

Big Ten Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 8, 2024

Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

Target Center

Nebraska Cornhuskers

Amy Williams

Alexis Markowski

Jaz Shelley

Logan Nissley

Postgame Press Conference

Nebraska - 73, Michigan State - 61

THE MODERATOR: We will begin this afternoon with the Nebraska press conference. Opening statement from Coach Williams.

AMY WILLIAMS: I'm just so proud of this red team right now. I just can't even hardly see straight. I thought we played great defensively. We held them about 20 points, I think, below their season average and just had great contributions from all over the place.

This whole year we feel like rebounding has been a huge emphasis for our team and something that has been a strength, but to be able to carry that out here tonight, I thought rebounding probably won us the game.

Q. Alexis, what was the challenge like inside against Julie Ayrault? You guys just kind of battled all game in there.

ALEXIS MARKOWSKI: Ayrault is a really good player. She's more like a guard but has back to the basket post skills. Very athletic.

We knew offensively I'd have a matchup there, just with her being undersized, and her as well me having to guard her on the perimeter.

She's a really good player. Wish them luck in the NCAA Tournament.

Q. Jaz, what are all the things that feel good about being one of the last four teams playing in this



tournament this year?

JAZ SHELLEY: I think it's exciting. No one expected us to be here, and being that high seed, I think it's pretty cool. This team has a bunch of fighters, and I think we can go really deep into this.

Q. In the first quarter, you missed three close ones there and got your own rebounds. How did that impact you going forward, that situation?

ALEXIS MARKOWSKI: I just try to tell myself that hopefully those were all the misses I was going to have today. Yeah, my teammates just came up to me and just instilled confidence, like we're going to keep going to you. Like, you got the next one. I have the best teammates.

Q. Jaz, it felt like you guys handled the full-court press really well. What did you see throughout the game?

JAZ SHELLEY: That's something we've struggled with this season. It was a point of emphasis, and we knew we needed to buy into our press breaker. People really wanted the basketball, and I think we did a really, really good job of breaking that.

Q. Each of you got to star in one of the quarters. Alexis, you had 12 of 15 points in the third quarter. Jaz, you had 8 in the first, and Logan you had 11 in one of them. How does it feel to know that anybody can take over at any time? How does that instill your confidence?

LOGAN NISSLEY: I think that's a big part of our team. Anyone can step on any given night. For all three of us to have that kind of game. I think there's multiple people that stepped up in the game. I know Nat had a double-double. Jess Petrie played big minutes when Lex got into foul trouble. I just think we have depth. So that really helps us go deep into games.

Q. You guys ended up making some three-pointers, but what's it like having a game like this where rebounds are so big and second-chance points are so big and kind of a paint game, inside game?



ALEXIS MARKOWSKI: It was a physical game, and tomorrow's going to be even more physical. Definitely in the first half, went back to back with charges and just some calls and having players in foul trouble.

It's just a battle. Every game's a battle. The team that rebounds better usually ends up on top.

Q. How did you address that Michigan State hadn't played yesterday and you guys did play? Did you address that, and how did you approach that?

JAZ SHELLEY: We thought it was an advantage in the sense we got our feet underneath us. Obviously we started pretty bad yesterday, and if it happened today, that would have been a different story. It's really cool we had that advantage, and we knew that. We wanted to pounce on them at the start of the game. We really did that.

People were aggressive and confident. I think that game underneath us really helped us get to that position.

Q. For any of you guys, first off, congrats on the victory. Second, any early thoughts on Maryland? What do you remember? That game was a long time ago, I know. What do you remember from that game, and what have you kind of picked up on watching them early in this tournament?

JAZ SHELLEY: I think Maryland is just as physical. They can shoot the ball really well. They have a lot of key pieces you have to keep in front of you.

It's going to be an exciting game. It's been a long time. We'll have to go and look at the scout. Big win for them today. They're on a high right now, so we'll have to really lock in and really know the scout.

Q. Lex is 6-for-6 in the second quarter. What's it like when Lex gets that mindset that she's going to dominate like that?

