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NCAA 2013 BASKETBALL
CHAMPIONSHIP
DIVISION I WOMEN'S BASKETBALL
FIRST/SECOND ROUNDS
LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY, HOST

An Interview With:

LSU

Q. Wondering before I ask the question, is there an update on Jeanne?

COACH CALDWELL: Well, at this time Jeanne is going to be reevaluated. She's feeling a lot better than what she was yesterday after taking that, having that collision. So we are still waiting to find out more, whether Jeanne will be able to go or not.

Q. For the players, whether it's seven or eight, Penn State is an up-tempo style, and how are you going to deal with that with the numbers that you have?

THERESA PLAISANCE: You know, playing with Jeanne or without Jeanne, we have to be ready to go at all costs. We've played against teams like Kentucky and Tennessee all year, pushing the ball up and down the court and we fought through adversity all year long, driving down to seven and six at times and we had two and three players out.

This is just going to be another test to see if we can push through it like we have all year long.

ADRIENNE WEBB: To elaborate on what Theresa said, we have been in adversity all year, we have been up-and-down with different players getting hurt, and we just have to go out and play hard tomorrow, and whether we have seven, eight playing, or we have six, seven playing, we still have to go out there and play our game.

Q. Adrienne, no one has asked how you feel; how did you manage to get through that without having some kind of injury last night?

COACH CALDWELL: She has a hard head.

ADRIENNE WEBB: I have a pretty hard head. I don't know, I guess the adrenaline just kicked in and just got me right back up. But doing fine and be ready for tomorrow's game.

Q. Also, about the game, considering that you played them last year and they have a similar team and you have similar players; is there a little bit of déjà vu? Does it feel like maybe a big SEC game, a team that you're familiar with, playing in your home arena again? There's a lot of things that are familiar about last year's game.

ADRIENNE WEBB: Absolutely, but there's a lot of things that are familiar. Some players are familiar, than others, but it's a new season, it's a new game, and we have to go out there and play to our potential. And even though we have seen like Maggie and Nikki Greene on the inside, we have to kind of know their game and know their number, basically.

THERESA PLAISANCE: I honestly don't even remember the game from last year up until last night when we had to watch game film, and then things started clicking and I started to get those flashbacks. But you know, this is a new year. We have a completely new starting lineup, and you know, we have new things to offer this year. So I think it's going to be a different game with some similarities.

Q. How are you guys different than the team that played Penn State last year?

THERESA PLAISANCE: Well, we are a lot different. First of all, we don't have the five seniors, four of which played in that game, pulling us through this year. We depend a lot of Boogie Barrett and Courtney Jones to get us through, and this year we have a lot of new weapons. We have a lot of new guard play. We don't have the same setup as last year. We have me inside, me and Shanece battling on the inside this year and maybe not relying on that quick game that Boogie and Courtney brought, slowing down a little bit on

the inside.

We also have a lot of versatility with Bianca being able to drive and dish out to Webb or whoever spots up on the outside. And a great addition to this team is Danielle Ballard. She brings a lot offensively and defensively, and that's a great addition to this team, and you know, I think Danielle is going to do well against a team like Penn State.

ADRIENNE WEBB: Yeah, our teams are very different from going to a lot of upper classmen last year to maybe two or three to actually really play -- missed a lot of last year and having a lot of newcomers that are stepping into that leadership role. But we've had a lot of adversity but we've fought through it as a team.

So we have gotten better, each and every game, each and every practice that we've had.

Q. Since you've had the opportunity to go back and watch the film from last year's game, obviously Maggie Lucas was the big star of that game. How would you all describe her as a player, and what are you looking to do tomorrow night with her?

THERESA PLAISANCE: Well, I certainly know Maggie Lucas as a friend and I know that Maggie Lucas is an extremely hard worker. You know, there's not too many times that you won't catch her in the gym and that just shows in her game play. I think she's averaging 22 points this year, and you know, that's just a testament to her like working really hard.

So yeah, a lot of attention is going to be on Maggie Lucas but there's a lot of other players that they have that can do us a lot of damage, too. Alex Bentley, senior point guard, she's not looking to go out with a loss, and I know we are fighting for our seniors, too. And also you have Nikki Greene on the inside, one of the most dominant posts in the Big Ten Conference. They have a lot of weapons and so do we.

