



2014 NCAA DIVISION I WOMEN'S BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

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

REGIONAL FINAL PRACTICE DAY QUOTES – Notre Dame

Muffet McGraw – Head Coach

On Odyssey Sims ...

"I don't think anyone has found a way to stop her. She's a phenomenal player. She can get shots and she's going to get her shots. She's going to get a lot of opportunities. It's really difficult to slow down a player like her when she's got the ball in her hands. She's just smart— she reads the defense, she passes well, she can really score. I don't think she has any weaknesses in her game. I think we have to try to do different things. I don't think we are going to come in with one plan and think it's going to be successful for 40 minutes, because no one has found a way to stop her yet. We're going to try a little bit of everything and hopefully find something that works."

On other matchup problems...

"I think that [Sims] creates so many problems for you because when she attacks and gets in the lane you focus on her, which is what a lot of people did last year with Skylar [Diggins]. Everybody looks at the ball and then she finds people underneath for an open shot. Nina Davis has really benefitted well from what Odyssey has been able to do for her. I think that's the problem is that you focus on her and you forget about the other people and they just put themselves in great positions to score. I think Nina Davis is a concern with her ability to rebound and score. (Makenzie) Robertson, you can't leave her alone on the three-point line. I think their team has just gotten better throughout the year, so I don't really think you can focus on Odyssey and forgot about anyone else."

On Notre Dame's defense...

"We've worked on our defense all year long. We've got a lot of challenges in the ACC, and we've had a lot of good teams and good players to guard. I've been fairly happy with the man-to-man. I think Jewell Loyd has really improved as a defensive player. Ariel Braker has done a lot of good things with her length. She's one player that's been kind of an X-factor for us with her size and ability to get out on the perimeter. I think it's been pretty good, but it can always get better."

On expectations for the game...

"We like to play up tempo. I think the fans enjoy a lot of offense and I think there's going to be a lot of offense— there's certainly going to be a lot of shots. I don't think the shot clock will come into play at all. I think it will be a fun, up-tempo game."

On the possibility of making four straight Final Fours...

"If that happens that would be a really great thing for our program. I think it sets us apart from others. Having Skylar was fun and she took us to three straight Final Fours, and now to have a different team do that would just be a really great thing for our program."

On advantages of playing at home...

"I think it's great. I don't know if they think it's great that they get to go to class but we do feel like it's such a comfort level playing at home, being in our own locker room, the pregame rituals are all the same. Everything is familiar. I think that's really important when you get to this stage of the tournament, especially for the younger players. I don't think it affects the upperclassmen at all, but when you come out and have that crowd behind you, I mean a loud raucous crowd that's going to really get things going for us tomorrow, I think that is a huge advantage."

On Lindsay Allen...

"I've been really, really proud of Lindsay and how she's handled herself, her demeanor, her poise. Six assists, no turnovers, made some shots— she really played well. I think she's much better than her freshman status. I think Oklahoma State tried to get up and rattle her and they weren't successful. I think other teams have tried that and said in the paper the day after that that was their game plan and it was not really successful. And I think she's right. I think we help her out a lot. The post can come out and screen for her and we're not going to leave her on an island up there. We are going to have some people around her so she's just able to relax and get the ball to the right people."

On when Notre Dame knew it was going to be a good team...

"We kept waiting for the big win to really solidify our status in the top ten. We didn't really have that in the preseason non-conference. We beat some ranked teams but when we had that stretch at Tennessee, at Maryland, at Duke we thought that would be a really formidable stretch. To come out of that undefeated, I think that was when we started to think we are a pretty good team. "

On playing without Skylar Diggins...

"The focus has gone away from one person and turned to three or four different people and it's harder to guard. It's made us harder to guard. I think when we come down the floor, you just don't know what to expect. With Skylar you could try to do some things to stop her but with the way we are playing now, anybody can bring the ball up, anybody can start the offense. We are just a very different team. We have that great balance and a lot of different weapons."

On the three won road games...

"We had poise on the road and mental toughness. As important as those three games were, when we came back and played a team that wasn't ranked between all of that, that was the true test of mental toughness. There were some trap games in the middle and we were successful in all of them and played really well in that stretch. I think we had big moments— K-Mac (Kayla McBride) making that shot against Maryland to really win the game with 12 second left, that was the closest game we'd had up to that point. I think we did some really good things. We played without Ace (Natalie Achonwa) for a stretch, in the first half against Tennessee we went through foul trouble and different lineups and had

different people emerge. I think that's when we looked and said this bench is really good, the Tennessee game. As a team, we really felt confident."