AMY WILLIAMS: Well, it's pretty fun for us as a coaching staff over there. I did tell her, while she was on the court, she got all her misses out on one possession. We knew that we would keep going right back to her.

To be honest, I thought our guards did a better job of zipping passes into her in the second quarter instead of kind of floating them into her. It allowed her to keep her positioning a little bit deeper and made things a little bit easier for her.

She just did a fantastic job of continuing to command the

ball on the low block and being dominant.

Q. What did you feel like you guys did better defensively after the first quarter? It felt like they had quite a few easy buckets in the opening period.

AMY WILLIAMS: I think we gave up -- yeah, 22 points in the first quarter. That was not going to keep them below their average, and we knew that. I thought we had some miscommunications in our transition defense there early, lost some people. They were able to get paint touches.

I thought we shored that up, had a much better second quarter, and gave us the confidence that we could defend.

Q. First, congrats on the win. Same question I asked to them, in that Maryland game, I don't know if you remember this, but their two top scorers are now out for the season because they tore their ACLs. Do you remember anything about that game in particular? What have you noticed from them recently?

AMY WILLIAMS: I remember Lavender Briggs for sure. She had a great game against us, but what I know for sure is they're fantastic in transition defense. They can run a lot of different people to a lot of different places. They have forwards that can hurt you from the perimeter, and they have guards that can take you down and post you up.

So all of that versatility just makes them incredibly dangerous, and I think their experience and their belief that they should win in this tournament is what has really carried them. I think that, coupled with the fact that they really dominated the boards.

So I think two strong rebounding teams right now are going to be going at it tomorrow. We've got just a little bit of time to try to figure it out.

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Michigan State Spartans

Robyn Fralick

Julia Ayrault

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ROBYN FRALICK: A lot of credit to Nebraska. I thought they played a really good game. Clearly they really hurt us on the glass, especially early in the game when we had some good momentum. So credit to them. They got a nice team.

For us, disappointing, but I think a lot to learn from it. We feel encouraged that we still have a lot of meaningful basketball left in front of us. We'll have to learn and regroup.

Q. Julia, what did you see just in that matchup with Alexis Markowski throughout the game?

JULIA AYRAULT: Obviously she's a tremendous player, so we tried to take some of that away and just kind of focus on forcing her out a little bit.

She had a great game. She double-doubled. So she played great. Just kind of for me just trying to stay focused on that and kind of doing more stuff off the dribble.

Q. What does this next week and a half look for you? Obviously the Big Ten is one of the conferences that plays the women's tournament before the men's. As you said, you still have meaningful basketball to play. Now that this part of March is over, how do you change the outlook and kind of just keep moving forward?

ROBYN FRALICK: I think we'll get a little time to rest, which will be helpful for this time of the year. Then you get back to work. I think you've got to be good at what you're good at, and I think you've got to be good at the things that happen all the time.



We'll have more opportunities to work on that, but we'll also get some time to rest and reset.

Q. What do you feel changed for you guys offensively? Kind of just the slower middle two quarters.

JULIA AYRAULT: What do I feel changed?

Q. Yeah, on the offensive end.

JULIA AYRAULT: I would say we talked a little bit about just kind of inside-out basketball. I thought second half we did a better job of just kind of moving it and got some better looks and better shots.

I felt like it picked up a little bit in the first half, but obviously a slow start and a slow first half for us.

Q. You guys had a bye, and Nebraska talked about how there is a little bit of an advantage to maybe playing a day before, getting a feel for the scenery, obviously at playing in an NBA, WNBA arena. Do you think there's an advantage to maybe playing the day before and getting your feet wet on the court?

ROBYN FRALICK: I don't know. I'm sure somebody's done some statistics on that, so there's data behind it. We always say in our program, when it's time to hoop, we hoop. If that's whatever gym, morning, night, cold, hot.

I don't know if it's an advantage or a disadvantage. I know we were really happy to finish as the 4th seed, and then today you've got to come and play good basketball.

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