



2014 NCAA DIVISION I WOMEN'S BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

Regional Final · Practice Day · Notre Dame vs. Baylor
Purcell Pavilion at the Joyce Center · Notre Dame, Ind.
Sunday, March 30

REGIONAL FINAL PRACTICE DAY QUOTES – Baylor

Kim Mulkey – Head Coach

On the difference between Notre Dame this year and previous seasons...

"I don't see a lot of change other than personnel. I think they're just a very balanced, good team. I see experience, but I don't know that there's a whole lot that has changed in their offensive approach to the game. They're doing really the same thing they did with Skylar [Diggins], except they're spreading the wealth now."

On targeting freshman point guard Lindsay Allen...

"You're asking way too many details. I'm not going to give you my game plan. I won't tell you all those details. I'll just say they're a very good team, and they're too good a team to just pick out one player. She wouldn't be at Notre Dame if she wasn't good. I'll leave it at that."

On Natalie Achonwa...

"She's an experienced post player. She's been to three Final Fours, I think. She plays international basketball for Canada, am I correct in that? She's played a lot of basketball, she's physical, and she's got a little meanness about her. She will throw a few choice words here and there. She just gets mad at herself and the competitor in her comes out, and we're just going to have our hands full down there. She's an experienced, tough, aggressive post player that does have a little finesse to her game with her passing ability."

On Notre Dame's size...

"Their size is not something inside that surprises me, it's the size that they own on the perimeter. They're long on the perimeter. Inside we've pretty much seen that. Nina [Davis]'s going to always be outsized in there, so that wasn't something that was going to be a concern. It was the length that they have on the perimeter. You have big perimeter players for Notre Dame."

On what it means to get to the Final Four...

"The enjoyment that I get out of it as a coach is to watch young people get to experience it for the first time, and our fans the opportunity to experience. Once you've done it, it never gets old, but it's

different after the first time. But we have a lot in that locker room that have never experienced it. It would mean a great deal to me personally if they had the opportunity to experience it at some point in their career at Baylor.”

On the different defenses Odyssey Sims has faced...

“First of all, she excels because she’s just that good. There are players that no matter what you do, you can’t stop them. You might make her miss a shot or miss three or four shots, but for the most part, Odyssey’s not going to go away. I think I said this in the last press conference, she has seen box-and-ones, she has seen triangle-and-twos, she has seen face guards, she has seen double teams, she has seen hedging, she has seen traps. I don’t know if there’s another defense out there. She’s seen it all, and for her to average the number of points that she has this year is pretty phenomenal. Yes, we do look for Odyssey in all that we do, but this team has grown and learned how to play with and around her. And she has grown in her trust of her teammates. Odyssey only attempted seven shots in the second half yesterday. Now you can credit Kentucky with some of that, being their defense, but I credit it that she realized we’re OK here. Everybody’s producing, everybody’s doing their part, and she didn’t feel the sense of urgency that she needed to take more than seven shots.”

On Odyssey Sims scoring 1,000 points this year...

“I had a conversation just talking the other day with a friend of mine. And I’ve been around the game since I was 14-years-old, and I’ve played with the best in the country. I’ve played with Olympians, I’ve played with All-Americans, I’ve coached Olympians, and I’ve coached All-Americans, guards, post. I don’t know that I’ve coached a kid that has seen the amount of attention defensively that Odyssey has seen. Now that could be because those All-Americans played with three or four All-Americans. But I’m just talking about an individual player, she has seen it all for 40 minutes. And for her to keep her composure as much as she does speaks volumes to her self-control. Odyssey, she doesn’t just see it when the ball is in her hands. She sees it away from the ball, she sees it coming off screens, and she sees it with the ball. She never, ever gets to be what I would call a normal player because she’s not a normal player.

On keeping players calm on the big stage...