On the depth of the bench...

"Michaela Mabrey has had a fantastic year. She's been phenomenal off the bench— she just changes the game when she comes in. You know she's going to shoot a three as soon as she crosses half court. She's fearless when she gets the ball in her hands and she changes the game for us. She's had so many dagger threes for us this year just at the most opportune moment. Just as recently as the Arizona State game, she hit a three in the corner to put us up by six at half. It was huge. I think she can really stretch the defense and change things so she's had a phenomenal year. Taya Reimer has been terrific as a freshman. She comes in and gives us great minutes at both ends of the floor. And then lately you've seen Madison Cable emerge. She's had a great NCAA tournament. And Markisha Wright had great minutes for us yesterday. We're confident in our bench and they have been the difference this year. We talk about losing Skylar but we did not have the same power coming off the bench last year as we do this year, and I think that's been the difference, having that strong, deep bench."

On preparing for Baylor...

"Brittney Griner changed the game in so many ways both offensively and defensively. We had specific plans to attack her, without much success. It's nice to game plan for a guard rather than a post. Not that it's any easier, but she was so dominant inside. We watched some of the film from the last couple of years but it's just so different. They are just so much better. And they're like us, so much more balanced. You don't have to focus on just one person. I mean, you have to know where Odyssey [Sims] is all of the time but you can't forget about the other people. I think in the past you were so much worried about Griner and Sims that the rest of them just kind of fell by the wayside. "

Kayla McBride – Senior – Guard

On the possibility of a high scoring game...

"We know that they like to get out and transition. That's something that Odyssey [Sims] does, and I know that a couple of the other players do the same thing. One of our focal points is to stop the transitioning."

On the extra motivation of playing Baylor...

"I think it is just playing 40 minutes of Notre Dame basketball. I think we already know what is at stake, and if we stick to what has been going all year, we have a good chance."

On dealing with the high pick and roll...

"We know that Odyssey is really good coming off ball screens. I think we are going to have to switch it up a little bit. I think the post has done a great job all year, and we have played a lot of different players who like to come off of ball screens."

Natalie Achonwa – Senior – Forward

On the differences and concerns of the Baylor team...

"I think that people tend to focus on Odyssey Sims, but they do not look as much at the other players. For example, there was the freshman, [Nina] Davis, who stepped up yesterday and scored 18 points, and is also a great rebounder. I think it is a focus on how we are going to guard together as a team. Like

Jewell [Loyd] said, we need to make sure we are sticking together and to our principles, our entire defense, and not just focusing on one key.”

On the extra motivation of playing Baylor...

“In this game alone, there is a lot of extra motivation: being at home, being a senior and also playing Baylor, who we lost to before. But I think our focus is on the fact that this is an Elite Eight game, and we want to put on our top game so that we can move onto the Final Four. I think we are focusing on how all 13 of us can do that, and we are just focusing on Notre Dame.”

On remembering Baylor’s win from last season...

“I think the biggest thing that I remember is that they won, and that is the only thing that I can think about in regard to that game. They are a very different team without a player like Brittney Griner, and we are a different team without a player like Skylar Diggins. I think that we are two brand-new teams playing another game, and we are just looking forward to that competition.”

Jewell Loyd – Sophomore – Guard

On limiting Odyssey Sims on defense...

“Definitely contain the ball, and find the transition. Our team defense is going to be there making every shot tough, and trying to get them frustrated.”

On the challenge of guarding Odyssey Sims, and on improvement on defense...

“I think it is fun guarding players like her. I take pride in my defense. We practice guarding great players in practice, and I give credit to my team. They help me out a lot. A lot of times I make mistakes and I look back and Ace [Natalie Achonwa] is there to help me out, and K-Mac [Kayla McBride], and Ariel [Braker], and etc. The confidence that they give me is great, saying, ‘We need you to stop this person,’ and so I give a lot of credit to my team.”

Lindsay Allen – Freshman – Guard

On getting targeted being a freshman guard...

“I have felt targeted at times, but we have other great ball handlers like Kayla [McBride] and Jewell [Loyd], and Natalie [Achonwa] sets up great screens for me to get open. I handle it pretty well, but we have other great ball handlers on the team.”

Ariel Braker – Senior – Forward

On the advantage of having mobile posts in transition...

“I think that it is obviously an advantage that we can get up and down the court, and it helps us with our rebounding game. If we are able to rebound, and get up and down the court, it takes a little pressure off of our offense to have to set up and run, and try to score.”