

Women's Basketball Invitation Tournament: Minnesota vs Belmont

Wednesday, April 2, 2025

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Hinkle Fieldhouse

Belmont Bruins

Bart Brooks

Tuti Jones

Sanaa Tripp

Finals Postgame Press Conference

Minnesota 75, Belmont 63

BART BROOKS: First of all, congratulations to Minnesota. They played really well tonight. I thought they had a really good plan and executed their players, they are talented, really woke. I have a lot of respect for Dawn and her program everywhere she's been. Credit to those guys. They earned it.

It stinks being on the other end of it. I hate it for our players. I just know how much they put into this.

But I'm very proud of the effort and the fight and the competitiveness. It wasn't necessarily our most efficient offensive night.

But the effort and the toughness and to stay in the game and stay in the play and continue to compete, when it just didn't feel like it was going our way, was what I love about this group, and the two ladies sitting next to me.

So, stinks to end your season at a loss but it's an unbelievable achievement to be playing in April in this game and I'm so proud of the team I get to coach.

Q. Can you talk about the fourth quarter? Felt like the second round all over again. You had the big deficit. Looked like you guys believed until maybe the final shot didn't go that you had a chance.

TUTI JONES: Yeah, one thing about this team, I know they are going to compete until the buzzer sounds and so that's why I love them so much. We were just trying to give it our all, whatever we could to win the game. We just



couldn't get there.

Q. I'd like know as somebody who has been here for five years, can you speak to the specialness of this team and this year specifically?

TUTI JONES: Belmont has been great to me for so long. That's why I love it here. This team, I know we had a lot of transfers coming in. But we grew close really fast. I don't know if it was the dinners that we went to or what. I love this group. I hate that the season is over, but I will forever cherish every memory I have with them.

Q. As somebody who is new to this team as a freshman what was it like to see that trust from coach? I think you played about at least like 25 minutes in a championship game. What was it like for you?

SANAA TRIPP: You know it's not like -- it's the same as any other time he puts me in. He has the same trust for when I started out and the season and was only playing like eight to ten. It was the same amount of trust. I went out there, and he trusted me to go out there and do what I know how to do. I just did it for a longer period this time. I just tried to give it my all, and I just played for my team every time I step out on the floor.

I feel like we've grown and built that trust over the years -- over this year, and through practices, that he believes that I'm going to give it my all every time I'm out there.

Q. How much did this run kind of validate everything you guys had gone through this season so beat the teams you did, the manner did to get to this point and play for a championship?

SANAA TRIPP: It validated everything. We've worked hard. Even one of the hardest nonconferences we've had this year we've all known that the team we are, we are a very great team. We are a very good team.

And this run, it's not a surprise. I believed every step of the way, every game every time we stepped out on the floor, I believed that we could win.



And although our bodies went through and we went know we through it, but I just have to trust in my team that every time we get out there, we're going to give it our all, and that's what we did.

Q. Just as you look at the season and everything you went through and some of your sisters in that locker room, to have this run, to play five games, play into April and play for a championship, what does this mean to you as a senior?

TUTI JONES: It means a lot. This is my first time playing in April. So that was great. I just love this group so much, and I'm just proud of everything we did this year.

Q. Talk about Minnesota, on top of their game, you guys were down 24. But you found the resiliency to come back. Talk about your team and how proud are you of the effort. At one point an eight-point game?

BART BROOKS: It didn't surprise me. I felt like we could not get any momentum offensively. Just multiple possessions of everything goes right except the ball didn't go in, and it was one of those nights, it felt like.

And credit to Minnesota. They made things tough, and they had a good plan and they are big and they cover space. They had a lot of positions.

But I felt like if we could just get something to go well for us, we were a play away from going on a run, and we were. The two ladies sitting next to me, they are a huge reason. Obviously, Jailyn, with her ability to pressure the ball defensively and then push pace in transition.

We're a very spurtable team. We can go on spurts and we can go on runs, and I felt like there was one out there for us. And I just probably did a little bit too late.

You know we had to think of three in the air to cut it to six. Two-possession game with two time-outs in my pocket, last minute, I feel pretty good about putting a little game pressure on them, and maybe, you know, finding a way to make magic happen again. But really love the competitiveness to at least put us in that position.

Q. From the first quarter, obviously shots weren't falling. But the defensive effort was still there. I was curious for you, can you speak to the defensive effort that you saw tonight from your team?

BART BROOKS: Yeah, you know, we try to help our players understand that one end of the floor shouldn't impact the other end but it does. It's a basketball truism when you play with sloppy, no pace offense, and you just

settle for shots, sometimes that becomes lethargic on the other end of the floor. And I thought we had a little bit of that in the first quarter.

But we also made enough plays. I thought we did enough good things to at least stay in the game without scoring at all in the first quarter.

And yeah, I think the team, they are a tough group of kids and they are competitive and just stinks we didn't play a little bit better. But yeah, I love the competitiveness and the fight.

Q. What did this run mean to have these five games after the season of injuries, the tough start against a brutal nonconference as validation for your seniors who went through so much of that but also as preparation for some of your younger players for what's to come next?

BART BROOKS: Yeah, I told our team in the locker room after the game that I'm not sure anyone in the locker room fully appreciates how amazing our group of seniors was this year.

We had five unbelievably great teammates as seniors. There's usually someone who is not a great teammate even if you've got good kids, they are not always great teammates. And every single one of our seniors were the most dependable reliable positive enthusiastic four-game losing streak showed up and set the tone and practiced the next day. Dependable to do everything right.

Encouraging whether they played at all, didn't play Jacee Busick on Senior Day, and she showed up the next day in practice and was the loudest player on the floor in drills. I don't know that our freshmen understand how lucky they were to have that group of seniors lead them this year.

And so it's not an accident we got to this game. They wanted to keep playing. They wanted this to last, and we said, it's going to be over tonight no matter what. We couldn't have made it last any longer. They pushed it to the end, and I just can't -- I can't thank our group enough.

This has been, you know, it's hard to judge everything this close after a season, but this is probably been my most enjoyable season as a head coach since I've been at Belmont.

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