“I think the schedule has allowed them to mature and grow up. I think our nonconference schedule was soft enough to allow them to gain confidence, with a few hard games in there. You knew at the time we did the schedule there would be six teams in the Big 12 in the top 25. By the time we got to them, some of them weren’t, but they’re still good teams. And I just think practice and putting them on the floor at a young age right off the bat has allowed them to grow and mature and not be overwhelmed. I don’t anticipate that they’ll come out tomorrow and do anything that would surprise me. They’re still freshmen, but they have games under their belt, and they’ll make mistakes, but there will always be mistakes with effort. And you can live with that.”

On playing regional games at home campus sites...

“You want me suspended again? I won’t answer that either. Anything I’ll say will be scrutinized and analyzed by the committee, and you’ve got a committee member sitting back there. [To committee member:] I did good, didn’t I? I won’t answer it, hon. I’m tired of being suspended. It doesn’t matter what I say. That’s all I’m going to tell you. I understand, I think it is a fair question. Look, nobody wants to be in a regional tournament on somebody’s home floor. That’s all I’m going to say. Who would want that? Nobody wants to be in a regional tournament on somebody’s home floor. And that’s about the extent of what I will say. I don’t know how it happened. I’m not informed enough, you’ll need to talk to the committee how we have these home floors. I will say this, my son said it best. He’s a freshman baseball player at LSU. And he opened the bracket, and he said, ‘Mom, I’m looking at the men’s bracket,

and I'm looking at the women's bracket. And it kind of hit me.' He said, 'In the men's bracket, you've got directional regionals: South, Southwest.' He said, 'Over here, you've got names of schools. We've got to change that. Even if you're playing at Notre Dame it should say "Northeast Bracket," you know what I'm saying? It just doesn't look good. It's an advertisement for the school is what it is. And so if a 19-year-old baseball player can recognize that and have a little interest in the women's game, maybe we can change that. And that's all I'm going to say about it. We're trying. We're trying it all. What can you do, go back to the top 16 seeds? Well if you do that, then you're really truly going to have four or five in those top 16 that don't give a flip about women's basketball either and their fans aren't going to show up. But yet they're going to be one of the top 16 seeds because they do have a good women's basketball program. So I don't know the answer, I don't study it enough. Have I given you enough to write about? Make sure you write it so that I don't get suspended. As my son said, 'Mom, the NCAA has put you in timeout.' Don't put me in timeout."

On getting insight from the Notre Dame-Oklahoma State game since Baylor played OSU three times and on injured Baylor guard Alexis Prince's missed presence...

"You know, no one has talked about what this team has accomplished without my second best player never getting on the floor except for one game. Alexis Prince was the MVP of the McDonald's All-American Game her senior year. Man, we're excited. You're a 6'2 perimeter player, I can post her, I can work her outside, and she's really never been healthy. And she's had her second foot surgery. And to think that this team has done all this without her is pretty remarkable. So what was your question? [On Oklahoma State:] I don't know if it helps us any more than maybe to get a gauge of some of the things that they might have exposed that Notre Dame did or didn't do. But we've played Notre Dame four times, so we pretty much know their personnel through the years and their philosophy and what they try to do. I don't know if that helps."

On Jewell Loyd...

"She's a tremendous, tremendous basketball player. She's one of those long, lengthy guards on the perimeter for Notre Dame that gets a lot of deflections, can leap out of the gym, runs the floor well, can handle the ball. She's really a presence on the floor – you can't take your eyes off her at any time. She moves well without the basketball. I don't know where she's most dangerous: with or without the basketball in her hands. And to think that she's so young and being able to lead her basketball team – she's really talented."

Odyssey Sims – Senior – Guard

On overcoming the various types of defenses she has played against...

"I have seen a lot of defenses this year, but I am used to it now. We've been seeing different defenses since the beginning of the year, especially in conference play. Coach [Mulkey] has done a great job with helping me attack defenses and my teammates have done a great job in practice defending me and helping me get better. The main thing is to stay patient on offense, no matter what defense they throw at us, don't rush, don't play into the defense's hands, and to keep composure."

