

Atlantic Coast Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 6, 2025

Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

North Carolina Tar Heels

Coach Courtney Banghart

Lexi Donarski

Indya Nivar

Postgame Press Conference

North Carolina 78, Boston College 71

COURTNEY BANGHART: A couple things. First off, really grateful to all the -- there were a lot of Tar Heel fans there. Some I know and some I don't. But there were a lot of fans who brought our team a lot of energy throughout the game. It matters to us, so thanks.

Also really great to have Alyssa back. Obviously the heart of a winner. We've been patient with her recovery, and it paid off because she's ready now, and she's helping us out.

Hats off to Boston College. They shoot 31 percent on the year from three and they gave us their best shot. They shot almost 50 percent from three. These guys are tired of hearing me say it, but I always say let the math be math.

They really did stick to the game plan really well and forced us to play a different way. Got into our pressure, got into an off-centered zone because we had to, and that also loosened us up on offense. I thought on offense we were a bit slow, played a little bit less aggressively than we were.

Give a lot of credit to these two, especially Indya who was just like -- kind of triggered a lot of an aggressive attack.

Hard to win in March. Certainly glad we did. Glad we're getting healthier and healthier, and excited to see what this team can keep doing.

Q. There was an extended stoppage when they were reviewing a potential flagrant on Alyssa. You guys were down nine, 63-54. Can you talk about what the mood was in that huddle and what you said to really



spark the run?

COURTNEY BANGHART: You know, it's an experienced group. I think their backs were against the wall. This is a team that hasn't been great against teams that on paper they're better than, right, over the last couple weeks.

And so we just sort of knew what we needed to do defensively; and then offensively just really implored them to find their way to get into hips, get outside hips, finish outside their body, really not settle.

Again, Indya, I think when you watch that game back, you'll see Indya had some really key offensive possessions for us. Even if she wasn't the finisher, she was the attacker.

I'm not sure it was the extended time-out. I think it was an opportunity for our guys to just make one more play.

Q. Indya, you had arguably your best game of the season against Virginia, and then today you led the team in assists and you did so many things. What's working for you the last two games?

INDYA NIVAR: Just finally seeing my work show in the game, I think. I've been putting in so much extra time on my finishes, on my drives, on my reads and stuff, and it's finally showing, and I think that's what we needed to help the team win tonight.

Then I needed a little bit extra in Virginia, but yeah, I know where I need that moving forward.

Q. Coach, you talked about the home crowd here in North Carolina. This game feels like a game of momentum swings. How do you feel like the crowd played a role in the fourth quarter of that game to help you gain the edge? And you're potentially going to play at home for about the next month. How do you feel that helps your team as we get into the heart of March Madness?

COURTNEY BANGHART: Yeah, well, first off, I'm not sure this is quite a home-court advantage. We played here earlier to UConn; lost. My record at the ACC Tournament



is I don't even know, but not something I brag about. I think a lot of these fans, honestly, they were in Louisville and they were in Clemson and they were in -- it's really remarkable.

I think you could put this tournament on the Moon and you'd have a lot of Tar Heel fans there because of who these people are. I keep hearing that from some of our most loyal supporters. They love Carolina women's basketball, but they love these humans. I always tell them, well, they're second in line to me. This is my group.

Yeah, I think the hosting opportunity that we continue to earn is great. For us to be able to play in such a storied arena, in a basketball state, it's awesome. It'll be well received, and it'll be well earned.

But we're focused on the next thing, which is a really good Florida State team, a team that beat us at the buzzer the last time we played them.

We know we've got a good challenge ahead of us, and we're looking forward to that one, as well.

Q. Coach, you had a nine-point deficit but you managed to fight it back. Was there anything strategically that you did? Second question: Alyssa gave you 24 minutes in her first game back. Any aftereffects or did she handle it to your satisfaction?

COURTNEY BANGHART: I mean, she was texting me late last night about I don't care what the minute restriction is, Coach, I can go. I am not strong enough to hold Alyssa back. That's not going to be a thing. She'll be fine. She's always fine. She always -- the only way I can hold her back is to not play her, and we'll play her. Not going to worry about Alyssa.

The first part of the question, I think, yeah, we were down nine so we went a little bit more to our off front zone and decided to extend the pressure. I thought against Virginia we didn't play well tired, and I think the courage of this group that they played well tired, that takes courage, and it was really fitting at the last time-out.

That was our shortcoming. We looked tired and we played tired and we got quiet tired. Then fast forward less than a week, and they did the opposite.

They get all the credit. I think I yelled at them a little bit. But they get the credit because they made those words turn into action.

Q. Lexi, there is no doubt your name gets circled on scout reports for great shooting. But time and time

again, you continue to get open towards the end of games. What is your secret sauce? Are you running around like Steph? Are you waiting for certain spots and waiting for the ball?

LEXI DONARSKI: I think it's some of both. A lot of them are not off of a dribble. I would say the majority are probably catch and shoot, which stems from usually a dribble penetration or some type of pressure on the rim, whether it's a post entry or some guard winning the paint or something.

So I would say that the majority of it comes from one of my teammates getting the ball into the paint and the defense all collapsing and kicking it out.

Q. Lexi and Indya, 20 to 24 points in the fourth quarter scored by you two and Maria and Alyssa. What is this veteran group of you guys playing for so long, how does that provide stability? And when you know you've got to dig in deep, how does that work effectively?

INDYA NIVAR: This is our second year playing together, and I think we just have that trust in one another, especially in those crunch times. We just know that all of us are going to give all that we have and that we have enough to beat whoever is in front of us. So that trust in each other, I felt like that really showed tonight at the end.

