

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Regional Semifinal: Indiana vs NC State

Saturday, March 27, 2021

San Antonio, Texas, USA

Alamodome - Mercado

Indiana Hoosiers

Teri Moren

Sweet 16 Postgame Media Conference



Indiana 73, NC State 70

THE MODERATOR: We'll now hear from head coach.

TERI MOREN: We're over the moon right now. So excited, so proud of this group. As I said to them, I had one word, and that was 'toughness'. I mean, we were so resilient. We're playing from behind for a little bit of that first half, and we never blinked. We just held true to who we are. We just dug our heels in. I thought we were tremendous defensively. Obviously starting with Nikki. I thought they were all great. But Nikki did a terrific job on the Perez. I thought the MVP of the game was Aleksa Gulbe. I thought what she gave us tonight was extraordinary.

So happy for my staff, these players. They deserve this. As I said to them, I keep telling them, we're built for this, from an endurance standpoint. We have this blue-collar mentality that we live by in Bloomington every day we step on the floor. We are built for this.

I'm so proud. You reap what you sow. We have continued to deposit work every day, make those deposits. This is where it's led us. Tonight I thought a lot of things came to light in terms of that, starting with us defensively. But I thought we had great movement offensively tonight. Really were able to spread them out, beat 'em off the bounce. I was really pleased, too, that we kept it a low turnover game for us.

I can't tell you just how proud I am of this group. And no one deserves this moment more than they do and our staff.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. You've been coaching a long time. This is the most historic run in the history of the school and for

women's basketball. Would you have seen this trip to the Elite 8 being even possible a couple months ago? What is it like for you personally coaching this particular team right in the middle of this?

TERI MOREN: Yes, to answer your question, to the first question, absolutely. I'm a big believer in putting things out there. If we're going to do the work and ask these kids to do the work, then our sights and our expectations are going to be high. I mean, why wouldn't they be?

We've said from one day we were going to build this thing brick by brick, we weren't going to try to skip steps. We were going to get the players in this program that fit me, our staff, the work ethic. We were going to be not just in the peaks but in the valleys with them every day. That's just how we've carried ourselves.

Our expectations for each other, for the team, for coaches, are high. So I'm not surprised that we're sitting here talking about the next step, which is an Elite 8 for this group. I don't think that our players are surprised.

In the last probably three or four years, we have intentionally really upped our schedule and played some of the best. Last year we were at The Virgin Islands, we opened up with South Carolina and Baylor. Beat South Carolina, came awfully close to a really great Baylor team.

We've been in these moments so our expectations absolutely are high. That will always be the case.

To answer your second question, how do I feel? I'm extremely blessed. I have so much joy right now for these players, just to see their excitement. This is unfamiliar territory for all of us.

So why you coach and why I coach is because I want to have an impact on these young ladies. Any time you can do something for the first time, and you know the whys, the reasons why we're able to do this for the first time, you know just how stinking hard they've worked. I'm over the moon and so joyful on the inside for these players and this staff. That's why I'm sitting here. I'm just trying to be a great representative of them and explain a little bit of what

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we do and how we do it and why we do things the way we do.

Q. I remember chatting to you about a month ago when you got ranked in the top 10 for the first time. You told me when you were a kid you went to a bunch of men's games at Assembly Hall because the women's teams weren't very good.

TERI MOREN: Right.

Q. What does it mean to get somewhere now maybe little girls want to come watch you play instead of the men's team?

TERI MOREN: Like I said the other night, Indiana, the state of Indiana, is basketball. It means so much for us to be able, obviously, to do what we did tonight.

We are building. We've continued to build our own tradition. I think I told you the tradition was always on the men's side. We wanted to build our own. When people talk about Indiana women's basketball, Indiana basketball, we didn't want it to be exclusive just to the men's side. We want people not only in the state but hopefully the people that tuned in tonight and watched a great game, because NC State is fabulous, left watching a team that obviously shares the ball, obviously had good ball movement, is tough as nails defensively. So hopefully we not only represented the state of Indiana but we gained some other fans out there that just wanted to see and watch a great women's basketball game tonight.

