

Big Ten Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Thursday March 5, 2020

Sharon Versyp Kayana Traylor Purdue Boilermakers

Purdue - 72, Michigan State - 63

Q. The good start seemed to energize this group today. How important was that first 10 minutes in particular?

SHARON VERSYP: First 10 minutes we really keyed in. We were just due to really connect and play well, and we wanted to get the ball inside immediately, and we did -- our first, probably eight points, (we) got inside, so that just really elevated the confidence. So that's what we wanted to do. The three things was transition defense, get the ball inside as much as we can, and then get three stops, and I thought all those three things worked out very well for a good three and a half quarters.

Q. 11 assists on your first 14 buckets I think was the number there. A lot of hands touching the ball. At that point you had to feel pretty good about that early on.

SHARON VERSYP: That was big. We finished the game 20 assists on 27 field goals. And when we share the basketball inside-outside, not trying to do a lot of one-on-one stuff -- we're not a one-on-one team, but I think building that confidence, having Karissa really start out hot and having Ae'Rianna start out hot, that kind of just built the confidence. But that's what we talk about is building confidence in the defense.

Q. How much did the switch to the zone midway through the first quarter kind of throw them off, or did you want them to potentially beat you from the three, make them shoot those shots?

SHARON VERSYP: We did that combination, because obviously Clouden is just so good off the dribble, and she can just dissect you, and McCutcheon was, so we went to that zone and they missed a lot of shots during that time. Then you get more momentum, so you can get down in transition buckets. So I think doing that was a big key for us to kind of get that lead and then sustain that lead.

Q. You're kind of considered a bubble team as far as the NCAA Tournament goes. What was your



message to your girls during the week? There's potentially something bigger to be played for here.
SHARON VERSYP: We talked. I mean, everything that we've done, our strength of schedule and the teams that we've beat, the things that I've seen, we've been a 10 seed or 11 seed. We see that. We don't talk about that. We knew today was going to be an important game, and we did what we needed to do, and obviously we'll get Maryland. Maryland is one of the top teams in the country, but it's going to continue to build our strength of schedule, so that's what the NCAA wants, that's what we give them.

Q. How have your seniors handled this week in particular?

SHARON VERSYP: Well, they've been really good leaders. They've been talking to the sophomores and freshmen about just the energy and what needs to be done here and how we do things, and it's totally different. The level is different, the feel is different. You know, and I think that's been good, and our staff did the same thing. But Ae'Rianna and Nique have done a good job through the whole year.

Kayana Traylor

Q. How important was the good start for this team today? It felt like it really energized everybody this afternoon.

KAYANA TRAYLOR: Yeah, I mean, we always emphasize energy in just the first four minutes. So I thought we got off to a really good start, and then that carried us for the rest of the game.

Q. Being able to kind of withstand their late run, this team kept its focus for all 40 minutes today.

KAYANA TRAYLOR: Well, we knew they weren't going to lay down and give it to us, obviously. They played for their seniors, just like we did, so we knew we had to play the whole 40 minutes. So we did a good job of sustaining their run and being able to go on a run, also.

Q. This team is still maybe trying to play for an NCAA Tournament berth. Was there a little more energy to the whole week getting ready for potentially a long weekend here?

KAYANA TRAYLOR: Of course, yeah. This is the Big Ten Tournament, so this is what we prepare for and look forward to, so it's always fun.

