

Big Ten Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 7, 2025

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Gainbridge Fieldhouse

Ohio State Buckeyes

Kevin McGuff

Cotie McMahan

Taylor Thierry

Postgame Press Conference



KEVIN MCGUFF: They played a lot of zone defense today which they hadn't played against us the first time but have played it more lately.

In the first half, I just did not think we moved the ball around too much ourselves or had a sense of urgency to do that. But as the game went on, especially late, I thought we got a lot better shots, and then we stepped up and we made some.

Q. Taylor and Cotie, can you talk about just getting a second win against Iowa this season. I know they're always a tough matchup and they're always a team that seems like Ohio State's excited to play against.

COTIE McMAHON: It felt good. Like we've said before, this game is always personal. So it felt good.

Q. For both of you as well, you guys were here last year when you were knocked down in the quarterfinals. Can you talk about how much you thought back to that feeling and how much you didn't want to repeat that.

TAYLOR THIERRY: Yeah, it's kind of easy. Simple as it sounds, we didn't want to lose our first game and go home right away. Again, just finding a way. This time of the season is hard to get a win, so just finding a way.

Q. For either of you, I guess what is the anticipation? I don't know if you saw this before heading on the floor, but going against UCLA tomorrow, how excited are you for that challenge against one of the best teams in the Big Ten?

TAYLOR THIERRY: Honestly just executing our game plan and trust our coaches and what they have for us to do. So I would say just execute our game plan, play our game.

Q. For Jaloni, she had a couple early fouls, and it seemed like she was kind of nervous to go into the paint until later on in the game whenever she only had two fouls in the last quarter. Is there anything you say to Jaloni? Because it seemed like she was kind of in

Ohio State - 60, Iowa - 59

THE MODERATOR: Welcome Ohio State and Coach Kevin McGuff. We will begin the press conference with an opening statement by Coach.

KEVIN MCGUFF: I'll just let these guys fire away with questions.

Q. Cotie, in the fourth quarter you missed those two free throws that you had, but then you hit the two most important free throws. Can you walk through that moment and how loud it was and hitting those free throws and what you felt after hitting that second one.

COTIE McMAHON: Honestly, I didn't really hear anything. I was kind of cussing myself out, like if I don't make these free throws, then we're going home. So I just made them.

Q. Taylor, it felt like you really started to come alive in the second half. Can you just talk about your mindset going from the first to the second half and what kind of started working for you.

TAYLOR THIERRY: Yeah, I was struggling a bit in the first half. I tried to stay confident, tried to stay positive, not get in my head. Also my teammates were very encouraging and had a lot of confidence in me. So just letting the game come to me and have confidence in myself and find areas that I could contribute to this team so we could win.

Q. Coach, what did you see tonight from Iowa's zone defense that kind of made it difficult for you guys, and how did you break through towards the end to get the points you needed to come up with the win?



her head on going to the basket, trying to avoid picking up another foul.

TAYLOR THIERRY: I just tried to encourage her and stay positive and just not let things she can't control control her.

I think she did a pretty good job. Like I said, just try to encourage her.

Q. It felt like in the second half the defense was running -- it was kind of producing the offense. Can you talk about how important it was locking down on defense and getting that figured out first?

TAYLOR THIERRY: I think our defense kind of contributes to our offense. So we were just trying to guard the ball and not get driven by really easily but just executing defensively, making it hard for them to score, boxing out, getting rebounds. I think that's important for us.

Like I said, our defense contributes to our offense.

Q. You had Eboni playing a little more than you usually do today. Can you talk about that decision, how she impacted the game?

KEVIN MCGUFF: I thought Eboni gave us fantastic minutes off the bench. She's played in a lot of games at Ohio State. She really has a great understanding of what we do, and I thought her execution was at a little bit higher level with her on the court.

I was just really proud of her, happy she could come in. She looked like a senior playing in her last Big Ten Tournament.

Q. It just seemed like after you guys got off to a hot start, for the rest of the game it seemed like Iowa's defense gave you a rough go for the remainder of the game, even though you guys pulled it out. What is it about the defense that made your offense struggle a bit?

