

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - James Madison vs Ohio State

Saturday, March 18, 2023

Columbus, Ohio, USA

Value City Arena

Ohio State Buckeyes

Kevin McGuff

Jacy Sheldon

Cotie McMahon

Media Conference



being able to make shots and set up pressure?

KEVIN MCGUFF: Biggest thing is we could not get in the press and couldn't make a shot. It sounds obvious because it is but we were having a hard time just getting the game the way we wanted because they were playing in transition offense the whole time in the first quarter. Once the shots started going in and we could get in the press, I think that obviously turned the tide of the game.

Q. You were down 16, and you know what happens in March, it's March Madness. How concerned were you?

KEVIN MCGUFF: Obviously you're always concerned when you get behind. The good thing about this group is we always come back. We have a style that we can play from behind, No. 1 and we have done this before. I think they have some confidence that regardless of what's going on, if we keep playing our style and so forth that we'll have a chance to come back and win.

Q. How big in the second quarter was being able to get to the free throw line? It seemed like that allowed you guys to in the press.

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah, I would agree. Once we started getting to the line and made some free throws, we could set the press and get the tempo the way we wanted.

Q. The press in the second quarter really sped up James Madison. Is that how you foresaw that to go, speed them up, get the crowd into it?

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah, I thought our press could be effective. Like I said, we just couldn't get in it enough in the first quarter. But they are a good team. I thought they were organized in it and I think in general it wore on them and we were able to pull away late in the game because I thought the pressure throughout the game had an effect.

Q. Seems like both teams had some issues with the officiating. To what degree did you feel that impacted the flow of the game?

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah, there were a lot of fouls, so it was

Ohio State 80, James Madison 66

KEVIN MCGUFF: Credit to James Madison I thought they played a really good game. As I expected, they are a program that's used to playing in March, so they were going to show up prepared and compete at a high level, which they did. We got off to a really show start, especially shooting the ball. That didn't allow us to get in our press and much of a rhythm in the game. Once you start making some shots, I thought we played obviously much better.

Q. The shooting, third game in a row where the first half was tough shooting. Was it the shot selection or passing? What was the reason shot weren't falling?

KEVIN MCGUFF: I thought actually we were getting pretty good shots. We had several open shots in our perimeter and around the basket. We weren't finishing. We looked rusty from being off for a couple weeks, so hopefully this allows us to settle this and we'll get off to a better start on Monday.

Q. Was that the message in the time-out?

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah, I think the biggest thing I wanted to emphasize is that sometimes when you are missing shots and you start to get behind, people try to make plays outside of the offense. Hero ball, I'm going to make a play to get my team back in it and that's something I emphasize, keep executing what we're doing and keep getting good shots. They will fall. Just make sure we get good shots.

Q. You caused 21 turnovers, only three in the first quarter. Was there a conscious effort to turn it up or



hard for either team to get in much of a flow. I think it was consistently a lot of fouls for both teams. Maybe not the way we wanted it but it was fairly consistent.

And it's just hard for us because we play in the Big Ten and it's like, fourth and one every possession throughout coming down the stretch. It's like a football game and then they are they are not calling a lot of fouls, and you get out here and it's a little bit different. That's what happens this time in March is that you have to adjust the way the game is going and I think we handled it as well as you could.

Q. Jacy played about 36 minutes. Was that the expectation going in or was that the flow of the game?

KEVIN MCGUFF: A little bit of both. Obviously when we went to the Big Ten Tournament, it was a much more conservative effort to ease her back into it.

So I think we were successful in that terms of we played her 15 to 16, 17, 18 minutes. But she's felt pretty good in the two weeks after, so we knew we would be able to get her for significant -- significant amount of time today.

Q. What do you look at as maybe why this team has had some trouble getting off to slow starts, and what does it take to overcome that so you can play a full 40 minutes when you need to?

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah, I don't know. I thought, like I said, I thought our shot selection was good early on, and you know we should be somewhat fresh to start the game.

But we didn't look in much of a rhythm, and so I don't know. I just think the thing that -- the other thing I would have said that we could have emphasized more, some offensive rebounding and we weren't really doing that.