ADRIENNE WEBB: I realize that Maggie is one of their assets on their team, but you really can't just take away her and not worry about everyone else. You have to be on your toes on each player on the court, because on any given night, each person can actually go off.

Q. You come into this game having won eight out of nine and probably feel like it should be nine out of ten. Can you talk about how that may be an indication of figuring things out with some of the new players as the

year went along, and how much confidence that gives you coming into this game against a strong team like Penn State?

THERESA PLAISANCE: Starting off this year, we had a lot of ups and downs. We won some, we lost some, we really struggled on the road. But that just showed our lack of maturity and lack of togetherness. As we got through the year and got to Tennessee you started seeing a team that was more united and more together.

And since Tennessee, I feel like we have been playing more as a unit instead of individuals and not that we were unconsciously being, you know, individuals before then, but we really started to mesh and really started to build that chemistry that, you know, we are starting a completely new starting lineup, one of us being a freshman, and you know, it's hard to adjust to different styles of play.

We are finally getting a feel for each other and ever since that Tennessee game, we seemed to mesh pretty well, and we have just grown as a group since that game.

ADRIENNE WEBB: Theresa put everything into words. We have matured over the year. We have really become a close-knit group of ladies and it shows in our play each and every time we step out on the court. I mean, referring back to that Tennessee loss, after that, we really came together and matured as a team each and every game.

Q. Sometimes when there is that much roster overhaul it can take teams time to sort out. Obviously there's been adversity that's come with only having seven or eight bodies, but in a way do you think it's an odd kind of blessing, there's no room to hide, and just by necessity, you had to be plugged into spots and operate?

THERESA PLAISANCE: Definitely, the biggest show of that would be Derreyal Youngblood, a freshman that we are expecting a lot out of in the paint. She's come in, started off the year being too aggressive and over time, you slowly see her developing into a D1 athlete that's doing a great job. We can go to her inside and we just know she's going to power through and get a finish, some big time rebounds from her.

And also Danielle Ballard, she broke the record for the steals, not just defensively, and offensively she does so much and creates so much

for us.

That's just two of the players that have done a lot for us this year, and just being able to grow and adapt to each other's game and it's something that we had to do, it took a little bit longer than expected but it eventually happened.

Q. Would you talk a little bit more about your friendship with Maggie, in the locker room, she talked about how you went to AAU ball; how hard is she going to be to defend?

THERESA PLAISANCE: Maggie and I have been friends, we go way back. We really got close on the McDonald's team, we were on the same rock band team, we won that championship. We have been very close ever since then. But Maggie Lucas is one of those players that, you know, she's a special player.

I know she works so hard, and she has a deadly release. You know, hand down, man down; if you're not ready at any split second, she'll just release it and doesn't matter who is guarding her. I don't think it really bothers her who is guarding her; that shot is going up. Maggie Lucas is going to be a tough person to guard strictly because of that fast release.

Q. Specifically what was the injury to Jeanne? Was it a concussion or head injury?

COACH CALDWELL: They obviously wanted to be cautious on everything, and so they did some tests, ran some tests last night and she passed some of those. She did some good things this morning.

We obviously want to re-evaluate and see how she's feeling, a lot better. She's being evaluated by doctors now. Any time that she would be diagnosed with a concussion, our athletic department, we definitely would not take any unnecessary measures to get her here. If she's out and they come back and say that she is, that's what it is. Jeanne is one of those players -- we told Jeanne, we need to know, how are you feeling, because she would literally fight her way back if she could.

So she's being very up front and honest with how she's been feeling, so that's been a positive, but she's been feeling good. So we are going to obviously wait to see what the evaluation leads to after today.

Q. What about her makes it so you have to be sure that she is being completely truthful --

COACH CALDWELL: She's a competitor. I'm not saying that she's a fibber, but she's a competitor. She is someone, you know, we have had to at times, I've told her, I've said, you're not going, you're not practicing today. I would have to pull her from practice.

She would not pull herself. And talking and working closely with Mickey, our athletic trainer, we would literally force her to not practice because she always wants to be out there on the floor. But she's been banged up and her teammates understand that there's times when she will need to sit out on some of the runs or things that we are doing up-and-down.

