

Big Ten Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 7, 2024
Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA
Target Center

Nebraska Cornhuskers

Amy Williams

Alexis Markowski

Callin Hake

Jaz Shelley

Postgame Press Conference

Nebraska - 64, Purdue - 56

THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, everyone. We will start the Nebraska press conference with the opening statement from Coach Williams.

AMY WILLIAMS: I'm just really proud of our team for surviving and advancing, and we're excited to have the opportunity to continue to play tomorrow in the quarters.

It was a little ugly game. We give a lot of credit to Purdue. We've played them for three times now, and we know that they are a very scrappy team that is going to make everything very, very difficult. I thought they did a great job of that here today on their second day of playing already.

We were able to make some plays at the right moments to be able to create the separation we needed to get a win.

Q. Alexis, a career high of six assists tonight. What did you see from how they defended you, and what were you able to take advantage of?

ALEXIS MARKOWSKI: They were definitely collapsing and doubling from the low side, so I knew I'd have teammates open on the perimeter. I just needed to be patient and make the right reads. Lucky for me, my teammates hit big shots.

Q. Callin, once you got into the game for a little bit, what was your mindset about where you could get scoring opportunities and impact the game?

CALLIN HAKE: Going off of what Lex said, we knew they



were going to double from the low side, and that was something we had practiced and repped on in practice. I knew if I would spot up, Lex threw phenomenal passes, that just opened up opportunities for everyone on the team.

Q. Just for any of you, what was working so well defensively in this game?

JAZ SHELLEY: I think we had a game plan to be able to keep the ball in front, and we didn't do that last time we played against Purdue. I think we did a lot better job of sitting down and avoiding paint touches. So I think that's kind of how we did that today.

THE MODERATOR: Callin or Alexis, anything to add on that question?

ALEXIS MARKOWSKI: I think Jaz nailed it.

CALLIN HAKE: Agreed.

Q. Lex, how do you feel after a game like this where you only score seven points in the first quarter, but then you walk out of here with a win?

ALEXIS MARKOWSKI: In March you want to win, survive and advance. I felt like today, just kind of adjusting to the tournament and playing under the big lights and stuff like that.

Yeah, I think it was good to have an opportunity to play today. We're going to prepare for Michigan State and come here ready to play tomorrow.

Q. Jaz, just what impressed you about what Cal did in this game and what she did for the team to help you win?

JAZ SHELLEY: Callin is such an energy player for us, and she hits big shots, like timely big shots. And we rely on her to be able to do that. Once she hits that, everyone else around her gets hyped.

She was able to come in and hit huge shots for us, and help the team get going. We're a little flat in patches, and



she always helps the team get back up again.

Q. Cal, what is it like for you that this tournament is in Minnesota? How is it different?

CALLIN HAKE: Obviously this is home for me, so that's super special. But wherever we're playing, I absolutely adore playing with these girls, and that doesn't change anything.

Having family here makes it sweet, but we're here to win, survive and advance, like Lex said.

Q. Jaz, you guys played Michigan State, I guess collectively as a team if they play full-court defense, how do the five people on the court have to work together so you handle that better than you did against Ohio State?

JAZ SHELLEY: I think everyone just has to want the ball. We have to be aggressive, try and look up the floor. Yeah, we just have to take care of the ball essentially, and that comes from people being aggressive and wanting the basketball.

Q. Amy, after the first quarter what changes or what things were said to try to get more offense?

AMY WILLIAMS: I thought early in the game probably a credit to Purdue's defense, but I thought we were settling for a little -- a few too many perimeter shots, kind of quick perimeter shots. We're okay with those shots. We have great shooters that were confident in them shooting it, but we wanted to get paint touches first and be able to work hard for the paint touches.

I thought early in the game we were maybe just playing a little frantic, taking quick shots, and we needed to kind of settle into the tournament, settle into our game, and be willing to work a little bit harder to get the ball inside, inside-outside looks.

Q. If you recall, Coach Williams, I asked you before the season about Coley's development to date. Can you talk about, because she's here in town, and this is her hometown. Talk about how she's been doing, progressing up to this point.

AMY WILLIAMS: I absolutely love Kendall Coley. What a team player she's been for us. There's times where we have to play here at the 3 spot. We have to play here at the 4 spot. She has to switch screens and be willing to stay in front of pesky, quick guards. She's got to be willing to bang around with post players. She knows every position on the court.

Whatever our team needs her to do, she's willing to do. Because of that, she's played just an integral, integral role for our team this entire season. So exciting to bring her back to her hometown to be able to cap it off here in the Big Ten tournament.

Q. Coach, you mentioned Purdue is kind of a scrappy team. You've played them three times. What kind of makes that kind of their defining trait in your eyes? Then how was Sophie Swanson able to kind of get seven three-pointers? Was it just kind of the focus on Ellis and their other scorers?

