

Big Ten Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Sunday March 5, 2017

Brenda Frese Brionna Jones Shatori Walker- Kimbrough Destiny Slocum Maryland Terrapins

Maryland - 74, Purdue - 64

THE MODERATOR: Maryland is here. Coach, an opening statement and then we'll go to the students.

COACH FRESE: You know, we talked about before this game that we were going to have to come out and nothing was ever given. You were going to have to come out and earn it. And the moment Bri and I just had on the court, she talked about how none of these, all three, have been easy in terms of what you have to go out and be able to go get.

So just really proud. We talked about Shatori told the team as we came in here that it was going to be the team with the best bench and depth in three days. We needed every single person.

And that's why we worked behind the scenes and to be ready for our moment. But I thought our seniors led the way, set the tone like they have all season long.

Purdue, I can't say enough about, when your 6 seed gets all the way to the championship game, your 5 seed, Michigan State, to the semis in terms of just the parity of our conference. And I thought Destiny in her first tournament did a phenomenal job in terms of leading the team and really, really proud of our team and it's just an incredible feeling.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the students.

Q. Brionna and Shatori, how does this compare to the last three you won. You're both seniors; is this one a little more special?

BRIONNA JONES: It's definitely special but getting to share it with this team makes it more special.



SHATORI WALKER-KIMBROUGH: Like Bri said, sharing this moment with my teammates is really special. The way everyone played collectively, it's really indescribable.

Q. Shatori, what can you say about Brionna? You won most outstanding player last year. She won it this year. Her performance was much like yesterday, just outstanding.

SHATORI WALKER-KIMBROUGH: She missed, like, eight shots in three days. It's just unheard of. She was unbelievable. That's just what she's been all year, but she's the best post in the country. She plays like it day in, day out. She makes us go. And she is just a beast down low offensively and defensively. We're blessed to have her.

Q. Brianna and Shatori, you played a bit slow compared to how you finished. How did you deal with the early struggles and come out with the win and have productive wins?

BRIONNA JONES: I think having confidence in my teammates knowing they were going to knock down shots when they were going. And just picking it up from there and just build off that when they got hot.

SHATORI WALKER-KIMBROUGH: Yeah, I definitely struggled with it offensively. But I mean the way our team came in, the minutes Ieshia and Blair played, and the big shots Destiny hit, they were definitely big.

And they did not play like freshmen. Like Coach said, our bench came in and did a great job, and I thought we did it in great ways. It wasn't pretty at all times but I thought we played really hard as a team.

Q. Des, you had not your best half in the first game but yesterday and today you shot with great confidence. Did anything change for you mentally?

DESTINY SLOCUM: My team giving me confidence, always being there. After the first half, they made sure after halftime to give me a little bit of confidence, tell me to keep shooting, simple as that.

Q. You were able to shoot again 52 percent against one of the best if not the best team in the conference. How was that able to happen?

COACH FRESE: Again, this team does a tremendous job, I think, of sharing the basketball at times. We just really slowed down and we were really poised. But they just continued to feed the hot hand, and you saw a lot of contributions that we were able to get to see our bench depth. The spark that they gave us tonight. But just a lot of great contributions, Kristen Confroy tonight, just a lot of key plays for us.

Q. How do you compare this championship to others that you've won?

COACH FRESE: Oh, my goodness. I mean, they're all indescribable, what it means to be able to continue to take these championships home and represent Maryland. But, again, I credit the players. I mean, they make it look easy, but like Bri talked about on the floor, they're not.

And it's even more incredible when you have two seniors who have spent four years of the hard work, the sweat, the tears, to be sending them out in the Big Ten in terms of just their success, all they do is win and one more remaining.

Q. Before the tournament, you said you were optimistic about your team's depth. What was it that you saw that made you feel they could have the performances they did this weekend?

COACH FRESE: Well, because they've been fighting all year, and I know the character in our locker room and how we played for each other. So I think just early when they saw how important in the first game the quarterfinals, how important our bench was going to be and just being ready, I think they were able to see how valuable they were.

I think our seniors layered it in their locker room talk and conversations and that was huge.

Q. Destiny, you were a freshman who plays beyond your years. What drives you?

DESTINY SLOCUM: Just my team. They're always there. They make me better than I look, I promise you. To have these two to pass to, it's crazy. She makes every shot. She also makes every shot. So they make me look better than I really am. But it's just the hard work putting in every day and having these people by my side always lifting me up.

Q. Destiny, what's it feel like to win your first tournament?

DESTINY SLOCUM: It's exciting, especially knowing this journey started in the summer, and we're still not finished and that this is one step on a long journey.

Q. Tom Izzo, Mark Turgeon, talked about the Big Ten being underrated as a whole on the men's side.

Do you think that translates to the women's side? And how do you feel about the conference as a whole going into the NCAA Tournament?

COACH FRESE: No question. I said it after the game. There's not enough credit given to the parity in this conference. And when you see a No. 5 seed and No. 6 seed be able to get to the semis and finals and to win games and push us, it speaks volumes of the parity in our conference. And we just have to continue to keep exposing it where people continue to watch the teams in the Big Ten. And we need to do well in the postseason, which I feel like we should get a lot of teams.