Q. What was the defensive plan on Waggoner? She dropped 32 against Syracuse yesterday and today she has only five and makes one shot from the floor.

COURTNEY BANGHART: Yeah, it was chest up on the ball. Just got to keep your chest in front of the ball. I always say, what's everybody else doing, right? So you can let your teammates play on islands one v. one or you can recognize that it's a team game. We wanted to have primary defenders chest the ball as best they could, we sort of make 18-footers. We didn't bite on pump fakes. And then what is everybody else doing.

So regardless of helping off the strong side or digging off of -- it's who are you guarding and how can you be worried about the major threats, and then keeping them off the glass. That's not easy, especially with how much rotational rebounding she requires.

Certainly glad to have Alyssa back to help in that category.

Q. Lexi, what were the emotions when you were down by nine? Take me through those last few minutes. Obviously you made a huge three to kind of put the game away. You're looking at possibly losing being

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able to host in the NCAA Tournament if you drop this game.

LEXI DONARSKI: Yeah, I think it was just igniting the fire within each other and being like this is feeling similar to what happened against Virginia and refusing to accept that that was going to happen again.

I really feel like it came from within all of us and just knowing that we're better than this and we're not going to accept anything but the best from each other and from ourselves.

Just continuing to get better and improve throughout the course of conference.

Q. Any update on Reniya?

COURTNEY BANGHART: Soon. Soon. She warmed up. Yeah, soon. This team has done so much. This tournament means a lot to us but so does the NCAA Tournament. Doing the best we can to make sure that we're healthiest when we can be. Obviously the fact that she's warming up, I think she's waiting for her name to be called.

But soon. We're going to take it kind of day by day truly. I know that's not great for media.

Q. Building on what was asked about being down and facing possibly a third loss in a row to kind of end this spell, they were shooting at one point 8 of 8 from three --

COURTNEY BANGHART: I mean, come on.

Q. How do you keep from panicking at that moment? Everything they were doing was going in.

COURTNEY BANGHART: Yeah, I hate to be so honest, but that's what you earn when you're a top-15 team in the country. You earn that the basket looks a little bit bigger because you're kind of playing with not a lot of -- you're not really expected to win so you kind of can be looser. It's on us to play with that ranking with puffing our chest out a little bit.

But I liked our coverages. I have to eat some of those because I told us we're helping off certain people, so I'm okay with eating the ones that I have to eat, because again, the math is supposed to math over time.

But yeah, I just know that I've gotten the double bye before and coming in for the first game of the tournament, there's a little bit of like, okay, I've got to get used to this. So I'm

glad that we got this one out of the way. We needed to get this game, and now we need to build off that in a lot of ways.

Q. You were asked about how you guys held Waggoner in check today. Another two different players, but how do you use that defensive strategy against Waggoner against a player like Ta'Niya Latson tomorrow?

COURTNEY BANGHART: You know, we've played them before, so that gives us some familiarity because we've played her before. I think you ask any team on the schedule that they've played how you handle Latson and they say they do their best.

She's leading the nation in scoring. But in terms of our actual, kind of the nuance of our game plan, that's what I'll be doing from now until tomorrow at 11:00 a.m.

So I'm not exactly sure how we're going to choose to handle that yet, but we'll be crystal clear by the time we need to be.

Q. You said you were getting texts from Alyssa. Are you getting any texts from Reniya?

COURTNEY BANGHART: Yeah, these kids want to play. They want to play, no doubt. There's an enormous amount of trust in our sport performance team. They also want to do something special in March. We're asking these guys to do a little bit more so that she can get back and give her as much rest as possible.

But yeah, you'll see her again. Reniya wouldn't be warming up if she wasn't going to play again.

Q. For the players, obviously you had to get through this one. You got a little bit of a scare and came back. You guys obviously remember that loss to Florida State. Any extra motivation coming into tomorrow, or just kind of get through the next one?

LEXI DONARSKI: I think there is. We've continued to get better throughout the course of this season, and so I feel like we're not the same team that we were back then, and we know what changes we need to make, looking back at that game.

I feel like we're going to come ready and we're going to make the changes that we need to make.

COURTNEY BANGHART: I remember I was asked, is it International Women's Day today or something? Is today the actual day?

Q. Saturday.

COURTNEY BANGHART: Because they asked me who my most inspirational woman was, and I said that my little nine year old daughter who's here today. She's a big Indya Nivar fan, so she had her Indya Nivar jersey on.

You're supposed to be at school today, babe. But she's our best fan, so we had to have her here.

Q. (Indiscernible) ...up in the huddle during that fourth quarter. It was the players on the floor and then Reniya comes off the bench. How in tune is this group and locked in?

COURTNEY BANGHART: Look, Reniya has been your floor general for two years. I know she missed a lot of time last year with an injury but she's the floor general. She understands the pace and tempo of their team. She knows Indya and Lexi's game to a tee.

So playing without that position is really a challenge because -- and Grace has done a great job. It's just she plays it differently, so that means it's a little bit different for Lexi and a little bit different for Indya and a little bit different for everybody else.

There is a major adjustment. Losing Alyssa hurts your heart in other ways, the toughness, the relentlessness. But the ball isn't always -- she's not the facilitator of action.

The fact that these guys have been able to battle without -- and how hard they've had to play just adjusting to a totally new style has been remarkable and should make us better because now they can play -- depending on who's in at certain times, they can play both ways.

But it is different. I give these guys a lot of credit. They've had to sort of adjust quickly. But yeah, Reniya, she knew. Down nine, she had something to say because it's still a team that she's sort of running from her position. I know she's thrilled the longer we keep playing, the more games she gets to play, too.

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