

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Rice vs LSU

Friday, March 22, 2024

Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA

Pete Maravich Assembly Center

Rice Owls

Lindsay Edmonds

Destiny Jackson

Malia Fisher

Media Conference

LSU - 70, Rice - 60

THE MODERATOR: Pleased to be joined by Rice Head Coach Lindsey Edmonds. As you can see on the table on the far side, we're joined by Malia Fisher and Destiny Jackson.

LINDSAY EDMONDS: I'm incredibly proud to be their coach. We came in here, and we wanted to have the exact same mindset that we had in the conference tournament, and that was to come in and play our best brand of basketball and to not quit and to not give up and be relentless and have the 95 mantra that we've been working on be at the forefront of everything we do.

I'm incredibly proud. We came in here, and we fought for four quarters. We won two of those four quarters against the defending National Champion. I thought we did a lot of great things, but the main thing that I'm proud of is that we never for one second quit or looked like we didn't believe that we belonged in this game.

Very, very proud. I don't know if I can say that enough.

THE MODERATOR: Let's open it up for the players first, please.

Q. Destiny and Malia, what was it like in the third quarter being on the court when the crowd really started getting into it and you knew it was kind of now your chance to make a push and keep the game going?

MALIA FISHER: I knew at one point I'm running down the



court, and it was when the crowd was getting really loud. I was like I can't hear myself think.

So it was a different environment, but you get used to it fast and then you just kind of acknowledge it and put it out of your mind. That's what we did.

DESTINY JACKSON: Yeah, it was really loud, but I just tried to block out the noise. I enjoyed it, hearing the sound for sure.

Q. Both Destiny and Malia, coming into this game, you all had played four games in four days. You won. Coach mentioned in practice that you got to carry that over to the next game. When did it all kind of like, not overwhelm you, but okay, we're here, let's do this.

MALIA FISHER: I think first quarter we came out, and I felt really comfortable honestly on the court. I don't think there was ever a point in time when I was scared or overwhelmed.

DESTINY JACKSON: I think the first quarter, the first few minutes, I was pretty locked in the first few minutes. But I'm used to it, and I think we did a good job.

Q. Malia, they're one of the more physical teams in the country really. How were you all able to go toe to toe with them on the glass and in all the physical areas?

MALIA FISHER: We had to get used to it for sure. I think coming out we were maybe a little timid. I think once we got over that first punch that they threw, we absolutely hung with them. I think it was just about playing our brand of basketball and hitting shots early to spread their defense out, then being aggressive.

Like I said, not being scared and taking it to them because, at the end of the day, we're all basketball players.

Q. I'm sure you all haven't had a chance to scroll through social media feeds yet, but the overwhelming response I'm seeing from Rice fans and folks online is they're proud of you guys and how you fought today. How do you feel about that, coming in with a loss but



playing the way you did?

DESTINY JACKSON: I feel proud. We're basketball players. We came to work. We came to fight no matter who we're playing. Just ready to get after it, and I think we did that.

MALIA FISHER: I would add that our support and our community is amazing. Being on this journey, starting from conference to now, I don't think anybody's doubted us. So I think just having them behind us has really added and contributed to our success.

Q. Can you just talk about the job that Sussy did tonight? Obviously comes in as a transfer, and just the growth both of you have seen from her and her ability to really limit what Angel Reese could do offensively.

MALIA FISHER: Fun fact, Sussy actually played LSU her freshman year at Samford and scored 16 on them. She came in with the mindset knowing she could hang with them and play with them, so I think she rubbed off a lot on us.

But her acted are unmatched, and playing with her and for her, it just makes me go even harder. I'm so proud to call her my teammate.

DESTINY JACKSON: She's really relentless. She's a beast in the paint. I'm glad I got to play with her my last year.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations on your magical run throughout the season. Thank you for joining us.

We'll open up the floor for Lindsay Edmonds.

Q. Kind of the same question I asked both the players, but what have you seen from Sussy and her development, and what's it like having her in the program and seeing her perform today?