Q. Brenda, what does Destiny mean to this team going forward into the future?

COACH FRESE: I mean, it's indescribable. You talk about -- she's the engine that makes us go. And you see just with her energy, with her spirit, she makes also everybody else around her better. She's the point guard that we've been missing. And, you know, she starts everything for us.

Q. Shatori, Maryland, I think, is the first team in Big Ten history to win both the regular season and tournament titles for three straight years. When you were a sophomore, did you envision that being able to unfold by the time you're a senior?

SHATORI WALKER-KIMBROUGH: Not really. Coach does a good job telling us to look out what's ahead, like what's right in front of us. And I think that's been -- we've been using that mindset since our sophomore year, just take it one game at a time, and see how that unfolds and how that mindset looking back how it played out now. I mean, it's a great mindset. And I say this confidently. I don't think Maryland's done now.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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Sharon Versyp Bridget Perry Ashley Morrisette Purdue Boilermakers

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THE MODERATOR: Purdue has joined us. Sharon, we'll start with a statement from you.

COACH VERSYP: Just really proud of this team. Played four games in four days and playing pretty much toe to toe. The third quarter was very difficult for us, but when you look at the stat sheet they made shots we didn't. And obviously they scored in the paint, and they do that to everyone in the country.

So Maryland's a very, very good basketball team, but we're not too far behind when you play in the fourth game, and I'm just really proud of what we've done and the journey we've had with these kids.

Q. You guys know that Jones is a challenge is a handful, just how difficult was she in this game, in this environment?

BRIDGET PERRY: You know, she's big and physical, very hard presence to guard. She's one of the best post players in the country. So at times we did a decent job. And at times when she gets deep she's scoring the ball. And we did good at times but not the whole game.

Q. Ashley, did they come at you with more size tonight and seem to -- you faced a lot of double teams this year but eventually did that wear you down, actually play four games in four days?

ASHLEY MORRISSETTE: Yeah, they definitely played some good defense. So credit to that.

Q. Ashley, this game stings. It's fresh. But what you guys have done over the last couple of weeks and now putting yourself into a position to make the NCAA Tournament, are you overall pretty happy with the run you guys have been on?

ASHLEY MORRISSETTE: We're happy we're getting there. But we're not satisfied. We're definitely looking



to make a run in the NCAA Tournament, and I know that this group can do that.

Q. Ashley, you guys played excellent all game. Going into the second half, that's when they had the biggest lead against you guys. Why is that? What were they able to do?

ASHLEY MORRISSETTE: Well, we didn't come out in the third quarter like how we wanted to. And I thought they took advantage of that very well. And they scored a lot of points in the paint. And we just needed to cover down more on Jones and a couple of times we did, but a then a few times we didn't. And against a team like Maryland you have to do that every time.

Q. Bridget, why did things start to click for this team, not only these last four days, but maybe these last three weeks?

BRIDGET PERRY: You know, I think everyone was surprised except us as a team. We knew we've had it in us and we've seen flashes. And I think being in a high pressure environment, playing for a championship completely elevated us as a team. We stayed together down the stretch no matter what. As a unit, nothing could break us and that was the difference.

Q. Sharon, do you think you guys passed the test for an NCAA Tournament team?

COACH VERSYP: I'm not the NCAA committee. But if it's their parameters, we hit every checkmark. So, yes, we should be in. If we didn't beat Ohio State, we probably wouldn't have been in. But we beat a No. 9-ranked team in the country. We won seven straight. Besides Illinois everybody was higher ranking than us.

We had major injuries through the entire season. We had concussions. We never had a full roster until really the last five games. So if the NCAA is saying certain things matter, then we're definitely in because we got the marquee win, and we deserve it.

Q. What did click for this team?

COACH VERSYP: After Penn State, people stepped up and got in people's face. Peer pressure is a lot better than coaches going after you.

And I think that totally changed it. And I think Ashley started it, and then I think Bridget continued it. I think they both did it together. But after Penn State, we

weren't real happy about losing. So then it all changed. And Ashley kept everybody accountable and so did Bridget.

And I think when a player gets in your face, says it's unacceptable, it's your teammate they responds, and they did. And these two did great.

Q. Coach, you said before that with Maryland, the problem of trying to come at them is they don't have one star player that you can focus on. So how does that just change the game plan going from Ohio State into --

COACH VERSYP: Yeah, it's difficult. Because they have such great shooters. If you look at their stats. They made shots; we didn't. We struggled offensively. But if you look at everything, I mean we just didn't score. And for them, Jones has scored on everybody in the country, the No. 1 team in the country. They couldn't stop her. And I thought, like Bridget said, we did some really good things, but then we let her go.

We had littles on her and our bigs should have been on her. And we were out of position a little bit. So credit them. They just know how to pound it inside. They do a good job and they share the ball very well.

So again, it's -- holding them to 74 points, people probably don't think is great, but I thought it was pretty decent. But if you look at the shooting percentage, that's where we got hurt.

Q. Ashley, what's the takeaway from not only this tournament but the last three or four weeks?

ASHLEY MORRISSETTE: The takeaway is definitely to stick together and this team has stuck together ever since that Penn State loss. And I think this team's heart is huge. And when we get to NCAAs we're going to be a dangerous team.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.