So for that, like I said, I'm thankful. I'm happy for Ali Patberg, our Indiana kids. But I'm happy for our entire team. It's because of those kids that we can represent Indiana the way we can tonight.

But I'll tell you this, that group is not quite done yet. They're eager to play some more basketball. I'm here for it.

Q. You mentioned a little bit there just the last run that NC State had at the end. The whole game was like that, you trading runs back and forth, especially in the first half. What does that say about the confidence of your group at this point to withstand that and stay in the game, take a lead into halftime?

TERI MOREN: Well, like I said, they didn't blink. That doesn't keep the screw -- we've played from behind a lot of times. I mean, we play in the Big Ten. It's an unbelievable league. So we're sort of used to being in those scenarios, but understand that it's a long game, it's a 40-minute game. You just kind of have to keep chipping away, chipping

away, chipping away.

So we don't get bothered by the fact that they made a run. I mean, we understand, like I said, the game is long. We talk about that all the time in timeouts, that we just got to keep chipping away, get great possessions offensively, then do what we have to do defensively to get stops.

Q. How important was it, seemed like outside of early on you were able to dictate how the game was played, kind of what adjustments needed to be made, how important was that for you guys tonight? Also what kind of statement does that make about the program to be able to do that against a top seed team like that?

TERI MOREN: Well, I mean, we played how we always play. We came into this tournament just trying to be who we are. We are not trying to be anybody different. My staff is extraordinary at putting together scouting reports. Our kids are always prepared. Our goal is never for our kids to get into a game and be surprised.

But offensively we are who we are. We're going to try to push the pace. We're going to try to play fast. We really try to go to our open motion more so tonight than ever, let our kids play with freedom.

I think that made all the difference, is that they weren't thinking, they were just playing. Not that we don't want them thinking, but they were just out there I think playing with so much more freedom.

I think the statement it makes is that, again, this is a team that I really believe -- I know this, they're for real. I mean, they're good. We've had success early in this season, and I've always as their head coach, this is a good basketball team. Tonight they were a great basketball team.

I don't know that it's any other statement other than we do things the right way. These kids are humble. They have so much humility when it comes to this game. They don't take anything for granted.

We are who we are. We are blue-collar. We're going to roll up our sleeves and we're going to step between the lines and we're going to go to work. It's a competitive environment, we're going to try to go toe-to-toe with you. We're not going to back down from anybody.

That's the confidence that they have. It's a confidence they have in each other. But it's the confidence that I as their leader has in them. I mean, I love this group. I believe in this group. I know my staff believes in this group. I know that that group believes in each other. That's all you have to have, is belief.

Q. Ali, two of the first three years she was in college, she couldn't play, she was hurt, then had to transfer and sit out. She talked about losing her confidence during that time and how much you were able to help her rebuild that. How do you do that? How do you help them with that? Secondly, if you could just talk about using the WNIT championship as a springboard. You talked about that a couple years when you won that, to use that to NCAA tournament success, which you've had.

TERI MOREN: To answer your first question, Ali Patberg is one of the best kids I will ever coach. When I say that, I mean her character, how she's been raised, her respect level that she has for her staff and for her team. So the answer is really simple: we just loved on her, we just loved on her and tried to build her up every day.

She is a passionate kid. She loves being in the gym. I think a lot of that was fostered right in there between the lines with her. We just went to work with her. Coach Box oversees our guard play. He's extraordinary at developing. He just worked with her every day. We would all be down there on the floor because that's what we do in our program. When somebody is working out, we're all there giving our kids good juice.

It was not a hard thing to do. She was broken when she arrived to Indiana. But as long as she had somebody that was willing to work and be in the gym with her and love on her and laugh with her, again, we just watched her sort of blossom in front of us to the kid I watched in high school who played so fearlessly at Columbus North, was an emotional leader.

It's been such a pleasure to coach her, watch her, be a part of her journey. I'm so blessed to be a part of Ali Patberg and the journey she's been on since she's been at Indiana.

