

Women's Basketball Invitation Tournament: Florida vs Minnesota

Monday, March 31, 2025

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Hinckle Fieldhouse

Minnesota Golden Gophers

Dawn Plitzuweit

Mallory Heyer

Grace Grocholski

Semifinal Postgame Press Conference

Minnesota 66, Florida 52

DAWN PLITZUWEIT: Well, I thought our young ladies really competed at a very, very high level today, and Florida, is a team that causes a lot of teams fits. I think they have been playing on a great, great roll. Find ways to force the issue with teams and turn teams over, and they got us in some of those scenarios. Blocked a lot of shots. Pushed the ball up the court.

You know, I thought our young ladies battled with some great toughness and some great resilience. I thought defended throughout the course of an entire game. And continued to make adjustments throughout the course of a game, and tried to find ways to move the ball, which can be tough against Florida.

But I thought we did a good job of penetrating and kicking and finding open kids and getting to the offensive glass. I thought our toughness was at an all-time high. Really proud of our young ladies, and we have an opportunity to play on.

Q. You had your sixth double-double and season-high 15 boards. Along with that, how did it feel to have shots go down?

MALLORY HEYER: Finding the open player and I was the recipient in some of those plays. So it felt good to see the ball go through the hoop, and obviously rebounding is something you can consistently do every single night. So that's something I can bring to the team every day.

Q. Saw you guys play in the Big Ten a few times this



year. Talk about how well the whole unit played today. I didn't see too many lapses of focus today.

GRACE GROCHOLSKI: Yeah, I thought we did a good job making adjustments. Like Coach said, things would happen and we turned it over a couple times, and then we made those adjustments, I would say for the whole second half, we continued to make adjustments when things went wrong. So that was really good for us.

MALLORY HEYER: I agree with Grace. I thought we brought such great energy today and we really connected. I think Florida is a great team, and they really pushed the ball and play at a good pace.

But I just thought we played Minnesota Basketball, and we did what we do best.

Q. I wonder how much better do you think you are right now than you were at the end of the regular season?

GRACE GROCHOLSKI: I'd say just the lessons we got through the regular season helped us to be in these positions. And I think this game, like I said, the adjustments that we made and staying together, is what helped us through the regular season and now during postseason.

MALLORY HEYER: I also think we've just been playing a complete game. I thought tonight we really started off strong, and then we also ended strong, too. So we really just kept that momentum through the whole game. We didn't really have many lapses.

THE MODERATOR: Last year a Big Ten team came in here, Illinois; won it. At the Big Ten Tournament, they talked about this experience and using it as a springboard to what could happen in the future. I would like to see if you feel a similar way about that, and what this experience has meant to both of you so far.

GRACE GROCHOLSKI: Yeah, I think any time you get to play in the postseason, it's a good experience for the team. Obviously a goal of ours is to make it into March Madness,



but we are really excited just to be in this tournament and make it to the Championship tomorrow.

MALLORY HEYER: Yeah, I agree with what Grace said. I think any time you get to play in the postseason, it really builds momentum for the next year. I thought last year, playing in the WNIT got us to build momentum for this year. So we're looking forward to doing the same thing after this tournament.

THE MODERATOR: Last question for the players, and they can go. Going to get a chance to play in the Championship Game on Wednesday. I don't know how much, if at all, you watched the earlier semifinal or if the coaches have talked to you about it yet. But curious your thoughts on that, and whether you will make it more about you, or are you concerned with the team that you've got to face for 40 minutes?

GRACE GROCHOLSKI: Yeah, obviously both of us had to go through a lot of good teams to get here. We're just excited to look at the scout and get to work tomorrow, and hopefully the next day.

MALLORY HEYER: We're just focused on this game together. So one game at a time, and now it's time to turn over to our next opponent and get ready for that.

Q. How about the Big Ten prepare you for this?

DAWN PLITZUWEIT: It absolutely helped us. The Big Ten -- I believe that last year, so our first year of Minnesota, was the best year the Big Ten had ever been.

And then this year it took a whole new level in having four new teams join us, and the teams within the conference that were still in the conference continuing to get stronger and better.

It obviously helps you, you know. It helps you continue to figure out what you have to do. It also wears you down a little bit.

So I do think that the break in between the Big Ten Tournament and the time that the WBIT started for us was a really important time for us, not just to kind of get healthy again, but also, I think, it just is important. It allowed us to really work on us.

There's so many times during that stretch that you're working on preparing for your opponents; that we had a good stretch of time of over a week that we could really focus on who we were and how we needed to compete and how we needed to do things better. I thought that really helped us.

But definitely playing against the competition that we played against in the Big Ten is a way for us to continue to get better.

