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An Interview With:

MINNESOTA

COACH PAM BORTON KIARA BUFORD RACHEL BANHAM

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Minnesota head coach Pam Borton as well as student-athletes Kiara Buford and Rachel Banham.

Coach, opening comments?

COACH BORTON: Very proud of our team's effort today. We fought. I thought we battled until the very end. I thought we had the entire momentum in the first half. I thought the momentum changed at the very beginning of the second half, probably in the first two or three minutes. I felt like we came out of the locker room and weren't as aggressive. A little tentative. Stopped doing some of the things that we did defensively in the first half to really set the tone in the second half.

And I felt like that completely changed momentum. Very pleased with our rebounding. We outrebounded them. Hit more field goals and felt like the only difference today was at the free-throw line.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Rachel, you guys were -- after that great first half, you guys fell behind 58-45. How were you guys able to stay composed and come back, make it a game?

RACHEL BANHAM: I think we just never gave up. We kept fighting. And I mean we just wanted to win the game. I think we kept looking for that. And even though things were falling apart,

we just kept tight together and we kept composed and we tried to win.

Q. Kiara, can you describe how you feel right now?

KIARA BUFORD: I'm obviously sad that we lost, but with a game like that I'm very proud of my team. I thought we played so hard. Coming off the game we had yesterday, I thought we fought to the end.

I thought we easily could have put it down in the dumps when we came down in the second half at the beginning, and we fought back and took it all the way to the wire and we played hard.

I think it showed a lot of character about our team.

Q. Do you guys think the way you played against Wisconsin yesterday gave you some momentum coming into the first half with how strong you were against the conference champs?

RACHEL BANHAM: I definitely think so. Whenever you can get that big of a win on your first night, you obviously have a little bit of momentum. And I think we played Penn State -- we were their last game before tonight, and I think that helped us a little bit, too, and we didn't want to go home, so we played hard.

Q. Rachel, you guys were down 74-71 with like 30 seconds left. And you drove in and went for a two-pointer. Can you describe your thought process, why you didn't go for the three?

RACHEL BANHAM: I was trying to attack, get in the lane and score and hopefully get fouled. But I think it would have probably been a little smarter if I would have shot it. I was a little rushed and just trying to hurry up and score and get the ball back, but that's what was going through my mind.

Q. Also you had nine rebounds today. Ten rebounds yesterday. You were like one of

the shortest players on the court at all times. Describe how you can rebound the ball so well.

RACHEL BANHAM: I think our post players are really good at getting the girls behind them. So when they do that I can just swoop in and get the ball. Whenever it drops to the ground, I run in and go for it. Otherwise I'm just running around trying to grab it.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Questions for Coach.

Q. How difficult is this considering, I guess, what was on the line for you, because you pretty much have to keep winning to advance to the postseason, and to come so close and play so hard and not quite get there?

COACH BORTON: Well, I was very proud of how we played. Obviously it's very disappointing on how we lost. But I think there's still a chance to get in postseason depending on how many teams get in the NCAA tournament, which I really truly believe that seven teams in the Big Ten should get in hands down. So we're holding out hope that we can be that team that's in the WNIT.

Q. Coach, you all did a good job on the interior defense on Nikki Greene in the first half. I think she was 0-for-7 from the field. She had a much stronger second half. What changed?

COACH BORTON: I think our ball pressure changed in the second half right at the very beginning, I think there was less pressure on the ball. I think (Alex) Bentley came out and really did a great job setting the tone and really attacking the lane.

But I thought we let her get in the lane too much and I think that really opened things up. I think our players maybe took a step off a little bit to try to get her in front. But I think our ball pressure really affected us in the second half because we gave her vision to throw it in.

And Nikki Greene, she's big and strong. She's a big post presence, and she's really worked on her game. She's gotten a lot better. And at this point last year she wasn't able to score on the block, and I think she's come a long way and has worked on her game.

Q. It seems like every time you put Jackie (Voigt) in the game she provides an instant spark. Can you talk more about that?

COACH BORTON: She's a senior. She's got a lot of experience. She's been a starter for us until she got a concussion about eight games ago and she plays like a veteran.

She's going to step up and make plays and she's going to put her body on the line and take charges and dive after loose balls and go one-on-two on the boards sometimes.

But she's got that experience and the refuse-to-lose attitude.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.
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