You always say this about Ali, she makes everybody else around her better. But I think most importantly Ali makes people feel important, really special. When you're in her presence, she is all about you, doesn't get distracted. She's not an on-the-phone type of kid, text messaging. That's not Ali. She wants to be in the moment, right there, getting to know someone on a personal level.

She's been an unbelievable leader for this group. Unbelievable. None of this is possible without Ali Patberg and the leadership she provides every night for those kids.

The NIT run was something we are still excited about, is talked about in Bloomington because I think one of the biggest things it did was it brought more people to our

games. We gained some extra fans that have fallen in love with Indiana women's basketball. That's the first thing.

But I do think this, I think it sort of jump-started what we have been trying to do here, and that's win consistently, win in big moments. In the six games we had in Simon Skjodt Assembly Hall, every game got a little bit bigger, got a little bit bigger. So we talk about championships. They can come in a lot of different ways and forms. We're awfully proud obviously of the WNIT championship with the Tyra Buss, Amanda Cahill who were here at the very beginning when we started to build this thing.

It certainly has done a lot I think for this program from not just outside as far as, like I said, the fan interest in women's basketball at Indiana, but also it has set the standard, right, for what we want to accomplish in this program. So, yeah, I think it's been really important that we got that.

But I will say this. After we accomplished that, that was no longer going to be the goal, was to get back to another WNIT championship. At that point we want to be year in and year out in the Dance, right, in the NCAA. Again, that experience was unbelievable in so many ways. But that didn't become the goal. It was, Okay, our goal is to get into the tournament, the 64 teams.

That would have happened last year if the pandemic hadn't happened. But that's our goal. Then obviously making a deep run in the tournament has now become the goal. It was last year. We kept the same goal this year.

Q. I've been asking you questions since pre-season about the depth of your team and your bench. You've been talking about how strong they are. They've than proving that. You got some really great quality minutes again from the bench. Specifically I want to ask you about the minutes that you got, the last three minutes and 53 seconds you got from Kiandra. Talk about that aggressive play, how she really helped to solidify the holds at the end.

TERI MOREN: She was so ready for that moment. Even afterwards when she gave me a hug, she thanked me for just believing in her. So I think that says a little bit about who she is.

She is all about her team. She is playing on a bad hip right now, but if she's told me once she's told me a thousand times, Whatever you need me to do, I will do. I will be there.

So tonight was a great example of a kid that has stayed ready, has been ready, was ready tonight. She came in. I

know she misses her two free throws. She was obviously disappointed with that. But she made some really big plays, really had to hold it down when Mack fouled out. I'm just thrilled.

I'm thrilled she's going to be in our program for a long time. She's just going to keep getting better and better and better. It's really disappointing right now that she's playing hurt. We're not seeing the best Kiandra Browne. She's not moving the way we know she can move. But I tell you what, she's going to give you every ounce of fight when she comes in. That's the thing. I love that kid. I appreciate that kid for what she's been through this season.

Q. What worked across the board for you in the last three minutes when you lose Mackenzie, especially in the last two defensive stops? What had to come together when you didn't have her on the floor?

TERI MOREN: Well, I thought our guard play. I thought Aleksa was so aggressive tonight. We just kept trying to get into, again, just a lot of rubbing action. We were running some rubs and some double rubs, just trying to get Berger and Ali and Nikki just loose in some open space. We really felt like by doing that we were creating some opportunities for us to get some real drives at the basket.

We just kind of opened it up and let 'em, like I said earlier, let 'em play with some freedom. It worked for us at the beginning. We weren't going to go away from it, at least I'm smart enough to understand that. If it's working, keep doing it. We didn't try to overcomplicate it. That was what was great about the game plan. We weren't in there strategizing and drawing up plays as much as we were, like, we just have to continue to get movement and be able to play off of each other.

Again, he was switching back and forth. He went from man to zone a little bit. So we executed when they went to their zone. We took a couple ill-advised shots. When I call them ill-advised, they're wide open but they're early into the shot clock. We didn't need to do that. We were guilty. We got to the timeout, got to fix that.

Again, I just think our kids stayed aggressive. That made all the difference in the world. They played to win. They didn't play not to lose.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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