But then she's always the first one to try to get back into drills and we're like, Jeanne, you're fine, you know the game plan, don't worry about it. But she's that type of player, which you love. You definitely love someone who has that competitive spirit who isn't a quitter, and she's definitely a fighter.

Q. You've had to be creative all year with the lineups with eight, but if you get to seven, is that a little too much subtraction? What do you do if you're at seven; is that going to be a suitable number?

COACH CALDWELL: Well, as long as three of them don't foul out, we'll be okay. We have started different lineups this year. When Jeanne was banged up after the Missouri game, we came back with Lutley and she played extremely well last into for us. Being a senior, she has the experience and she's been to postseason play. She understands what is at stake here and obviously she's going to do everything in her power to help her team win.

Q. As a follow-up to that, it's going to sound odd to ask this, I know coaches like to have as many options as possible, but has it been something unique in having eight and giving you -- just knowing, this is what I have to work with, reduce the stress in planning what the team can do?

COACH CALDWELL: The one thing about having eight players is they have become a lot tighter. When you're traveling, it's a smaller number. They definitely have their own

personalities, but they have kind of taken on this, "Eight is Enough" and what does that mean, eight is enough. Eight is enough for us to come out every day and compete and play the way that we want to play.

This group has been fun to coach. I have been overly thrilled to come every day to practice because our practices are now really short, so it seems like their attention span is there. Because they know we can't go long because we don't have the bodies.

The other thing is there's a different level, sense of urgency on their part, because they know that you cannot keep looking down the bench is: You're going to play. It's not an option. They cannot hide, and they all understand their role for this team. And if someone does not do their role or they are, you know, not having a great game, we only have maybe one other person that can step it up.

So they are taking on a little bit more ownership of this team, which is what you want all the time, because it is their team.

Q. How do you deal with a player like that in this situation, do you bring her the game plan and try to tell her? And Derreyal didn't play last night, any particular reason for that? One assumes she's going to have to play tomorrow night.

COACH CALDWELL: Well, Jeanne, she probably was already on synergy last night watching the game, knowing her. She's a very smart player, and you know, she will pick up what we need to do. We have done a lot of walk-throughs before because we have been pretty banged up. We have done mental scouting reports where it's just really focusing in on the film work, the film, would, the film work.

The question with Derreyal Youngblood, the game last night was a very up-tempo game. You had a team -- one of the best teams in the country, that had four and five players that could shoot the three. So we knew that was going to be a challenge for Derreyal Youngblood, but she's also been in that situation where she's had to come back and had to battle against teams that have power post players and she's been successful.

So we look for her to get some valuable minutes for us tomorrow night because she definitely can contribute and help us.

Q. How surprised were you to see Penn State again?

COACH CALDWELL: You know, I haven't really been on any of the selection or been to any of -- the committees, how they do the brackets and things like that. I know that when you see a team like Penn State, arguments can be out there for them, they could easily have been a 2-seed or a 3-seed.

I was more surprised to see Green Bay. They are one of the best 11-seeds that I've seen in a long time. I do think that they are a team that with Green Bay that easily could have been where we are at. But with Penn State, you know, it's a situation where you've got teams that are hosting, and so you know, you've got to send someone somewhere. You know, we are the type or I'm the type where I look at the bracket and I know it's totally out of our control; so that I was more surprised, more so with Green Bay.

But Penn State is one of those teams that you've got to play the best and they are one of the best teams in the country, and we understand that second round games are going to be tough and challenging, and that's just the draw that we got.

Q. I'm looking at Shanece's game and she just stood out to me more than anybody except the threes from Adrienne, when you look at size from Penn State, they will probably try to exploit their physicality inside and when I look at your bigs, they don't have the same kind of style, but with Theresa playing out behind the arc, is that an advantage compared to maybe the physical play inside and can maybe Shanece's and Derreyal come in and be physical down low?

COACH CALDWELL: They definitely can. Shanece and Derreyal Youngblood have shown that they can compete and defend some of the best players in the country. You know, you think about Nikki Greene, she's definitely one of those players that you've got to have a conversation about, but so is Kelly Bond with Texas A&M. So they found success being able to battle All-American-calibre type players.

Theresa gives us an opportunity to expand our offense because of her ability to shoot the three-ball. With that said, everybody knows her game and everybody knows exactly what she can and can't do.

But we have got to make sure that we

continue to put her in the most successful situations, but she's going to have to be able to have that power presence as well, because Plaisance can score in the paint and we are going to need her, we are going to need paint points against a very aggressive man-to-man, get into you type defense. We are going to have to be able to handle that pressure and Theresa is going to be a big part of that.

Q. Falling apart question. Seems like the breaks you've had have been fortuitous, because it gives you a semblance of a rotation, three in the front, five in the back; do you feel like things broke in your favor that way, that you can actually maintain some semblance of normalcy -- looking at the numbers, realistically, can you maintain somewhat of a normal rotation out of all that?

COACH CALDWELL: We can. We have got versatility and we have got players that can play more than one position. Theresa Plaisance has played one through five for us this year. Bianca has played one through four. So they give us an opportunity to have different looks on the floor.

You know, Danielle Ballard is that player that can play one, two and three, but she is one of the best rebounding guards at the point position this I've seen in a long time. We have been asking a lot from her to help out on the board.

Adrienne Webb, she is somebody that has put in the time, the hours, to be the player that she is now -- and her level of competitiveness right now is at its highest. And I don't know if that has anything to do with her being a senior, but at this time of year, she's definitely zoning in to what we have to do.

So the leadership is there from your upper classmen, as well, and we have got freshmen that are really looking to follow. And so when you have that combination, anything is possible.

Q. Theresa said she didn't really remember last year's game but I'm willing to bet that's a different case with you.

COACH CALDWELL: Yes.

Q. How long did that stick with you after the season last year, and did the possibility of a rematch excite you a little bit when you guys won last night?

COACH CALDWELL: You know, you go back and you look at the last game that you

finished, and as a coach, you critique yourself in what can we have done better to get this team ready to play at Penn State. And so you go into the off-season and you meet with your staff and you talk about what you need to do in the fall.

This team responded and they responded in a big way, and now that test or that challenge faces them again. The one thing about playing a team that you've played before is obviously you know their game, it's not going to be anything that, you know, they know who Nikki Greene is. They know who Lucas is. They have a feel for what they are capable of doing.

If this team wants to win tomorrow night, we cannot play the same way we did last year. We can't rest on the fact that we could of, would of, should of. We have to totally, if you will, erase last year and focus in on who we are today and who we will be tomorrow. And we are a totally different team.

This team reminds me of a team that came together like the Bad News Bears, you know, when they weren't really good early, and then they just plugged away, plugged away, and their confidence started to build. And that's what's happened is this team has learned to play through adversity, but also, to smack it back. And that's something that last year's team, we didn't do that all the time. We kind of did, but this year's team has been very resilient.

And so, you know, I'm proud of them for getting themselves in position to compete again against a great team like Penn State. And you know, Theresa Plaisance is going to be key for us. She is not the same player that she was last year. She has evolved and became in my opinion one of the best post players in the country.

Adrienne Webb is playing like a woman on the a mission. And then we have a phenomenal freshman in Danielle Ballard and if everybody else can see what we see and we feel that's capable of, this team, they can do anything, once they put their mind, but more importantly, their hearts to it.

Q. One thing I'm sure you want different from last night is perimeter defense, but you're limited and try to play without fouling too much; how did you feel about your three point defense last night and what needs to be different maybe in this game?

COACH CALDWELL: The thing about a team like Green Bay is they are one of the best

three-point shooting teams that we faced all year. And a lot of teams that play a matchup zone, you're going to give up some threes.

Where we have got to be better is the one-pass away, and I thought we missed a lot of those assignments because they were coming down in that trail spot, where our bigs are pretty much trained to come down and they run to their spot in our match-ups. We have got to be better in that area.

But guarding the three-ball, you know, it's a hard -- it's a hard game when you have -- when you play a team like that that has four people on the floor that can shoot the three. You know, and they pass the ball extremely well. They had about 20 assists.

Green Bay is good, and a lot of teams, not just our team, have struggled in being able to defend the three ball but a lot of teams have struggled in scoring against them. And so we were able to put up enough points, if you will, to win the game -- but I like Green Bay. I wish they were still in the tournament -- not against us, but I like watching their style of play. I love the hustle of his kids. I love the fight and the determination they had. They are a fun team to watch. They weren't exactly fun to play against but they were very fun to watch.

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