Q. We talked at the Big Ten about you weren't shooting the ball really well, but you overall shot the ball pretty well tonight. I've seen you shoot better three-point shooting than this, but talk about from then to now, the shooting.

DAWN PLITZUWEIT: Well, I think it started really for us after our game at Toledo. Because in Toledo, we didn't shoot the ball well, but then against Missouri State, we shot it a lot better. We shot it pretty well against Gonzaga and shot it okay tonight.

So it's a big part of who we are, and what we have to do to stretch the floor and make things happen. So it's good to see us making some shots, and boy, we hope that continues on Wednesday, that's for sure.

Q. Do you think that this stretch of basketball in the WBIT is the best you've seen the team play so far this season?

DAWN PLITZUWEIT: I think it is the best we've played since Mara and Tay, since that happened.

But I do think that we are -- we're learning things about ourselves right now. We still have to get better at sticking screens and reading screens and some of those little things.

But I do think that we're understanding the game at a bigger picture, and I think we're able to make adjustments quicker, and do the things that we need to do to put ourselves in good positions.

Q. Can you talk about the way Mallory played and how that impacted the game?

DAWN PLITZUWEIT: Mallory Heyer, she had five offensive rebounds against a very, very athletic and tough Florida team. So her desire, her competitiveness, is at an all-time level. I think she played great. But at that time, you have to do it on both ends of the court, and she certainly did that.

I also think she was someone who we relied on offensively. She may not have scored as many points as some other players did but she was someone who kept our offense moving. She was someone who was cutting to the basket. She is someone who was making some really good passes and really good reads. I just thought she played as well as

we've seen her play.

I thought she did a lot of great things for us, and created -- and all those plays are energy plays. Especially later in the game where all of the sudden you get an offensive rebound, and she's dribbling out of there and making the next pass, and now we can work again for a good shot. And that's not easy to do against Florida, especially when they are out-doubling you and some ball screen action and making life difficult and swarm the lane and make you kick it.

At that point in time, then Mal gets another offensive rebound, and pull we can it back out and we can try to work for something inside-out again.

THE MODERATOR: Since there are no more questions, I'm going to give you one question about defense. Held them to 35 percent from the field, 19 percent from three. You had 16 turnovers forced and you had nine steals. Just talk about that kind of defensive effort.

DAWN PLITZUWEIT: Again I thought our teams competed at a very high level, and Florida is a team that one of their great strengths is their ability to get out, and run and we saw that early in the game. They kind of got us in some transition scenarios.

But again, a lot of that stems from what you're doing offensively. But I thought when we were able -- I thought our young ladies did a good job of making adjustments throughout the course of the game. And finishing plays. I think that's really a big key, without following them. There weren't many free throws shot. I don't know that might have been the fastest game in the WBIT at this point in time. Because there really were not a lot of times when the ball -- or the clock was stopped for free throws, too.

But I thought we defended well. We were helping each other. We had to make an adjustment in the first half. Liv McGill I think had 16 points in the first half alone. So had to try to make an adjustment during the course of halftime.

And I thought our young ladies did a much better job of understanding how valuable and how important she is and how much she creates for them.

Q. Just wondering, I don't know how many leading scorers you've had through the course of the year, but it's often a different person. And I'm wondering how hard that makes maybe for a team to prepare for you guys?

DAWN PLITZUWEIT: That's an ideal situation, really, for us, because then we can kind of play equal opportunity

basketball.

I thought what we were able to do today, because Florida helps so well, is that we were able to kind of get in and create some opportunities at the rim, and then kick it out. Then we got a lot of open threes from those type of looks, or one more pass after that.

It is important for us. Because we run an offense that allows different players to make different plays, and in order to do that, you have to have players who are able to make a variety of different plays. You have to have the versatility. Otherwise it doesn't work very well either.

Q. Looking at the stats, four kids in double figures, and one who isn't, Sophie, who usually has double figures, and you've got three with 39 minutes, one with 37 and one with 30. Are we all in the ice bath tonight and tomorrow?

DAWN PLITZUWEIT: That's why media took a little bit longer. We had to wait for the ice baths to be done.

Q. How will you get ready for Belmont, just a lot of film?

DAWN PLITZUWEIT: Right.

Q. They have to defend five scorers from Minnesota.

DAWN PLITZUWEIT: Belmont is a team that I've known for a long time. Bart does a tremendous, tremendous job. And they are so versatile that -- I don't know exactly how we're going to try to guard them at this point in time, besides try to guard them in a man-to-man, because that's what we do. That's not a surprise. We're not giving them any scouting reports. We haven't played zone.

So ultimately, you know, we're not going to be able to do a whole lot physically tomorrow. We have to do it mentally, and we have to be in good spots and try to do the best we can of putting them in spots where they are not getting wide open shots or opportunities at the rim, which they do those two things at a really high level.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports