

Big Ten Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 8, 2024

Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

Target Center

Michigan Wolverines

Kim Barnes Arico

Laila Phelia

Lauren Hansen

Postgame Press Conference

Michigan - 69, Indiana - 56

THE MODERATOR: Good evening, everyone. We will start the Michigan press conference with opening statement from Coach Barnes Arico. Go ahead.

KIM BARNES ARICO: Just really proud of our team, the way they battled back. We were down 17. We talked about some adjustments we would have to make in the second half.

We thought we started the game great defensively and then had a really bad second quarter. Just I think our confidence grew as the game went on.

I think Laila Phelia showed why she's one of the best players in the country, and I thought she did a tremendous job late when they started to really double her and try to load on her of finding Lauren. Lauren is one of the best shooters in the country, one of the best playmakers in the country. So they found each other.

But our team just battled and did a great job defensively against a really disciplined, tough Indiana team. It was a great basketball game, a great basketball game for our team and super excited to be advancing in the Big Ten tournament.

Q. It seemed like a switch kind of flipped in that third quarter. Can you guys talk about some of those halftime adjustments that you made to go from scoring 9 points in the first quarter to scoring 29 in the fourth.

LAUREN HANSEN: I just feel like in the locker room we came back in, and we all had things we wanted to talk about defensively, offensively, just getting movement, kind



of using our actions to the fullest. Like going through each thing, not just running through the motions.

And we knew that they were going to go on a run. They're a great team. But we would also go on our run. We just kept saying, this is our half, this is our half. We stuck to that and stuck to each other.

Q. Laila, for you, obviously another great performance tonight, but now that's 76 minutes played in about 24 hours. Now you've got to do it again tomorrow in 17 hours, if my math is correct. How do you just get your body physically prepared to try to put together another strong performance?

LAILA PHELIA: I feel like throughout the season Coach has done a great job of mentally preparing me for that and physically, of course, just getting all the recovery in that I need.

Overall I feel like just the mental preparation, onto the next.

Q. It seemed like in the second half you guys had a lot better ball movement. What were you seeing that helped facilitate that improved offense?

LAUREN HANSEN: Well, Laila and Jordan, they both draw a lot of attention, so they were able to just drive and move the ball, kick it out, and we could kind of space the floor a little bit. Chyra did a great job. Cam went to work.

When you're aggressive like that, they have to play you, and we just kept finding each other. That was the emphasis at halftime, just playing off each other and feeding off that. So I think that was the difference.

Q. Lauren, on that timeout in the fourth quarter, you hit the end of the shot clock three. The team already had momentum at that point, but how much did that feel like it was really when you guys got going downhill?

LAUREN HANSEN: To make a three with two seconds left on the shot clock, it was just a huge momentum. Jordan threw me the ball, and for her to have confidence in me like



that kind of just reignited me. Then we got a stop, came down, and we were like let's get some stops and let's finish this out.

So I think it was just a confidence boost for everybody.

Q. This is kind of a question just about scheme. It seemed like Chyra and Cam were kind of playing at the same time to get that double big rotation in. What did you kind of see from that, and how did you see that working through?

KIM BARNES ARICO: We track like all of our numbers, so it was funny, I ran down the end of the bench, and I asked our video coordinator like what was the tracking in the first half with those guys in together? Because I wanted them an opportunity to be in together. They're different. They complement each other really well.

We were fearful of some matchups, but I thought Chyra just did a phenomenal job guarding a guard, and she really knew where to be and was able to give a lot of help. Then it gave Cameron the opportunity to really take the post position where Chyra could be a great screener and facilitator.

So I thought they both played really well together, and we did have them out there for a period of time together where they did a great job.

Cameron is so great with her back to the basket and really made some big plays for us down the stretch in that run as well, whereas Chyra is a little more comfortable as a face-up.

Q. Lauren or Laila, obviously this game helps with NCAA Tournament. It clearly, if there's any doubt that you guys were getting in, you're getting in now. Could you just talk about just having that in hand now and knowing everything you do from now on sort of even continues to help with that.

LAUREN HANSEN: I think it's a confidence boost, but at the same time, we came here to win a Big Ten Championship. So that's the goal. That's just right now it's a bonus. We'll deal with all that after. We're just going to stay focused on the moment that we're in.

Q. Obviously a really quick turnaround for you guys. You guys play tomorrow. You guys are the top defensive team in the conference going against Iowa, the top offensive team in the conference, and obviously a dynamic player like Caitlin Clark. She had 49 last time that you guys played. What's the unique challenge in defending a player like that, and what

gives you guys confidence that as a team and as a defense you guys are prepared to beat them?

