



2019 NCAA DIVISION I WOMEN'S BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

Second Round · #3 Maryland vs. #6 UCLA

XFINITY Center · College Park, Md.

Monday, March 25, 2019

PREGAME QUOTES – UCLA

Cori Close, UCLA Head Coach:

Opening Statement:

"It's so funny, this time of year everybody is exhausted and I thought to myself last night 'I get to have another sleepless night, isn't that great?' I am so grateful and I'm so grateful to be able to keep coaching this team. I am so grateful to be able to watch a group of young women grow from being sort of doubtful individuals, I think they're very honest in that with sort of this unknown, and have them grow into a very confident group of young women that play very well together. I'm just excited to go watch that process and be a small part of it. I have a lot of respect for Maryland. Brenda is just-- I think I mentioned this yesterday, she just builds a program of sustained excellence and that's something that I place at a very high value because there's ups and downs but when you can get a culture that consistently performs at a really high level that's to be admired and respected. I have respected that for many, many years."

On her memories from the matchups with Florida State versus Maryland:

"Some of my most vivid memories from Florida State are these epic games versus Maryland. I remember when, I think it was Deron-- we had a double overtime game down in Tallahassee that was just amazing. We've had some great ones up here obviously when Tolliver and Langhorn and Harper and those years when they had so many great players. Somehow, we ended up having these really great games. Those are really fun and that's what you really enjoy in the competition of a great league. I think there's so many. They're really good. They recruit really well. They play at a high level. Rebounding and physicality I've always admired that. They've just consistently been a very physical and rebounding team. Adding the shooters that they have on this year's team, my goodness. They've been just a really great team. But again, over a long period of time you can trace that back and I just think it's amazing what they've done."

On how cool it will be that tomorrow will be the 41st anniversary of the 1978 Maryland versus UCLA game:

"That's pretty amazing and if I'm correct Denise Curry was in that game, correct? It's pretty neat. Denise Curry is here with us. So, having one of the people-- she's a season ticket holder for us, her and Annie Myers actually, and Debbie Willie is on this trip, her name now is Debbie Holiday but her maiden name is Debbie Willie. We have them here with us and that part of history. We

talk a lot about respect and represent. Respect the opportunities that you've been given and represent the people that have come before you. I think, 'Wow, we're walking in a trail the other people blazed.' I just think that it is really big to remember that we did not come at this alone. Back in the day-- here we have Denise traveling with us and we charter here and we have all these great meals and they drove buses and had four to a room and all of these different things. I think it's really good to pause and say thank you to the people that were involved in those games, thank you to the people who really lived out Title IX in an amazing, courageous way that now we get opportunities that just would never had been here without their sacrifice and courageous belief."

On what she thinks about the bracket they're in and what it would mean to potentially take out two of the most prominent programs in the sport in Tennessee and Maryland:

"Well, I think one of our storied softball coaches at UCLA had this phrase that 'they're just shirts'. People have a jersey on, but people have to go out and make plays and teams have to go and do that. I think that it's a little bit dangerous. You want to respect that; I mean they have earned that place in history and they've earned that with their excellence over a long period of time but at the same time it's just shirts. The fact that they're just putting those shirts on- those individual players and these two teams at this moment have to go and make plays together. Would it be meaningful? Yeah, because I want to keep coaching this team. But I try not to place too much on the name on the front of the jersey other than the fact that I want to represent it well with strong character and great play and teamwork and togetherness, but in terms of because somebody has a more storied history than someone else I don't really give it much thought."

On if she agrees with Senior Guard Japreece Dean that the team seems more focused on the road:

"Well it's hard to argue when you look at how our year has gone. She's got to be careful what she says, I'm going to be having them all in hotels at home and all of these different things. I think there has been sort of this sense of focus that there's no external distractions. It's interesting because like with social media it's not like they're ever far from their families or people in their influence but it's just something a little bit tighter and a little bit less going on. I think all year long; it's just been incrementally and then once you get a couple of huge road wins. I mean at Arizona State we get that huge win; they were ranked 16th in the country and then we go and get triple overtime win at Arizona two days later and then it just starts with just building. Then it becomes a psychological edge that they feel like they've earned this confidence of being a great road team. I don't know if I can trace it all back but my mom was like 'I'm just hoping and praying that you get to earn your way to a home game,' and I'm like 'Mom, be careful what you wish for. We're doing pretty well on the road.' So, I don't know-- every team, like you guys have referred to earlier, every team and every year is a little bit different. I think that this team has developed a little bit of an identity that they enjoy the challenge of being on the road and they've found a way to work it to their advantage."

