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An Interview With:

PURDUE

COACH SHARON VERSYP BRITTANY RAYBURN COURTNEY MOSES

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Purdue head coach Sharon Versyp as well as student-athletes Brittany Rayburn and Courtney Moses.

Coach, an opening statement.

COACH VERSYP: I just thought it was amazing basketball game. Both teams had the will to win. Knew it was going to be tough on the boards and a very physical game.

And envisioned it would come down, since it continued to stay close, down to the last possession. And, you know, we executed exceptionally well. We were able to finish at the end. And obviously we're very excited where we're at right now.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Brittany, can you just talk about the last possession and sort of the progress that the ball took in getting to you and what you saw on your way to the basket?

BRITTANY RAYBURN: Yeah, I think, first of all, we executed it perfectly. I think Coach drew up a perfect play for us.

It was a play that had been working all second half. And we just kept going back to it. And Chantel made a great pass, and the rest is history.

Q. I think you went up over Greene. Is that right?

BRITTANY RAYBURN: Sure, I don't know.

Q. She obviously has some height advantage. Did you have to adjust at all or did you feel you just went straight up strong?

BRITTANY RAYBURN: I knew that the refs aren't going to decide the game at the end of the game. It's right not to do that. I knew that regardless of who was there, I had to finish. I knew I had to get to the basket. And also for an outside shot.

Regardless of who was there, I had to get to the basket.

Q. Brittany, how much of this was about when you were on the bench and had to watch your team and still maintain a lead and kept enthusiasm, still seemed pretty fired up in the first half?

BRITTANY RAYBURN: Yeah. We had a great all-around effort by everybody. This young lady kept us in there with a great percentage from the floor. She's shooting well and everybody's setting great screens. And Antionette Howard coming in with 18 boards, that's awesome. I think we had an all-around great performance from everybody tonight.

Q. Brittany, you've had some opportunities, Michigan game there, I guess, whatever game it was, Michigan State, did you learn anything from that today about trying to take it hard on the layup like that?

BRITTANY RAYBURN: Yeah, I think we've had a lot of close games where we didn't finish, a lot of overtime games. We didn't want it to go into overtime, obviously, because we wanted to be able to play another game and have fresh legs.

And I think we all decided in that timeout this is ours, and we just came together as a team and said we're going to get it.

Q. Courtney, take us through your vantage point of how everything unfolded on

that last play.

COURTNEY MOSES: Like she said, we ran it perfectly. Coach set up the perfect play. It had been working all game. Chantel made a great pass, Brittany just read it, went baseline. She had Maggie Lucas on one side and Nikki Greene on the other, and she just went up over right off the glass, and there was like one second left, but we played good defense and won the game.

Q. Courtney, I think Penn State led for maybe five seconds throughout the game. You hit a lot of 3s. Every time they seemed to have momentum, you seemed to answer with big shots of your own. Where did that mental toughness come from and how did you progress off the season to develop it?

COURTNEY MOSES: I say mental toughness comes from being in the gym, and not only from being in the gym, but it comes from the people you surround yourself with, my teammates and coaches. Once you have all the confidence in the world from them coming to you, then the rest is history.

Q. We think of Purdue and how much success the program has had in this building. But the thought registers that this class hasn't won this title yet, right? Tell me, each of you, what this win would mean tomorrow.

BRITTANY RAYBURN: As a senior this is your goal when you come in as a freshman, win Big Ten titles.

We've had a lot of fun with this group. This is a great young group of women. We've been through a lot of things in our time here. People that are here, we've went through near-death circumstances and we've pulled together as a group.

And I think it's something that we've worked extremely hard for, and it would be a great win in our season going into the NCAA.

COURTNEY MOSES: Just speaking from what Brit said, we have six seniors, and being on behalf of the underclassmen, we're playing for our seniors.

Q. Brittany, could you talk about the job that the bench did there when you and Sam O. were on the bench with two fouls in the first half, in particular Antionette Howard seemed to really rise up today?

BRITTANY RAYBURN: Like I said earlier, everybody played extremely well today. Bench,

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starters, everybody that went in the game did their job and they did it great.

That's the big key to the team: We have a big bench because everyone that goes in works as hard as they can and gets their job done. Antionette did a great job today hitting the boards and scoring buckets for us.

Q. You've avenged losses to Michigan State and now Penn State, and you'll have to do it tomorrow against Nebraska. What did you learn from those games and what did you maybe change between the times you played Michigan State and Penn State the first time and then now?