LAILA PHELIA: I feel like the biggest thing for us is just staying true to who we are as a team and continuing to do the little things and chip away. Caitlin Clark, she's a great player, so we all have to definitely tune in and help each other out on that.

Q. Laila, even when Mackenzie Holmes switched to guarding you in the fourth quarter when she subbed in, it seemed like you were able to keep your offensive momentum rolling. What enabled you to do that?

LAILA PHELIA: Just staying aggressive. Coach harped on it a lot before the game. So just continue to go repeat, telling myself, okay, Mackenzie Holmes switched up on me but drawing the foul.

Q. How did Mackenzie's status kind of being up in the air affect you guys' preparation? What were you anticipating coming into the game, and through the week, how did it impact you?

KIM BARNES ARICO: It was really unknown. We tried to read the Indy paper every single day to try to figure out if she was going to play or not. But we prepared for her. She's such a tremendous player. We prepared during the week to face her.

Then she came in the game, later in the game. We were prepared to have to defend her. So we prepared if they went small, five guards, which is how they started the game, and then we were ready if they went with their post players as well.

Q. Bouncing off that question about Iowa to begin with, now, as he said, it's such a quick turnaround, but everyone talks about Caitlin, but four other players scored in double figures, Hannah Stuelke had eight. How do you prepare your team, top defensive team in the conference, to guard a versatile Iowa team?

KIM BARNES ARICO: It's tough. They're a great team. They're one of the top teams in the country for a reason. They have the best player probably in the world right now on their team, who's playing with a tremendous amount of confidence.

But she's not the only player. They have a really good team. We got to go to their place and be a part of that special night for Caitlin and for Iowa, and that was extremely, extremely challenging for us.

We hung around for a good period of time, but they got us



down the stretch. I think this gives us another opportunity to maybe get them on a neutral court and see if we can be better on the defensive end tomorrow than we were at Iowa.

We know that we're going to have to play defense on multiple positions, and we've had to do that the last couple days with great shooters that Indiana had as well. But they're an amazing program. Indiana is an amazing program, two phenomenal coaches. We know that they'll be prepared.

You guys have touched on a lot, the load of our players going into day 3. We entered the tournament earlier this season, and we talked about it at shootaround earlier today, where we'd have to play three consecutive days to try to prepare us for the Big Ten tournament.

I know that their bodies may be fatigued, but they're playing on adrenaline right now, and they're trying to do something that we haven't done before. So they'll be fired up. Hopefully they won't look fatigued for you all tomorrow because we know that Iowa will play like this. So we've got to be ready to go.

Q. Coach, obviously Lauren had those three big threes down the stretch to kind of put them away. Can you just talk about the importance of those threes, the tough, contested shots that she can make.

KIM BARNES ARICO: We tried to switch actually at half to put Lauren in a different spot and Laila in a different spot because we felt like Laila would be able to get downhill. So instead of Lauren bringing it up, we put Laila in a position to try to attack and go downhill right away. Then we had Lauren as the person that was filling in her spot.

I probably told you guys, I rebound for Lauren every shootaround, and she's an exceptional, exceptional shooter. We just don't always get her in positions to shoot it because a lot of the times she's handling the ball. So we tried to make an adjustment and play to what we felt the strengths were today, and that was Laila having the ball in her hands and being the decision-maker and trying to attack, and Lauren filling those spots and trying to get her some open looks.

Q. You had three of the lower-seeded teams win the quarterfinals today. Does that just sort of reiterate the difficulty of this conference?

KIM BARNES ARICO: Yeah, that's something I feel like, when we were a 2 or a 3 or a 4 seed, like I try to emphasize a lot to the rest of the world because I don't know if everyone really appreciates how strong our

conference is from top to bottom. It's actually just getting better and better.

Next year when we add these other powerhouses, it's going to be even better and better. I just think that that speaks to obviously the parity of our league, but even from the NCAA selection committee, holy cow, look at this league. Look at the teams that have beaten other teams. Sometimes it depends when you play somebody or where you play somebody, but I think we've got some really darn good teams in our league. I think that was on display for everyone to see today.

Q. Laila Phelia's average, more than her previous career high in this tournament so far. How have you seen her really heat up and take charge in these key moments down the stretch?

KIM BARNES ARICO: Laila has been phenomenal, and I think she, like our team, is continuing to get better and better and better. I told her just walking over here how proud I am of her ability to read the screens, and they were icing her and trying to force her to go left. Cameron did a good job of switching the screen, and she did a good job of dragging it out. That's why Mackenzie Holmes was on her a few times.