KEVIN MCGUFF: Credit to Iowa. I thought they played a fantastic game, and they had a fantastic run in the tournament here. They played zone defense the first time we played them, and we didn't execute real well against it, and that gave us problems.

Late in the game we got better shots, but for a while there, we just kind of stood around and didn't move ourselves, didn't move the ball very effectively. Finally got it right at the end, but Iowa played really great defense tonight.

Q. Taylor and Cotie and other players have talked over

the last few years about how playing Iowa is personal, how they felt disrespected the past few years. Do you see them preparing for a game like this any different than another game? Do you feel maybe more of a heightened sense whenever they're going up against a team like Iowa or a team they feel is more of a rival to them?

KEVIN MCGUFF: Iowa is a great program. They've won a lot of basketball games. They've won this tournament two years in a row. Give them credit. They've built something really good there. So we like the opportunity to measure ourselves against the best in this conference, and they're certainly one of those programs.

Q. Affolter, what does she add to the Hawkeyes offense and defense?

KEVIN MCGUFF: She adds a physical presence around basket. I thought she did a nice job getting good positions. She finishes real well. She's a great player. That gives them another efficient player that they can play in the paint.

So she's good. She hurt us tonight.

Q. It felt like Petty was playing well tonight but you took her out a couple of times. Can you talk about the decision to take her out of the game and put Elsa in?

KEVIN MCGUFF: I think their post players are really good. You've got to keep fresh bodies on them. So a combination of Petty, Elsa, and Eboni was kind of the formula. That's why we were trying to sub them, to keep them fresh.

Q. Free throws have been a difficulty for the team this year. Cotie has had games where she hits 50 percent or so. In the final quarter when she hit both of those free throws, what was going through your mind?

KEVIN MCGUFF: On the last play in general, we wanted to get the ball in her hands and create space for her to play in. She made the right play. She got fouled. At that point, you've got to step up and put yourself in position to make them, and she did. Really happy and proud she could do that for us.

Q. Lucy had 12 points in the first half, 2 in the second. It seemed like there was different coverage on her in the second half, like more double teams. What did you change from your game plan going into the second half to kind of limit her offensively?

KEVIN MCGUFF: We were trying to get the ball out of her hands, if we could. She's a great player, and she played

extremely well against us the first time. But it's tough too. She logged a lot of heavy minutes here for three games in three days. So we wanted to wear on her with the full court pressure and get the ball out of her hands in the half-court.

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Jan Jensen

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Ohio State - 60, Iowa - 59

THE MODERATOR: We now have Iowa coach Jan Jensen along with Lucy Olsen and Hannah Stuelke. At this time, Coach, if you'd make an opening statement.

JAN JENSEN: We're disappointed, but I told the players in the locker room I just couldn't be more proud of them. They just battled. We just came up a little bit short tonight.

Unfortunately, it's kind of been the story of our games the whole season. I think our Syd just told me it's been nine losses by under 10, I do know that. So of course I do a lot of soul searching, just trying to get them over that finish line.

Ohio State, credit to Kevin and his staff. They're always really good. They have a great team. I love their game plan. I just looked at the box score. The difference of five points in the first quarter -- really weren't very good in the first, but we won the second. Then in that second half, they won by one point in the third and they won -- whatever, by one.

I'm proud of them, and I love coaching them, and I'm so grateful that we get a shot at the postseason.

Q. Hannah, can you just kind of walk me through your vantage point of the late foul that was called against you on Cotie and also your final look there at the end.

HANNAH STUELKE: I don't know, I didn't want to foul there obviously, but I did. She made both of her free throws, kudos to her. I thought we got a great look in the end.

Q. Lucy, you've had a heavy workload on offense all season pretty much and even into the tournament. I don't know if you heard what Coach said, but he kind of threw a different coverage at you in the second half, kind of more double teams. I just want to know from your perspective, what did you see out there in the second half to kind of limit you offensively?