Combination of maybe a little bit more at the rim shots, around the basket, maybe get to the free throw line earlier and not just settle for threes would be something that would give us a little more balance in terms of getting off to a better start.

Q. Cotie had 18 points tonight. What impressed you about her to see her rise to the occasion her first NCAA Tournament game?

KEVIN MCGUFF: Just how hard she plays and competes. She's done that since the first day she stepped on campus, is the thing that's been most impressive to me. If you look at where she was, and you guys wouldn't have seen her play last year, she came at Christmas but from where she was the first day to where she is today, she made a tremendous amount of progress. And it's because she

practices really hard and she competes at a high level. She's really coachable.

You can see she's got God given talents but I think a lot of people have that. But most people don't have the motor she has or the competitive character that she has, and that's why I think we are really just starting to scratch the surface of the player who she is going to be.

Q. There's been some talk about if the women might eventually go to neutral sites in the early rounds. Obviously crowd was fun today.

KEVIN MCGUFF: Yeah.

Q. But having been at power conferences and mid-majors, do you have an opinion?

KEVIN MCGUFF: I think that it would be great if we could get to that and still have the environment like we had today. I think that's ideal, just like the men do it.

I don't know that we're there yet to where we could generate the crowds that we had today. I think it's really important to have a great environment for the NCAA Tournament. I'm really thankful for our fans that showed up today. I thought they played a part in the game quite frankly; when we really got going in the second half, the crowd was electric.

But I do think it would be great to have neutral courts. I think we are closer today than we were a couple years ago. I know you look around the Big Ten, everyone is drawing really, really well. I think eventually you may be able to carve out some sites where we could get great neutral court crowds, and I think it would be awesome.

Q. I'm guess you haven't been out on the town the whole lot the past few days, but Columbus has shown that one city could handle men's and women's at the same time.

KEVIN MCGUFF: You're right. You're right. Our city is built for this. The people who put these events on in town are incredible and amazing. They are well organized. We have a bunch of great hotels and great restaurants. I think Columbus could be a town that could do that, yes.

Q. It's probably been the most trying year of your career, missing all this time. How did you deal with it mentally and now that you are here seemingly at full strength for March, what's it feel like?

JACY SHELDON: Just finding ways to stay in the gym, finding a way to stay around these guys is what helped me

out the most. We have a great group, so just being able to see them every day helped a ton. Being out there is awesome. We have a great team, like I said, and great chemistry, so playing with them is just fun.

Q. How hard was it to mentally stay where you needed to be?

JACY SHELDON: I think I just tried to focus on them and the game and not really myself. So I think it was, like I said, it was fun. It was exciting. We definitely got off to a slow start but once we started playing our game it, was a lot of fun.

Q. What does it mean to have somebody like Rikki Harris on the bench watching, maybe not playing as many minutes but still sharing with you what she's seeing on the court.

JACY SHELDON: Yeah, Rikki is an incredible person and a great teammate and a great leader. She's always talking to all of us to be honest, keeping us in check and telling us what she's seeing on the court and off. She's somebody that's really special in this program and keeps us going. She's awesome.

Q. To have Jacy back at full strength, what is the extra spark that that gives to you all?

KEVIN MCGUFF: Well, she's really special in the press, No. 1. So our press is at a different level when she's out there because of her speed, quickness and intensity that she plays with. Our pace is much better when she's on the floor or when the ball is in her hands; it's getting up the court quicker than normal and these guys will run with her, so we are at a better pace.

In general, I think she's the person on our team that makes everybody better. Everybody gets a little bit better and Jacy is on the court.

Q. When you hit that three in the second half, it gave your team the lead and it was your team's first three of the game. That moment right there, how meaningful was it for you, just that moment in the game getting that lead and comeback and seeing it all the way through? And how much did your first NCAA Tournament game live up to your expectations?

COTIE McMAHON: Yeah, I feel like hitting that one three we all needed to see one go in. After that, T-Mik started getting hot and stuff like that. I thought it was important for us to get going after that and that was the shot that kind of helped us get going.

As far as my first NCAA appearance, I thought it was sweet. No better feeling than coming in on your home court and having a huge crowd and having everybody behind you, it was sweet. Obviously my family are huge supporters. I thought it was really cool for them to all make it here.

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