

Women's Basketball Invitation Tournament: Penn State vs Villanova

Monday, April 1, 2024
Indianapolis, Indiana, USA
Hinckle Fieldhouse

Villanova Wildcats

Denise Dillon

Lucy Olsen

Kaitlyn Orihel

Semifinal Press Conference

Villanova 58, Penn State 53

DENISE DILLON: Well, extremely proud, excited to continue to play with this group. It's just a true testament to the growth of this team and finding a way to get that W today to keep playing is exciting against a really, really good Penn State team. Great season, solid season and was playing some of their best basketball in postseason as well. So congratulations to them.

But we are beyond excited to have one more game in us to battle on Wednesday.

Q. Lucy, you played in this building before this seen against Butler. What was it like coming back to Hinckle Fieldhouse, and in this case, possibly playing for a WBIT inaugural championship?

LUCY OLSEN: Yeah, I mean, this place is great. There's so much history behind it. We said it's a little home-court advantage because we played here a few times. But the gym is awesome. The environment is great. Yeah, it's exciting. Hopefully we win one, win the Championship.

THE MODERATOR: Talk about, you get the lead and then it comes down, still, to the final seconds. What was your thought process going on as you were trying to hold them off and then get the win that's going to get you to the Championship Game?

KAITLYN ORIHHEL: Penn State was such a great team, and obviously they are going to go on their runs. So for us, everything was one stop at a time, and if something didn't go our way on offense, we were determined to get it back



on defense. So I think every time-out, we talked about being in the present moment. So if something didn't go our way, we were trying to focus on the next play, and I think that's what helped us win today.

LUCY OLSEN: Yeah, I also think that we tend to make games a little more exciting than we want it to be. But because we have done it so much during the season, we were prepared for it. And talked about these situations in practices, and I think we did a good job, staying together like Kait said, focusing on each other, and coming back out with a win.

Q. Going back a little bit to Hinkle, people say that this place is at its best during the day when the light is coming through the ceiling and all that. What's it like to play in here during the day at sort of like primetime?

LUCY OLSEN: Yeah, I don't know, what time was our game at Butler? I don't even remember. I feel like I tend to just zone in. Like I don't even see much of the crowd, which is unfortunate. I try to take it in but I honestly don't even notice much outside of it. But the lighting was good, I guess.

KAITLYN ORIHHEL: Yeah, I kind of like -- this place kind of remind me of the Palestra back in Philly, such an historical gym. Playing there a couple times as well, we are used to gyms like this. Yeah, that was about it.

Q. Whatever tournament you're in, to get to the last day, to go to the limit, how good is that and what's it mean to you to be up here and do that?

DENISE DILLON: It's tremendous. To be playing in April is unbelievable, and again, just bring it back to our young women who didn't finish the year, regular season or conference tournament play as they wanted, and then having an opportunity to continue to play. They regrouped, they refocused and reconnected and showed up every day for us at practice and showed up for each other and put themselves in the best position to continue to play. And then they got a taste of a couple wins early, and just were feeling it.

And today, we did not shoot the ball well here at Hinkle. You know, the ball wasn't falling for us like it has the last past three games but our defense sure was on point, and that gave us -- throughout the season, throughout Villanova Basketball, it gives us a chance to be successful.

Again, a credit to them for sticking to what they do best, just the effort and energy, and playing down to the wire to get themselves to play in a Championship Game.

Q. Is there any team in the BIG EAST that reminded you of Penn State when you decided to go and have a game plan?

DENISE DILLON: Sure. I talked about it yesterday, just saying their scoring power reminded me a lot of Creighton, just the ability to put the ball in the basket in so many different ways. Creighton is so strong around the perimeter and threes, and then just getting cuts and such.

But Penn State just throwing one player in after the next, who is capable of scoring from the three off the dribble, and you're going through that game as a coach, and you're thinking, wow, your team is really holding them to low-scoring games. You just want to see them rewarded, and thankfully we were in the end, because they can put that ball in the basket.

Q. Talk a little bit about what the rest of your night is going to be like now. In a conference tournament, you have a turnaround for the next day, and now you have a day-plus. So what will you do to break this game down coming up next and how do you get your players ready for Wednesday night?

DENISE DILLON: Yeah, well, it's about recovery for the players. We were fired up there in the locker room, cheering about all things, and we mentioned the cold tubs and there was silence. So they are going to use the cold tubs. So they will be taken care of recovery, the rest and recovery for them.

The coaches will be out watching this game here, and yeah, learning as much as we can about Illinois, Washington State prior to Wednesday.

THE MODERATOR: I want to thank you for your time and good luck and we'll see you Wednesday.

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