



2016 NCAA DIVISION I WOMEN'S BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

First Round · Georgia vs. Indiana
Purcell Pavilion at the Joyce Center · Notre Dame, Indiana
Friday, March 18

PRACTICE DAY 1 QUOTES – Georgia

Joni Taylor, Georgia Head Coach:

On Georgia's midseason tournament run to make the NCAA Tournament...

“Our first four games were against ranked opponents, so what we did differently this year is that we sat down and we broke our season into three different sections. Season one was our non-conference. Season two was conference play. Season three was postseason play. We talked about each season separately. When we got to season two, which was our conference play, we talked about starting on the road at Texas A&M and the challenges that might be presented there and coming back and having a really good Missouri team that is ranked. We had Kentucky after them, and then you look at Florida is ranked before you go down to Gainesville. So, we talked about what might happen and the position we could be in if things went exactly the way we wanted and also what could happen if things didn't quite go the way we wanted them to go. Yes, we were very disappointed in how we started, but I don't think it was a shock either. That helped our players because they were prepared for a tough start. We just knew we had to stay the course and trust ourselves and trust the work we had put in all summer, all preseason, and all non-conference to know that we were a good team. If we continue to fight and stay together, we can crawl ourselves out of that hole.”

On the biggest obstacle to getting Georgia back to the NCAA Tournament...

“Marjorie (Butler) mentioned it. We have a senior-heavy team. We really challenged them to grow off the floor. In the past we've played well in spurts, but we weren't very consistent. We did a lot of things to challenge them to stretch themselves outside of the basketball court, with just their leadership, their presence and being accountable and being responsible and taking that accountability on themselves. It really showed this year, especially in tough situations for us. We knew we had to run and get out in transition. We knew we had to be a really, really good defensive team to give ourselves a chance.”

On the team's mindset after a disappointing SEC tournament...

"I think they're ready to go. Obviously, we didn't want to go home after Vanderbilt. Losing that game in overtime was really tough on us. It gave us the chance to get back and practice and work on us without having to prepare for another team. We had a chance to really practice without Shacobia (Barbee), and after we lost her we had two games to prep for without really taking into consideration everything she does for us. This week gave us the chance to really work on us and focus on getting better and things we have to do as a team. What they need to understand is, our margin for error is just really small now because she did do so much. It's not just one person who has to fill her shoes."

On her biggest concern about facing Indiana...

"They can score. They're really talented offensively. They have a lot of really good players. Buss [Tyra Buss] being their leader and engine. She's their fire-starter. We have to make sure we're in front of her at all times and play her under the basketball and not let her get easy points in transition and then not foul her. She leads their conference in getting to the free throw line in attempts per game. We have to make sure we keep them off the free throw line. They have a really talented team. They have (Karlee) McBride who can really stretch you. They have players inside that do a really nice job. We have to be sound at all positions. That comes to knowing your scouting report and knowing personnel and playing scouting report defense."

On her strategy to win the rebounding battle...

"Just boxing out. We have to box out and limit them to only one possession. That's something that Shacobia (Barbee) was great at for us. It's all hands on deck. I don't think there's one player that's going to get her boards. We have to have two or three more rebounds per game, but that's something that we've really focused on all week long is making sure we box out."

On slowing down Buss...

"That's what's fortunate about the conference we play in. We see people like that every night. We have seen people that are wanting to get to the rim and attack in transition. In that aspect, it's something that we talk about to make our team aware of. 'Hey, this is another player who is going to try to get to the rim before we have a chance to set our defense.' But it's not going to be anything new for us in terms of not having to face it all year long in our conference. I think it speaks for itself that we have nine teams in the NCAA Tournament from the SEC because every single night you're going to play really good athletes, you're going against really good coaches. I think our league has prepared us."

On differences in style between SEC and Big Ten...

"The skillset is really good in both conferences. When I look at our conference, I think we're athletic. We have a lot of athleticism and skillset. When I look at the Big Ten and watch them play, I think of the number of people who can come off the bench and score. There are not just one or two people you have to focus in on, there's about four or five people that could really have big nights and go off. I think it's about understanding all of your personnel."

On proving themselves in the tournament...

"I think we're an experienced team. The biggest thing is, you don't come to Georgia to just get into the tournament. You want to make deep runs. That's why those kids came here and that's their motivation for being here now. You have to make sure they enjoy the moment and enjoy

getting back to the tournament after not making it last year. After that, it's time to get down to business and focus on an Indiana team."

Merritt Hempe, Georgia (forward):

On the turnaround mid-season...

"(We were) mostly focusing in on our defense and improving the little things that we were messing up in those games, understanding that every possession is important. Really studying the scouting reports and defending. That's what we focused on for a good portion of time, and I think that really paid off for us."

On what's different this year...

"I think one thing we've done really well this year is running in transition and getting out and trying to be more offensively-minded. Making sure we're studying our scouting reports, knowing what the other team's strengths and weaknesses are and attacking defensively."

Marjorie Butler, Georgia (guard):

On what it means to be back in the tournament...

"Last year when we missed the tournament, I think a lot of us were extremely disappointed. That's a program expectation to make it to the tournament, and not being able to make it last year, we feel like we let ourselves down and the program as a whole. Being able to come back, be in the tournament, and be in such a great atmosphere is a great feeling. Although it's an expectation to make the tournament, that's not enough for us. It's also an expectation to win while you're in the tournament. It's a great feeling, but just being here isn't enough."

On guarding Buss...

"She's a great player. She's extremely athletic. She gets to the rim well. She has players around her that make her very good. She has shooters that spread the floor out. They have a strong inside presence. Ultimately, we're going to have to stop penetration and limit their looks in the paint. We're going to have to come with a defensive intensity, a lot of energy, and be able to pressure them so that they're uncomfortable."

On facing IU who was also one-and-done in the conference tournament...

"I think it gives us a little more motivation because it's almost like we have a little more left to prove. To have another one-and-done, that would be a disappointment to us. If anything, we came back and focused back in and tried to do what we could to prepare for this game and try and make a run in this tournament."