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An Interview With:

PENN STATE

COACH COQUESE WASHINGTON ALEX BENTLEY MIA NICKSON

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Penn State head coach Coquese Washington and student-athletes Alex Bentley and Mia Nickson. We'll start right off the bat with questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Mia, could you just talk a little bit about the rebounding battle tonight. You had 13 rebounds to lead the team, but overall the team struggled in that aspect. Could you talk about that a little bit?

MIA NICKSON: I mean, they just had all five people on the glass. And so it was difficult at times to get your hands on it.

They really keyed in on getting on the boards. And they did a great job of that tonight.

Q. Alex, I imagine you had some people here tonight. I just wonder how tough this is for you. I'm sure you would have liked to have won at your hometown?

ALEX BENTLEY: Yeah, I mean we're not happy. It's really a tough loss. It hurts really bad. It's not the way, you know, we wanted it to end up. But just gotta keep our heads up, because we have more basketball to play.

Q. Alex, just looking at the box score, you guys did a pretty good job of keeping the ball -- only eight turnovers. Despite how they were able to really play defense and shut down Maggie, can you talk about how you guys were

really able to handle and go up and down the floor?

ALEX BENTLEY: I think my teammates are great at ball pressure. We stuck to the game plan. We moved the ball well. And that's pretty much it.

Q. Alex, when you fouled out with about a minute left, I saw you huddle up your teammates on the court and they came back from five points down to tie it up. What did you say to them in the huddle?

ALEX BENTLEY: I told them they got it. I believed in them 100 percent. I knew that my teammates were going to pull out something crazy. And I knew -- and I believed we were still going to win it.

And I just told them to go out and do it.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Questions for Coach.

Q. Can you just talk about the job that Purdue did defensively, particularly on Maggie?

COACH WASHINGTON: I thought they did a pretty good job all night long. They're a good team, defensive team. It was a struggle. I mean, I think both of us are pretty good defensive teams.

And that's why it was a struggle all night long for either team, I felt, to get into a rhythm. So they did a good job.

Q. I just spoke to Alex briefly in the locker room. She seemed trying to stay optimistic despite this loss. Can you talk a little bit about her leadership tonight and how she played on the court?

COACH WASHINGTON: Well, she's a tremendous competitor. And it's evident by her play that she's the leader of this team. And she willed us to stay in the game when we really couldn't get into an offensive flow, rhythm. She made some big baskets.

And so I mean, the team kind of feeds off that. And I think her competitive fire and her will to

win is one of the things that we key on and count on.

Q. When we see rebounding differentials like this, when you guys beat Ohio State, you did it pretty handily. Despite being down 22, you guys only lost by two. Can you talk about their will to stay in it and keep fighting, working getting the boards?

COACH WASHINGTON: Purdue did a great job rebounding, obviously, but I thought we did a pretty good job defensively. We pressured them into some turnovers, turning those turnovers in the points.

We just didn't do that quite enough. But obviously if you give up 22 rebounds and 19 offensive rebounds, it's going to be tough for you to win the game.

Moving forward, we've got to get better at the rebounding.

Q. What were you trying to do on that last play defensively to try and get that stop?

COACH WASHINGTON: Well, I thought we did a good job defensively. And I just think Brittany Rayburn made a better shot. Sometimes that happens. She drove it right into Nikki Greene. I think Nikki might have even tipped it a little bit. And she got it up high and it went in.

So we defended it as well as you could defend it without fouling. And she made a great shot.

Q. No. 2, Antionette Howard, I think only played ten minutes in West Lafayette, didn't really do a whole lot. But today she goes for a double-double. What did you see out of her maybe that was a little bit unexpected?

COACH WASHINGTON: Nothing unexpected. She just -- she played like a senior. And I think her energy on the boards really gave them a lift especially the first half. She got a lot of offensive rebounds. And she was tough on the boards and given second chances, and I think that really galvanized them and gave them some confidence.

Q. Really close game like this, how did you miss the presence of Ariel Edwards tonight?

COACH WASHINGTON: We missed her. We missed her big. I think she could have helped on the rebounding, for sure. Gave us a little bit more size. She probably would have been

guarding Rayburn, that last play. So maybe with a little bit more size maybe she doesn't have quite the angle to make it.

But hopefully we'll have her back for the NCAA tournament.

Q. Nikki, second game where she hasn't been, she hasn't scored in the first half. Any concerns looking ahead at the NCAA getting her going earlier than halftime?

COACH WASHINGTON: She had great shots. She just didn't put them down. So I'm not worried about that. She'll make them.

You can't worry about offense. I mean, I'd be worried if she wasn't getting touches. I'd be worried if she wasn't getting the ball in spots where she could do something positive with it. But she's getting great looks. And the last two games in the first half they rolled in and out, just came off her hand a little short, a little long, a little left. She'll be fine.

Q. How long do you think it will take for the team to shake off a buzzer beater like this in the Big Ten tournament and look totally ahead towards NAAs?

COACH WASHINGTON: Hopefully they'll shake it off pretty quickly. Fortunately for us we're at spring break so they've got a few days to go home and get some home cooking and TLC and get revved up for the NCAA tournament.

But we talked in the locker room. I'm not disappointed in the way we played. I wish we would have won the game, but, I mean, this is what happens when you're in competitive sports.

Sometimes you play as hard as you can, you do everything you can, and you lose. And that doesn't mean you're a loser. And that doesn't mean you need to hang your head. We played a very good game, especially the second half. Purdue played a great game and they made the last play. They made the last play, and there's no more time left for us to make a play.

And I just take my hat off to Purdue. They played a great game. And I'm really proud of our team. And we're going to go in the NCAA tournament and we're going to be confident and we're going to be a tough team to play, and our kids are going to go home and get rested up and get rejuvenated, and we're going to get ready to go and play in the NCAA tournament and play our best basketball.

Q. Talk about the last play. Just your thoughts going into it, going for the quick 2 when you guys could have held for the potential last shot of the game. Just your thoughts on that offensive series.

COACH WASHINGTON: I wanted to put the pressure on them to make a play. And they did. But our thought was we're going to go for the tie, and we're going to try to tie it up and see if we can get one stop.

And unfortunately we didn't. But I like the way we executed on the last play. And it turned out the way it turned out.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

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