

Women's Basketball Invitation Tournament: Florida vs Minnesota

Monday, March 31, 2025

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Hinckle Fieldhouse

Florida Gators

Susie Gardner

Liv McGill

Laila Reynolds

Semifinal Postgame Press Conference



and coaches did a really good job of getting us here. We had some obstacles with our head coach not being here, but we fought through it, and we gave it our best shot.

THE MODERATOR: My understanding is you have a new member to the family? Did that happen? What do you guys think and what are your thoughts on that today? Even though your coach is not here, certainly as a family, that's something you should always remember.

LIV MCGILL: Just a blessing. Obviously she wasn't here but here in spirit. Just talking to us on the phone and being who she is. Still motivating us but also, like you said, we're a family, and family comes first. Just a blessing.

LAILA REYNOLDS: Yeah, I would say the same, just having a new member of the family. Like Liv said, it's a blessing and just to watch him grow from here on out, it's going to be fun.

THE MODERATOR: What will be the main takeaway for you for this season, and how will this experience help the program moving forward and some of the goals that you expect coming back as you head into next year?

LIV MCGILL: Some things I would take away is just be where your feet are, one game at a time. I learned that the games early in the season are just as important at the end of the season. I will not take that for granted again being a freshman. I will know and have experience now under my best, and I will not make that mistake again.

LAILA REYNOLDS: I would say just have fun with it. That's my biggest thing, and I will carry that over for the next years. And just enjoy the game, and play like you were in middle school at the park.

Q. Was there anything that Minnesota did that you saw in the SEC that would relate to playing in this game today?

SUSIE GARDNER: You know, their defense was packing it in. We excel when we get to the rim. We were having a hard time getting to the rim as drivers, and then when the ball went in to Shay inside. They were packing it down, as

Minnesota 66, Florida 52

SUSIE GARDNER: First of all, we are really proud of our season and the way we finished the season, and our young players that are sitting up here. A lot of credit to Minnesota. They played great defense. Their defense was better than our offense tonight. But I think we set a foundation. First-class tournament.

We're disappointed, obviously, but that was not our best game of the year for sure. But we played hard. We played together.

But Minnesota is a really good team.

Q. How important and how much of an incentive was it being a Minnesota kid playing against the Gophers tonight?

LIV MCGILL: I didn't really think much of it. Just another team. Happened to be Minnesota. It's nice to play against my former high school teammates, but not really much thought about it.

Q. What was it like playing here at historic Hinkle Fieldhouse in Indianapolis with a shot to be in a championship game in a couple days?

LAILA REYNOLDS: It was just a great opportunity just to be playing in this tournament and in March. No matter what it was, no matter the outcome, I'm just happy to be able to compete with them.

LIV MCGILL: Great opportunity to travel here. The staff



well.

Then we knew we had to hit shots this game and we simply did not hit shots. I don't know if they were sped up but it just felt like we were just a little bit off a little bit. We were not getting the steals we normally get. They hurt us a lot on the offensive glass. Got a couple of offensive rebounds. And it wasn't just their post players; it was their guards, and they would pass it back out for huge threes. They played well.

We did not play our best. I'm not taking anything away from them, but our offense, we usually score in the 70s, you know, so that was a huge part of our frustration. Because I thought our defense was decent.

THE MODERATOR: Can you talk about the experience that you've had coming here to Indianapolis, the takeaway from the games that you had an opportunity to play, and how you thought the team responded and were really together and maybe bonding more from this opportunity?

SUSIE GARDNER: That's a lot of questions. I don't know if I can remember them all.

So what I recall is, first of all, it's my first time in the WBIT. I'm really, really thrilled that it's happening for our sport. We've been in other tournaments through the years, but this place really did a good job of, I thought, had a great field, No. 1, 32 great teams, competitive. Even when we were on the road, we got to play at home, on the road.

And coming here, I had no idea what to expect. I feel like C.J., one of our assistant coaches, has been at the University of South Carolina for many years and she's been to several Final Fours. She kept explaining to our guys, Hey, when you get a police escort at the gym, that's what happens at the Final Four. Kept comparing with that tournament, as well.

So I felt like everyone here, all the volunteers, the committee, really did a good job; I think passion for the game and people that show up and meeting us at the hotel. We got in at 2:30 in the morning, and we had people waiting for us at the hotel which didn't have to happen. And then making sure we knew our locker room, all that kind of stuff. I feel like everyone has just contributed.

The event last night, bringing all the teams together. It's really been a first-class environment. I wish our players understood the history of Hinkle Fieldhouse, but you've got to understand that they are not going to, moving forward. So you are going to have to ask the coaches that question.

It's been a great tournament. Certainly wish we were in the

Championship Game. That would have been, jackpot. But you know, it's been an awesome experience.

Q. Ra Shaya Kyle, of course, is an Indiana kid, and her whole family was here. Talk about her progress. She transferred into Florida, got hurt and came back strong. Talk about how important she is to your program.

SUSIE GARDNER: Understand, I've only been here nine months, so what I'm going to tell you is hearsay. She was having a great year last year before she tore her ACL versus Vandy, like great year. And I think Florida was having a great year as well. I think when we lost our inside player, or they lost their inside player, it kind of hurt the program in terms of NCAA Tournament.

I got to experience Shay this summer when she was working her way back. And it's hard for a 6'6 post player to do that. It's not easy for anybody but a 6'6 post player, and she came back early. She's a great voice. She was excited about having her family here. I think it was her high school band that was here, also, playing.

She was really, really excited about coming home. We are thankful that we had some fans, because we have a lot of our fans that are at another tournament right now, so it was great to have Shay's family here.

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