BRITTANY RAYBURN: A lot of the same things. We played every team extremely hard and to the end, and our coaching staff has put up great game plans for us. And I think right now we're executing it to a T. We have to continue to do that.

Q. Your thoughts on playing Nebraska tomorrow? I know the first game was a thriller. You came out on the wrong end?

BRITTANY RAYBURN: I just say we're excited. It's exciting to let this victory settle in. We're going to get rest tonight and hit it hard again in the morning and get a good scout in.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, ladies. Questions for Coach.

Q. Did you feel like you made Maggie Lucas uncomfortable tonight maybe not getting in the spots she wanted to get into?

COACH VERSYP: I feel we did. You know, anytime you play a team, you have to make adjustments. And I thought we did a good job on her, kind of just chasing her, face guarding her everywhere.

I thought KK did an exceptional job early on, her quickness. Then Dee Dee and Chantel, those two are constantly rotating off on her.

I think we disrupted her. Then at the end of the game, probably the last minute 30, we just were switching off screens, so it was just a totally different look, bigger person on her, making her do something that she didn't feel comfortable with.

Q. Softball question, but I'll throw two at you at once. Coaches love to talk about team basketball and how much all different facets come together, but talk about the stretch

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in the first half with Rayburn on the bench and you guys maintain a lead. And then, secondly, I'm wondering what you or your program think about this place, because you always seem to do well here.

COACH VERSYP: I think for us, the entire year is we're not about one player; we're about a team. And every player on this team has stepped up and done some great things. When people have been sitting, people have been injured. So we've always had someone else that might have been a leading scorer. So I think it's hard to defend sometimes and other people will step up.

As for playing here, you know, this Fieldhouse has been amazing to us. I think our last memory of this was last year, though, when Drey [Mingo] almost died and we were here playing Auburn. It was a celebration of life. That's what we're bringing into the tournament today.

We had success before. But that was more important than any basketball game, and I think we're thriving off of that right now.

Q. In the last minute things weren't necessarily going your way there with several things. Just what was your message there with 16 seconds to go, and then what did you set up and what did you see?

COACH VERSYP: We knew they were going to make a free throw. They were ahead by two. Got the ball, supposed to get the ball in by Courtney the first time and kind of dribbled off her leg, and she's very frustrated and, yeah, they scored. But bringing it up, we knew exactly what play we were going to run.

It's been working. We called a specific set. But I think we took care of the basketball exceptionally well. Made very good passes. Lucas tried to deny Brittany. And just like take it to the hole. She was going to have a shot, curl or try to get to the basket.

And she just read it very well. And it got overplayed. So Brittany finished.

Q. If you can set Brittany's plays aside, what does it mean to have someone like her in your program, the kind of captain she is, the leader, the person who does everything right, the foundation?

COACH VERSYP: Yeah, I mean, Brittany's a leader on and off the court. She's a great human being. She gives back to the community.

She's an amazing student. Going to be in vet school. And she's an incredible basketball student. And she really makes everybody around her better. She brings a calm and a confidence when she's out on the court. We're just totally different. And she's obviously had a lot of accolades, but she's going to give credit to everybody else. So she's very special to our program.

Q. Can you just talk about the job Howard did? And also you had a 54-33 rebounding advantage. What did that mean for you in terms of getting this win?

COACH VERSYP: We said we had to do a great job of boxing them out, limit their offensive goals. So holding them to 12 was a big feat for us, because we didn't do that that well yesterday. So we were really focused on that. Antionette brought so much energy. And I thought that was good.

She didn't play as many minutes yesterday. So she had great legs today, playing 27. Being able to rebound. Being able to score. But I think her offensive boards was obviously the big difference.

But it was everybody. For us to beat them on the boards by that amount, we said that was the key to the game.

Q. Coach, I don't know if you've seen much of Nebraska's run recently, but how tough do you think tomorrow's final will be?

COACH VERSYP: When you get to the final, it will be tough. Doesn't matter who you're playing right now. Nebraska had a month like we did in February. They went on a losing streak and so did we, and now we turn it around at the right time.

They're playing really good basketball, and so are we. And I think the depth's going to come in. But they're a great basketball team. They've been a great addition to the Big Ten. No matter who gets to the final game, both teams are very solid.

Q. Huskers have gone on runs of 41-10, 40-16, and 40-10 the past three games. What do you think the key will be for Purdue to stop them going on a run like that?

COACH VERSYP: The biggest thing is just playing good solid defense, matching their intensity. They're a great offensive team and

obviously defensive team as well.

They gave us everything, and we played an exceptional game, the three overtime, so just go back to the basics of playing some defense.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

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