LUCY OLSEN: I think we got a lot of good open shots. We just didn't hit as many as we needed to. I missed a lot of layups. Yeah, their defense is good. I guess it threw me off a little bit.

Just a few more makes, and that's our game. Yeah, I don't know, we got a lot of good open shots with the rest of my teammates, so I'm happy about that.

Q. Hannah, to start the second half, you had a couple of moments especially in the paint where you've been really good all season, where you were able to tie or even give your team the lead. It may not have been the outcome you were hoping for, but you were certainly a presence tonight with 14 points. Can you talk me through that a little bit?

HANNAH STUELKE: My teammates do a great job of getting me the ball when I need it. Yeah, I have great teammates, and I'm glad I got to experience this with them for sure.

Q. Hannah, Cotie during her post-game said that this game is always personal going up against you guys. Is it the same for you guys? Is this a rivalry that's kind of budding in the women's game a little bit?

HANNAH STUELKE: I think every game is personal no matter who we're playing. We want to be us, and I think we need to focus on us a little bit more in this game. I don't think -- I wouldn't call it a rivalry, but every game we have to show up.

Q. Jan, you've had a few points like this throughout the season where you kind of have conflicting emotions coming out of a game like this. How does this game and then this week become a beneficial



thing as you guys move toward the NCAA Tournament?

JAN JENSEN: I think it's been much more positive than negative. I think they've showed up and they're -- I think our coaching staff is dynamite. I thought the scouts were awesome. I thought we knew our personnel pretty well. I thought our defensive schemes, I think they were always in the moment.

I think it's fun to be part of March. I think it's fun -- I still believe, even though we came up a little short, I think we're one of the hottest teams.

I was a little hopeful deep down in my heart that we'd maybe win one or two more and might have got to host, that's been pretty fun. I don't know if that's possible or not. I'm a little disappointed.

But I'm just so thankful that I get to coach them and we'll be in the NCAA Tournament.

So yeah, conflicted. You don't like to lose. It's so weird about sport, the difference -- the euphoria of a win to the disappointment of a loss. But so many more positives out of this experience for sure.

Q. You had mentioned doing soul searching about some of these really close games. As a first-year head coach, even though you've been around for a long time, what does that entail for you, and how do you think you're going to be doing it moving forward for the tournament?

JAN JENSEN: I think when you go, you kind of think your sets, sometimes you kind of go with who you think is going to hit the corner pocket. Then I'll go back and think, oh, maybe we should have thrown it inside. Maybe we shouldn't have driven it.

I'm guessing, Geno, if he loses a game or two, he might do that too. I guess I couldn't -- don't know for sure. But I think anybody, in my opinion, worth their salt is certainly not going to look at everybody else and say, oh, she should have hit that. Oh, we should have done a little better at that. They should have done that. I think you'd better look first and foremost at the decisions you were making.

I don't feel like -- I'm not dismayed by it. I just wish we would have did this a little better, but I think it's just sport. Last night I felt pretty good about what I called. This one, I'm like, oh, maybe I should have gone a different way in that last 6.8 seconds.

I wouldn't trade the experience, I wouldn't trade the fun of trying to win it for sure.

Q. I wanted to ask about Ava, but just real quick, you were mad about something on the inbounds with like .7 left when Hannah was cutting across. What was going on there?

JAN JENSEN: I can't say a whole lot, but I think the situation on the other end before that happened, I thought that was kind of an unfortunate way to have to shoot free throws with six seconds left. Been there, done that a few weeks ago.

Then this one, when Hannah was trying to run, before we just got the ball handed, in my opinion, she was being held all the way. When she was being held, instead of handing the ball, it was like (indicating) kind of told her not to get held. I thought maybe we could have had a holding foul and we could've maybe shot a free throw.

I'm not criticizing. I don't want to be in trouble but that's why I was hot because she couldn't even get set to go. In that type of situation, part of the play when you've got .7 seconds, the timing has got to be perfect. So then when you can't get the jump on the play, it just kind of takes the rhythm out of it.

