

Women's Basketball Invitation Tournament: Minnesota vs Belmont

Wednesday, April 2, 2025

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Hinkle Fieldhouse

Minnesota Golden Gophers Dawn Plitzuweit

Mallory Heyer

Tori McKinney

Finals Postgame Press Conference

Minnesota 75, Belmont 63

DAWN PLITZUWEIT: Certainly really excited for our young ladies and our program. Feel really fortunate to be in this position and to come out on top. We knew Belmont was going to make a run, and boy, they sure made one at the end.

We were able to weather that storm and just really proud of our young ladies for the resilience that they have shown all year in dealing with the adversity that we've gone through.

Q. Mallory, what was it like seeing Tori have touch a big game tonight?

MALLORY HEYER: I'm so proud of her. She was everywhere tonight hitting big shots, she was celebrating, she was into it. And also on the defensive end, she's done a great job this season and so proud of her to end this way.

Q. What does this win, this tournament, this championship mean for the team going forward?

TORI MCKINNEY: I think it's a big step. This place is such a genuine place to be, and you can see it out on court. We love it here and it's the next steppingstone to make it further next year.

MALLORY HEYER: I said it yesterday but building momentum for next season. We are just going to carry this and keep moving forward.

Q. 16 boards two nights in a row. Is that something Dawn talked to you about and the coaching staff,



because Belmont will shoot the ball, and making sure you finish off what you're shooting?

MALLORY HEYER: I think rebounding is always a key for us, and I feel like it's something that I can bring to the team every single night. So yeah, that's basically that.

Q. Tori, you had a good night shooting the ball and your team had a pretty good night shooting the ball. You have that 24-point lead, I think at the end of the third quarter, start of the fourth, and then Belmont made a run on you. What was said in your huddles between all of you?

TORI MCKINNEY: Yeah, it was like we have to get this stop. We need to take pride with ourselves but at the same time, it was more about being together and if it was five of us on the court, then this five has us and we got this. So we're good.

Q. Last year Shauna here in told us, this is really, really great but I want to play the NCAA and she's there and she used this as a catalyst right here at Hinkle Fieldhouse in the WBIT. Do you feel that same way coming in, and plus you'll get Mara back next year.

DAWN PLITZUWEIT: I guess we can say ditto at that point in time. Absolutely. This is incredible, incredible for our young ladies and incredible for our program. But the goal is to be in the Big Dance. Hopefully this gives I us a way to catapult and keep growing. Obviously we want to get healthy. Obviously that's going to be really important for us.

I think Mallory said it. I think it's a way for us to gain momentum.

Q. What were some of the keys to Tori's game tonight?

DAWN PLITZUWEIT: Well, Tori is a young lady, you look at the stat sheet she scored 26, and she had three assists.

But I think that she really defended as a very, very high



level. She just played great basketball. She attacked when we needed someone to attack. She made does decisions when she does attack whether this was trying to score or kick it out and find open kids.

But I thought she did a tremendous, tremendous job defensively, until we started following a little bit in the third quarter. We kind of got a little bit undisciplined in that way. And we need her out there. She played just a spectacular game for us.

Q. Grace wasn't hitting, but then she went about and assisted, she played some awesome defense for you guys. Talk about her maturity this year compared to last year.

DAWN PLITZUWEIT: Well, again, that's a great point because grace is someone who really hits shots at a high level for us and I thought she got some open looks and she didn't really fall.

Again she was defending at a really high level. She's someone we need to do an awful lot for us, and today it was passing it and taking care of the ball because she drew extra defenders and made really good decisions.

Just kind of is someone who doesn't get rattled very easily. She missed some free throws, and then I looked at her and she's like, "It's okay, I got this," but has a lot of confidence. And that's important, and you need that. That becomes a contagious thing and she has that quiet confidence about her.

Q. What about Amaya Battle? You look at that kid and the way that Belmont was attacking your guards down the stretch, and they got it to like eight and she came down and she's got a sweet jumper.

DAWN PLITZUWEIT: She does.

Q. She had some key shots for you, I thought, at some very key moments.

DAWN PLITZUWEIT: Right.

Q. But just, you know, the impact that she has and the influence she has on this team?

DAWN PLITZUWEIT: Well, she's someone who wants the ball in her hands and wants to make the play, and that's the first step. Then you have to have the ability to do it. Maybe the ability to do is first, and then the want to do it. But she has the ability to do it and she has the desire to make those kind of plays.

But I also think she's someone who just she handled the ball for us. She defended. She rebounded. I mean there are times she's in there with post kids snagging rebounds and making things happen.

And she, again, is just kind of a -- she's a steady kind of player and makes a lot of things happen and we had the ball in her hands an awful lot and she had to make an awful lot of decisions with it and did that, and now she made some big free throws for us down the stretch, too, to let us catch our breath again.

Q. What does it mean to you and Minnesota to come in here to historic Hinkle Fieldhouse, play in the WBIT, and then know this is a great steppingstone for any team that is selected for this, just an awesome challenge and adventure for them. Talk a little bit about how important it was for you guys to go ahead and accept the WBIT invitational and come in here and play.

DAWN PLITZUWEIT: First of all we are thankful to the committee for selecting us and give us an opportunity to continue to play. I thought the event itself was incredibly well run all the way throughout. Gave our young ladies an opportunity to grow and develop and I thought we did that during this five-game stretch.

When you talk about Hinkle Fieldhouse, the only thing -- it's great. It's an incredible fieldhouse. The raised floor is not watt quite as high as the raised floor on the bar. We want to make sure everyone comes and has a chance to experience that because it's an incredible venue to play in.

We had a crew that flew down here or drove down here from Minnesota, so really thankful for the support from our fans. I thought Belmont had I areally good crowd, too. So it was a great atmosphere to play in.

Are we surprised Belmont made a run? No, not at all. They were able to hold them at bay for long enough, thankful the game was only 40 minutes.

But Bart has done just a tremendous, tremendous job, and their young ladies really competed at a very, very high level. So I thought overall, it was a great championship event.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

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