AMY WILLIAMS: To be honest with you, they're scrappy, I think, because they take on the identity of their coach. You can see how much that team enjoys fighting and playing hard for their head coach, and they lay it all on the line.

They have some really great pieces. I think I've noticed, in three games of playing Purdue, some similarities in the sense that we both have fifth year seniors, very experienced players. They've got Jeanae Terry, Madison Layden, Caitlyn Harper all season, Abbey Ellis, just experienced fifth and sixth year kids. Then we've kind of got the Jaz Shelleys and Alexis Markowskis and our experience on our side, Maddie Krull.

You mix in with that some talented freshmen. We feel awesome about Natalie Potts and Logan Nissley and Jessica Petrie and the contributions to our team. On their side, you've got Mary Ashley Stevenson, Rashunda Jones who goes crazy last night, and turn around today and Sophie Swanson goes crazy on us.

I don't think we were focusing on other players. We knew how good of a shooter Sophie Swanson is. Kind of late game they ran her some really good actions to get her open looks, and she knocked them down and was hot from behind the arc. We survived her 25 points and did a pretty good job holding them to 31 points outside of hers.

Q. Just what did you see from Callin in that fourth quarter? Obviously made big play after big play.

AMY WILLIAMS: I'm so incredibly proud of Callin. She bounced back after missing a couple free throws at the Illinois game that I know she wanted to have, but the next morning she was back in the gym. She was working, she was shooting, she was back at it.

Our staff continues to maintain confidence in her. Then to watch her come out and step up and make big shots, big plays. I thought there was a stretch where she scored a bucket, went down and took a critical charge, I think, on

Jeanae Terry, and then went back down and hit another big bucket. That stretch right there really gave us the confidence to know we can push forth and win this game.

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Purdue Boilermakers

Katie Gearlds

Jeanae Terry

Sophie Swanson

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THE MODERATOR: For the Purdue press conference, we will start with questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Jeanae, what has this school meant to you? Obviously you come over from Illinois, and you start all 60 games you played here. What does being a Boilermaker meant to you?

JEANAE TERRY: It means everything. Just the family atmosphere I've received since being here for my three years is a lifelong relationship that I have forever. I'm so happy to be able to put this uniform on for these supporters and for these fans that come out and watch us every night. I love being a Boilermaker.

Q. Sophie, obviously, 7-of-9 from three. Just what was working for you today?

SOPHIE SWANSON: Just my teammates getting me open, me just doing my job and knocking those shots down and doing anything I can to help the team out.

THE MODERATOR: Jeanae and Sophie, you can head back to the locker room.

Q. What did you feel like your team did well early in this one, and what allowed Nebraska to kind of break away with it in the fourth quarter?

KATIE GEARLDS: I thought we did a really good job of keeping off the offensive glass. Really for the whole game. The one offensive rebound I know they got in the first half was a kickout three to Jaz Shelley. We lost Jaz a little bit in the first half, but if you tell me we're walking into halftime



25-25. We probably should have finished the second quarter a little bit better. Had a couple of careless turnovers. I've got to do a better job of helping our young kids in those kinds of situations.

Then just down the stretch, just kind of ran out of gas. I thought we got some really, really good looks. Madison and Abbey, they got some good looks from three, and then just down the stretch, the open looks that Nebraska got, they made and we did not.

Q. I know I just talked to Jeanae about what it meant, but also Abbey, this is it for her. What have those two specifically meant to you as a coach?

KATIE GEARLDS: Yeah, special. When they came over, I was still -- I was the assistant coach, waiting to be the head coach when they transferred from Cal Poly in Illinois. Then right before the season, Coach retires, and we've got 40 days, and all of a sudden I'm their head coach.

Those two just bought into me. I helped to recruit them to Purdue, but I wasn't supposed to be their head coach, and they believed in me from day one. For me, Abbey and Jeanae always have a really special place in my heart.

Then you can go down the line to Madison and Caitlyn as seniors for our ball club. They believed in me. They never turned their backs on me.

It's going to be weird when we do practice and those guys aren't out there, but Abbey and Jeanae might have gone to other schools before here, but they are definitely Boilermakers.

Q. Kind of on the other side of that, you had a pretty strong showing from your freshmen, Stevenson, Swanson today, and Jones. What does that mean for the future of your program?

KATIE GEARLDS: Those kids, they're not able to do what they do if they don't have the leadership that Jeanae and Abbey and Madison and Caitlyn provided, but for us moving forward, this was really our first recruiting class that we kind of put together with me as the head coach.



Obviously we've got a lot of things that we've got to continue to grow and get better, but I'll tell you what, those kids got a lot of great experience in some really tight situations that we're going to dive into this summer. Hopefully we can just continue to get better and better and chase getting Purdue back onto the top.

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