but maybe we should get some Big 12 opponents on our nonconference schedule. That's bad scheduling.

Yeah, it is, it's a different basketball. Different brand of basketball. But yeah, they were gritty. They were tough. They were great. A lot of credit to the Cowgirls.

Q. Looking back to November, where do you feel like you guys grew the most on each side of the ball, and if you can talk a little bit about Maddie's career overall and what you'll miss about not having her around every day?

CARLA BERUBE: I'll start with Maddie. We talked about her a lot this year and the comeback she's had. She has just set such a great standard of, yeah, what it means to love this game, to love the uniform that you put on every day, the love that you have for your teammates.

Just incredible human, incredible work ethic that she brings every single day; the joy that she is to have around, certainly going to miss her a lot. And you hear how Skye talks about her. I think I've been so grateful -- I've felt so grateful and I feel so lucky to have coached her during her career.

What we've gotten better at? I do think our defense, certainly over the course of the season, especially at the end of the regular season and into the Ivy League tournament, I was really, really proud of the fight and the grit and the toughness that we played with. I think Olivia and Fadima have a lot to do with that the way they play on that end of the floor. It didn't show today as much, giving up 82 points.

But there were times when we got some really great stops, and when you do that, it always fuels our offense and I think that's how we got back in the game. And then just had some mishaps on the defensive side. I am proud of them, the way they are connected. I told them in the locker room, I loved coaching this season. I mean, I loved all my seasons but the way they were connected and just loved each other and loved playing together, it was such a joy to coach them.

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