I just think her growth and her understanding of the game is continuing to develop, and it's been on display. She's a tremendous player. She always talked about her freshman year when the team went to the Elite Eight, those seniors, like Naz Hillmon and Danielle Rauch, like they poured into her, and they carried her through that tournament.

Today I challenged her, like Laila, this is your time. This is your time to pour into those young ones and show them what it means to compete and to compete at this level. She pretty much did that today, yesterday, and it's proud moments as a coach to see your players really, it clicked the way it has for her the last couple days.

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Indiana Hoosiers

Teri Moren

Sydney Parrish

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THE MODERATOR: Good evening. We'll start the Indiana press conference with an opening statement from Coach Moren.

TERI MOREN: It was a tale of two halves. We got off to a really good start, loved how hard we played. We had to move our pieces around. I thought we rebounded the ball in the first half. I thought we were really doing some really good things.

Knew that Michigan was not going to go away. Came out second half, completely different story. Bad shots, forced shots. I thought we panicked at times. We only had four turnovers at half, and we ended up with them scoring 24 points off of our turnovers. 19 points of those came off of our 10 turnovers in the second half.

Give Michigan credit, I thought Phelia was really good tonight, really just put her head down and attacked us. I thought Cameron Williams was a load on the inside as well. Then Hansen knocking down the last couple threes when we changed defenses. She had to step up and knock down some big shots for them.

We're really disappointed, but as I said to our guys, we have to continue to learn even in moments like this. Turnovers have been something that we've addressed. Being able to guard better off the dribble is something that we've addressed. And we didn't do either one of those good enough in the second half tonight.

Like I said, we're disappointed.

Q. Sydney, what happened when you got kind of shaken up, and how tough is that? You're already shorthanded, to have to leave the floor after just four



minutes, what was kind of going through your head, and how did you kind of get back out so quick?

SYDNEY PARRISH: It's March, things happen. It's frustrating having to leave the court, but I wanted to be out there and help as much as I could. Got to shake things off and get back on the court.

Q. Sydney, you came up, had a lot of emotion on your face. Can you kind of just walk us through what you're feeling right now?

SYDNEY PARRISH: I think I'm most disappointed because I know what this group is capable of. I know we could have made it to championship Sunday. I know we're one of the best teams in the league, if not the best. And I think that's where I really got, I guess, emotional and upset because I know we're enough and I know we have enough pieces, even with Mackenzie and Lilly battling some injuries and stuff, I know we have enough pieces to be able to be a championship team.

So just pretty disappointed.

Q. Sydney, what did Michigan do to kind of change things in the second half to make it tougher?

SYDNEY PARRISH: They started attacking the basket really aggressively, and we had really trouble keeping Phelia in front of us. Once we went to the zone, they started hitting shots in the zone, and turnovers lead to fast-break layups. It's hard to play defense when there are live ball turnovers. I think that's really what happened towards the end of the game.

Q. This is not the way you wanted this to go, but you still have a bigger goal ahead. Can you guys maybe talk about sort of regrouping and looking ahead to the NCAA Tournament?

SYDNEY PARRISH: Of course. We talked about it in the locker room a little bit. A lot of teams this week in the country are losing and their season's over. We have the opportunity to go do something exciting in March, and we know that.



This next or two, just try and get as healthy as we can and bounce back harder. I mean, last year we lost early in the NCAA Tournament, and I think that this year it's going to have a chip on our shoulder, and we're going to come out harder.

Q. Kind of bouncing off of that question, this is a tournament unlike other conferences where the women's tournament comes before the men's. So now it's like that one week layover period. What does that look like for you guys because you know there are bigger goals ahead?

SYDNEY PARRISH: Just being in the gym and trying to, like I said, get healthy and get up and down a little bit and trying to just start preparing and watching film on this week's game and just get ready for the tournament. It's going to be a fun one.

We're excited to kind of push this aside and start looking at the next season.

Q. Mackenzie obviously brings so much to the team on and off the court. For you guys as players, what's that adjustment like when she's not out there with you guys?

SYDNEY PARRISH: We've dealt with it before. You saw us last year postseason. We've been with her and without on the court before. She brings a lot, but we have a lot of players on the bench that are going to step up and help too.

Lilly was battling through an injury and played 21 minutes, and I didn't think she could walk yesterday. So I think that's pretty good to see. She gave us good minutes. Mackenzie's presence was missed, but I think we're going to be great.

Q. Teri, as Mackenzie was concerned, it's pretty clear, but not playing her until the fourth quarter, you probably didn't want to. First of all, how healthy was she, and what goes through your mind as you're going through the game, especially as you start to see it go away, in terms of how you handle her situation?