On what her thoughts are on Maryland's Kaila Charles:

"I think she is just so versatile. She reminds me in some ways of Michaela, in the fact that she's explosive, she can hit you in three level scoring not maybe as much from the outside, but she's capable. She's really aggressive and when they go small and put her at the four, she's a tough matchup. She's obviously done a really good job and she's definitely been someone who has gotten our attention in our scouting report for sure."

On what it's like to get freshman ready to play:

"Well I think it is really hard so I think she deserves a lot of credit for that. My staff is Shannon Perry, who was coaching on the Duke staff when Tolliver hit that step back shot, so we know it

well. Shannon doesn't let us forget it. I think that first of all give her credit. I think that it is an art form. When to try to push the bottoms to get them uncomfortable to get them ready for battle and when to really build them back up and try to help them build their confidence and know that they're capable. It's not- I think that it's really hard. I always say that every freshman wants to quit a dozen times and transfer a dozen times. It's just going to happen. I always say to parents that it is the hardest year of their life but also the most growth-filled year of their life. I think that it's just staying the course and building relationships and I think that is something Brenda is really good at. She believes in her process and she knows how to build relationships and sincerely invest in her players. As a result of that, as those hard times come, she really knows how to build with them because she's done the relational work to really ride out the storms because there's going to be storms with freshmen. I think that's been really similar for us is that every freshman is going to hit the wall and to let them know that its normal and its ok. We call it the edge. When you get to the edge and your talent runs out and now you have to develop the discipline and skill to really reach our potential. To not see the edge is a bad thing, but that's when the really good stuff happens. If you can get that turned around in a freshman's mind-- this is right about February you start to see them around the corner and now there's no freshmen anymore come March."

On if there is anything you can take from Maryland's Head Coach Brenda Frese:

"Well I think that it starts for me with Coach Wooden and the consistency over a long period of time. It started with recruiting and relationships. That is why I admire Coach Wooden so much. Then he built in the culture and the discipline within his program to have the skill catch up with that, but it was originally started with relationships and recruiting and I think that Brenda has done as well and that's something I really believe in. It is something that-- She's been really great. I remember as a human being-- my second day on the job at Florida Sate one of our players passed away suddenly. I had just moved across the country and my head is spinning. I remember being there distinctly and Brenda sending flowers and getting Sue on the phone and I just know that Sue felt very cared for in that moment. I think that's about people and putting people first. I admire that she's done that with what she has built with her family and what she's been through with her son. I admire just the way that her players come back. I saw some of them in the stands here yesterday, because it's putting people's hearts first. That is something that I deeply believe in. So, in that case, yes, I would love for us to be a Maryland of the west. If we're able to be a program that puts people's hearts first and recruits at a very high level and then has a culture of growth that prepares them for life beyond UCLA. I'm always like 'we have to help them be prepared for when the ball goes flat.' Whenever that may be. They may have a long career, but we're going to put people's hearts first and we're going to prepare them for when the ball goes flat. I definitely have watched her over the years and have taken things that I definitely want to make characteristics of our program as well."

Michaela Onyenwere, Sophomore Forward

On looking at their bracket matchups:

"We just felt like it was a great opportunity. We were in practice when the bracket got leaked actually, so we kind of found out in an unconventional way. But it's just a great opportunity to be able to play these high caliber teams with great players. We're just really excited for this opportunity."

On the mindset going into the second round:

"I think the confidence is a big kind of thing for us. We have come a long way since the beginning of the season and we've been through a lot of ups and downs, but we are here for a reason. Along with having that urgency, just continuing to have fun. We don't have any games

left this year, so just continuing to enjoy our seniors, continuing to enjoy our coaches, and continuing to be having fun with this team.”

On Lindsey Corsaro’s performance yesterday:

“Lindsey has been through a lot, like she said yesterday in our press conference, this is her first NCAA game, and this is her third year here. So just having somebody who is just a great person, a great leader for us, get that opportunity is really nice to see for me. And just as her teammate, I’m so proud of her and so proud of her growth this year.”

On how team bonding prepares the players for road games:

“I think it’s really important because we have kind of grown into a team where we are really close off the court and I know that these people are my family and it’s easy to compete with people you love and support and you know care for you. So, it’s just easier to have this connection off the court like what it is on the court, you know, that everyone has your best interest at heart.”

On the difference between preparing for the tournament and regular season:

“I think the preparation stays the same. Whether it is a NCAA game or regular road game, I think that we are still urgent and still came here to win a game, so I think our preparation and urgency are still very similar.”