On previous successes against Notre Dame in her career...

"Well, we did have a 6'8 monster in the paint which gave us a bit of an advantage. It'll be a grind it out game. It'll be very physical. They have great guards who can shoot threes and take you off the dribble so we'll have to defend all over the court and make sure our help side is very strong and to help the helper."

We just have to play basketball. We have to play hard and every possession counts from this point on. Nobody wants to go home, so we're going to play hard and hopefully we can come out with a victory."

On getting to the Final Four with this team...

"It would mean a lot, especially since nobody really expected us to be here. This team has grown faster than all of us really expected, especially the freshmen who have come a long way and have stepped up to the plate. They've learned their roles and took it upon themselves. They've come off the bench and have given us a lot of production. It'll be exciting and it would be unbelievable."

On the matchup with Notre Dame's guards...

"We have our hands full on the perimeter. Notre Dame is a very good team and we give them credit. They've had an outstanding season. Our guards have to guard all over the floor. They can take it off the dribble, and if we go under the screen, they can nail the jump shot. We're going to have to play as hard as we can and do the best that we can. They're going to make some shots in our face but we're going to have to live with that and make sure it's contested and make sure we limit their open shots. They get most of their points in transition so we're going to have to make sure we do a great job of getting back and not letting them get into it early."

Nina Davis – Freshman – Forward

The challenges of playing against Notre Dame's post players...

"We're going to throw [experience] out the window. At this point, experience is not the reason we're here. We really just have to go out there and play basketball. No matter if you're a senior, junior, sophomore, or freshman, when you get between the lines, it doesn't really matter. It's going to be the team that hustles the most, gets to the foul line, rebounds, and plays every possession like it's their last."

On how the schedule Baylor has played has helped prepare them for this stage...

"It has helped us grow a lot. We played so many different teams that threw different things at us. Some played 2-3 zones, some played man-to-man. We have pretty much faced anything that we could go up against tomorrow. We have to go out there relaxed and not panic if they throw any type of junk defense at us and we should be all right."

Makenzie Robertson – Senior – Guard

On trying to beat Notre Dame at home...

"It's always difficult when you go to somebody's home court. As far as the crowd goes, we've been seeing that kind of crowd all throughout the Big 12. We have great fans, they have great fans and we're going to be used to that. As far as the home court advantage goes, we embrace it and take it as a challenge and we'll do our best."

On getting to the Final Four with this team...

"It couldn't get much better. It's what everyone dreams about: getting to the Final Four and having a chance to go for a championship. With the inexperience with this team, including myself, the fact that we've made it this far is unbelievable and it just shows the fight that we have."

Sune Agbuke – Junior – Forward

On the importance of good help defense...

“It’s important that we focus on stopping the ball without fouling and knowing that they’re good shooters. We know that they’re going to make contested shots, but we have to make sure that they are contested and not wide open threes or wide open mid-range jump shots. We have to make sure that we have a hand up in their face, boxing out, and that we’re making it tough for them.”

On the difficulty of guarding Natalie Achonwa...

“She was getting a lot of offensive rebounds [against Oklahoma State] and put backs. It was interesting because we’ve played OSU three times so it was good for us to compare side-to-side what we’re going up against. [Natalie Achonwa] was working really hard and she never stops moving. She has a lot of fight in her, so the posts are going to have a lot of trouble with that, but our focus is to keep her out of the paint and to keep her off balance since she’s a very good passer. I can’t stop moving and I’m going to have to body up to her when I need to body up to her, and I need to keep my hands up and stay out of foul trouble.”

Niya Johnson – Sophomore – Guard

On what she expects to see against Notre Dame...

“Mainly man-to-man defense, but some zone. They can’t really guard us for 40 minutes in man so we’ll probably see some zone. We just have to stay in our tempo.”