TERI MOREN: I think it was just trying to figure out the balance. Our goal was to be here till Sunday. So we were going to -- she was available. We knew she was going to be available. We didn't want to have to play her. We wanted to be able to use her tomorrow more.

But she looked at me, and she said, I'm ready to go in, see if I can help.

So in terms of how healthy she is, she could have easily played tonight. We just were trying to hold her out as much as we could to see what the pieces that we did have that we did feel were healthy enough, if we could get past Michigan and into tomorrow's semifinal.

Q. Is it a struggle, though, when you're kind of trying to balance all that and -- did you think, when Michigan starts making a run, oh maybe here? How hard is that as a coach to try to have the right feel to try to this is the moment?

TERI MOREN: I don't know. I don't if I -- I'm not sure how you figure that out. I really did think that we would be able to settle down a little bit, especially in the timeouts we talked about we're kind of going off script here.

Shot selection, forced shots -- I think everybody was just trying to do a little bit more. We needed to do what we're good at, and that's share the ball and play off of one another. Then again, the turnovers just were -- I mean, almost every one of those led to a run-out.

We talk all the time, there's no defense for that.

Q. Last time your team played Michigan, you got off to a historic start, scoring 38 points, going 15-for-15 from the floor. Can you talk about what that difference was today that made it more difficult to get going on offense?

TERI MOREN: Well, we were naive to think we were going to start off like that. We're always hoping, but again, Michigan is playing for something right now. They're playing really, really good basketball. Kim and her staff do an excellent job.

So, again, it was just we got off to a really good start. We didn't get off to the start we did back at home in Bloomington, but it felt good going into halftime. Also cautioned our kids that it was far from over.

Then Phelia just decided to come out and sort of try to take that third and fourth quarter over, but then she had help. I thought Williams again was a presence on the inside. Again, when we did change defense, our defenses, them being able, whether it was Hobbs, she had a couple, but Hansen, those two threes towards the end in the fourth really hurt us.

Q. Teri, you kind of just touched on it. In that second half, what were you seeing from the team that just wasn't working on the court?

TERI MOREN: We just didn't seem like we -- I felt like we were all just guilty of trying to do a little bit too much as individuals. That's what I love about this group so much because they want to do the right thing. Sometimes the right thing is maybe being guilty of forcing shots and not taking better care of the ball.

So that's what I -- there was a couple moments where they came down, and I kind of looked over like, I'm not sure what that was and why we felt like we had to do it, and we were winning. We were up.

It's a hard lesson, but I think we've been in those scenarios before where we've had a lead, we've been able to maintain a lead. Tonight we weren't. A lot of that has to do with Michigan, but tonight I just thought, like I said, we kind of lost our way there in critical moments.

Q. Coach, do you sort of have an idea, because you have some time before the NCAA Tournament, what it will look like for Mackenzie in terms of does she rest a little more?

TERI MOREN: Yes.

Q. Is she able to practice regularly, or do you sort of take that day by day?

TERI MOREN: I think it will be -- she's been in practice. Probably not early in the week she was not, but it won't be like we did a year ago because this is where she hurt her knee last year. So she needed that time off.

She feels really good, which is very positive. So I anticipate she as well as -- Syd's right. Lilly really battled tonight. I'm kind of with Syd. I didn't know if she was going to be able to play at all tonight. So that, and then Syd has also been battling her own foot injury.

The two weeks in between is going to be really, really important for this group to get healthy. I think when the NCAA Tournament gets here, I think we'll feel a whole lot different and much, much better.

Q. I know you're not going to feel sorry for yourself, but how hard is it to not have the best version of your team for now a second year at this time of year? That's not to say anything bad about the pieces you have, but just how hard is that? I know it seems with the emotion with Sydney, it's kind of part of it. Is that hard when you're in this moment?

TERI MOREN: Absolutely. It stinks. It really does. Especially when they're such a great group and they're so connected. We've had a great year, have been in some

really tough battles in which we've won, a couple that we've lost.

So you want to come into this tournament and have a chance because you came so close in the regular season of winning another one. This is your last chance for those seniors, especially for Mackenzie and Sara and Arielle.

Yeah, it stinks that we kind of limped into this tournament, but I still admire this group and love them and appreciate them giving everything they had in spite of all those things that right now haven't gone our way.

Q. This loss kind of puts into limbo hosting the NCAA Tournament, I'm sure more than you'd like. What is your mindset going into this week just not knowing for sure?

TERI MOREN: I think our body of work speaks for itself. We're not healthy by any stretch of the means. I think that has to be part of the criteria or whatever they look at. This is not Indiana at full health right now. It's not a healthy squad.

But I do believe this, that come tournament time in two weeks we will have a much different looking, healthier basketball team.

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