LINDSAY EDMONDS: Unfortunately Sussy dealt with some injuries early on in the season. It was highs and lows for her. We saw her go through some really hard days. For her to be able to be rewarded the way that she's been in the conference tournament and today, it's just awesome to be able to see it.

Her team has rallied around her and lifted her on those dark days and had confidence in her and poured in her and made sure that she believed in herself. She was able to showcase her talents down the stretch when we probably needed it the most.

Everybody talks about Sussy's ability to score the ball, and obviously she can, but her ability to defend and rebound at her size is pretty phenomenal. A lot of people try to just iso her, but she's smart, and she knows she has to give everybody a step and just wall up because she's a big wall.

It's been a lot of fun to see her be rewarded the way she has.

Q. It's one thing to talk about coming into an environment like this and playing the way you did, but what was the conversation like in between the first and second quarter when you weathered the first punch, held them under 30 percent shooting, and it was a ballgame?

LINDSAY EDMONDS: When we looked up at the end of the first quarter, we were like it's 6-12. We're okay. We haven't hit shots, but we are doing okay. Our game plan defense I thought was tremendous in the first quarter. We were doing exactly what we wanted to do.

Now in that quarter break, it was like, okay, settle in. Now the shots that we have been getting, knock them down with confidence. Let's get the ball inside with confidence.

So I thought we came out in the second quarter and played obviously much better because of that. But we weathered the first punch, and we knew we wanted to punch back, and we knew we were going to punch back. Just didn't know if it was going to happen at the end of the first or beginning of the second.

So they weathered it and punched back and kept punching and kept swinging. We cut it to four late too. So just really proud of that effort.

Q. A follow-up on that. The poise of your leaders to -- when the stadium was rocking in that third quarter and it kind of felt like this is LSU's chance to run away with it, they didn't. Did you have to say anything, or what did you see from the court of how your team kind of responded to that high pressure situation?

LINDSAY EDMONDS: I just remember looking out at them and doing the settle. Then I saw the players mimicking me, and I just think they have a lot of confidence in one another, and they pulled together. They just, they went on a run themselves.

So they weren't afraid of that moment. They weren't afraid of the stage. I think we represented Rice on a national stage really, really well.

Q. Expanding on that a little bit further because now you have a base group that's been to, as I say, college basketball's promised land and have actually crossed the road. Now next season is upwardly bound. You're only losing one player, Destiny, because she's a senior. What's the upside now?

LINDSAY EDMONDS: We talked about it in the locker room, remember this feeling. Remember what it felt like to get here. But next year we want to go further. We want to go a step further.

That means summer work has to be harder. Preseason work has to be harder. If I'm being honest with them and I'm being honest with you guys, we didn't help ourselves with our seeding in conference play because we went on our skid that we went on.

So if we don't have that skid and we play the way we should have played all through conference, we're probably not in this matchup and maybe we have a better matchup for us.

Everything matters. We've already started talking about that. I think everybody's going to be hungry to get back because, like you mentioned, we are losing a big piece with D.J., but we have everybody else coming back, and we signed a great freshman class as well. Excited for what the year can look like.

Q. For perspective, I know it's always hard to -- it's not easy to compliment a performance after a loss. LSU lost at home once this year to South Carolina, I believe, and it was pretty close. So you come in here in a high stakes game, and I think it was a one-point game three times in the third quarter, pretty close in the last two minutes. How do you put that in perspective? Just the kind of game you played today.

LINDSAY EDMONDS: I told our players our goal is to hold our opponents to 60 or less. We held the defending national champions to 70. That's not easy to do. We had six kills, which for us three kills in a row -- three stops in a row was a kill. So we had six kills, like you mentioned. We had it at one a couple times in the third and pretty close down the stretch.

Like we did that. We showed up, and we did that. We were not afraid of the moment, and we were ready to play. Like I said, we proved that we were here and that we were not going to just be someone that they were going to be able to run over or walk all over. That was because of their unwavering belief in one another and their unwavering confidence in our game plan and what we were trying to get accomplished today.