On what they know about Maryland:

“I watch college basketball a lot, so I’m always looking to see good games. I know that Maryland has been one of the top teams this year. They have great players; players I had played against in AAU back in the day, so I’ve kind of watched their growth. I’ve watched how they play and I know they are just a great team.”

On their thoughts turning the season around and making it to the tournament:

“From the beginning it was hard. I mean it’s not no secret, it was hard at the beginning of the season, but there was no lack of belief from the coaching staff or from any of our teammates. That’s just something that, if you like, have such great coaches who instill that confidence in you, regardless of what you guys are doing because they knew what our potential was going to be. Even when the season started, we knew that we were going to be a little bit different, but that didn’t ever waver from the coaching staff. So, when you have people like that who believe in you it’s easier to kind of change things around even when you hit adversity.”

On what makes this team different from last year:

“Last year we relied a lot on Jordin [Canada] and Kelli [Hayes] just to lead us. They are great players and they did a lot of great things here and I looking up to a lot of them because of the things they did that were crazy on the court, but then they were such great people off the court. I think it’s a little bit different this year, where it’s like you have to scout everybody. Everybody on our team is a weapon and I think that it to our advantage because it’s not like you can guard one person and one person will step up. I think that versatility between our team has definitely got us to where we are right now.”

Japreece Dean, Junior Guard

On looking at their bracket matchups:

"I think I agree with Michalea that it's a great opportunity and knowing that we are a great team too and the letters across our chest matter too. I thought it was a great opportunity to be able to play these teams."

On the mindset going into the second round:

"I think just taking it one day at a time. Whether that's today in practice having a focus and an urgency and then getting ready for our opponent. But just having an attack mindset and believing in ourselves and knowing that we've come a long way and that we are peaking at a great time, so I think just having the confidence in ourselves and knowing that we're a great team as well."

On Lindsey Corsaro's performance yesterday:

"I thought it was great. I texted her after the game. I was like, we need to see that every time and have that confidence every time you get on the floor. But it was great to see her. I'm sure that feels good to see the ball go through the net so I'm sure that's great for her. But as far as a point guard it's amazing cause just having different people step up at different times, which makes our team hard to guard. So, I think it's amazing and I'm happy for her."

On difference between the tournament and regular season:

"Yeah, obviously it's a little bit more intense in the NCAA just as far as one and done, but I think that we just keep the same urgency and being on the road it's just a different vibe because it's more structured, we're around each other more. I feel like we are more accountable on the road then we are at home honestly. But I think it's great and just knowing that we are playing for our seniors and this could be their last time, so I think that just fighting for each other just every change we get is great."

On what they know about Maryland:

"For me this year, it's crazy because it's probably one of the only teams I haven't really seen play. Cause I watch a lot of basketball too, but I have not really seen Maryland play."

On their thoughts turning the season around and making it to the tournament:

"I think just human nature. I mean there are obviously some thoughts you probably have when you start off that way and just hearing outsiders talk about our picks gone and then just how coach Cori is going to make this team good. Just stuff like that, it's hard to tune out, but I felt like we stuck together, and we matured and like I said, we are peaking at the right time. It's amazing to see how great this team is and how great the players are."

On why they are more accountable on the road:

"Because there's just more structure. I think that it's like, okay lights out at this time. We have roommates, so now you have a person next to you, like okay it's time to go to bed. Whenever you're at home, it's like, I have my own room by myself and I can stay up. I think that it's just more structure and I don't know, on the road it's just a different vibe. We are just around each other. We have good meals. That's another thing. Like at home, we could be eating anything. We don't know what people are eating, especially in the dorms. I don't know, but the meals are just a lot better. Just more structure."

On what makes this team different from last year:

"I would have to agree that just it's more of a team and not watching one person do a lot of things. I mean, sometimes we watch Mic [Onyenwere] do some great things, but I think that everyone has just stepped up into a new role. Whether that is scoring, leading, passing, anything. So I think everyone took on the pressure and just stepped up."

On if comparisons to Jordin Canada are frustrating:

“Honestly, yes they do get a little frustrating. Not just comparing, but just calling me her. Like Jordin Jr. Like, that’s not my name. My name is Japreece and we’re different. Obviously, Jordin is a great player, so kind of it is a nice thing to be compared to a top 10 draft pick. We talk all the time. She has my back and I appreciate that. And I appreciated that tweet and you can tell that she doesn’t like it either. I love her, and we talk all the time.”