Q. Regarding Ava, she obviously gives you -- it was a great tournament for her, but it gives you a little interesting thought process, I guess, going into the next round because it seemed like you were trying to figure out how to use her more.

JAN JENSEN: Yeah, that's the thing. It's usually been more of a lineup issue, what type of post we're playing. If we need a little bit more bounce or I need a little bit more size, think Lauren Betts size versus Petty, versus a VanSlooten last night.

Ava's been coming, right? In my opinion, in my coaching career, whatever chair I sit on, the timing of when you kind of unleash can make all the difference. If you're a freshman and has to play, it's different because you're playing with -- I think Olivia Olson, one of my faves in the conference from Michigan, she gets to play a lot differently than a lot of them because she's starting and so is Swords and it's a different feel. But when you're jockeying for position and trying to get someone ready to go when it's money time, to me that's the hardest part. If you do it right, that will usually come up big for you.

I think Ava's done a lot, and she's showed she's ready for the moments.

Q. Again, I'm just asking about a defense again. In the first half, they did a lot of press. Also in the second half. But they focused more on Lucy in the second half. When they're kind of taking the most consistent offensive weapon out of the game almost, how do you kind of adjust to that, especially down the stretch in a close game like that?

JAN JENSEN: I think Lucy did a good job of handling it. We forced some shots in the first half, but I think we got tremendously good looks. Unfortunately, Taylor McCabe was just really cold. I'll take Taylor McCabe just about every day. I'll take Kylie Feuerbach in that corner pocket that last 40, 50 seconds left.

So I think we're usually more than that. I think Lucy was a little bit colder too. She tried to attack some, just didn't hit some. I think, if we wouldn't have got other looks, I'd have been a little bit more -- you know, felt more pressed with that.

I think it was a good decision by them, but I think we still could have found a way to win the game.

Q. Jan, how well positioned do you think your team is for this tournament? Certainly some of your players have been down that road, but this is going to be a different kind of NCAA Tournament.

JAN JENSEN: I think we're about as good as this group can be because I think back where we were when we hit the West Coast road trip. We were in the middle of that adversity where we lost a few in a row. I remember looking at their eyes, we were at a Seattle University. We just lost by one point at Oregon. We didn't have Hannah in that game. Boy, it was tough sledding, right, for everybody to get up and get on the plane and fly up to Washington.

But we had a really good meeting, and I just kept saying, hey, we're closer than we're farther. I think what they've been through, if you can come through adversity and look back on it and really look at where you've grown and have more success than not, I think you should feel really good about getting to play in the Big Dance.

The story of this particular team is the difference is we just don't have that consistent go-to situation at the end of the game. This particular time, it was defense by Kevin, but we've kind of been all over the board. So maybe that's come into play.

I think these guys should feel really good. It was big shoes when they all started. Their shadows were looming. Non-con went pretty well, hit a little rockiness, but boy, I think we should feel pretty good going into the tournament.

But as I felt every year, where we're No. 1 seed or whatever we get, it's all about the matchups.

You face a team that you just know you don't click as much with, then it gets to be a little bit harder. I'm just thrilled we're going to see our name pop up, really feel grateful for that. These kids deserve it. They've battled.

Q. I know you're someone who kind of doesn't like to look into the past too much. I know you kind of just like to coach in the moment, control what you can control, but moving further into March, I should say, moving into the NCAA Tournament, which a month or two ago was even in question. What's the one thing you kind of want to see from this team, and what's one way you think maybe tonight ties into that? Something that you think can be improved upon or even just keep doing to get you guys more success.

JAN JENSEN: I think it's just the little consistency on offense. I credit Ohio State a lot. Their defense kind of speeds you up, but we missed a lot of layups. A lot of times we missed some layups throughout the year at key times, but we just go too many minutes at times, which is harder to score.

That's one thing I keep looking at, different actions. I want to see our offense get a little bit more consistent, and we'll be working on that. I think I need to just be a little bit more physical. I think now we can kind of work on ourselves again. You can't work on yourselves too much when you're preparing for the next opponent.

So offensively consistent, and I've just got to get us a little bit more physical to finish layups.

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