

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Second Round - San Diego State vs LSU

Saturday, March 22, 2025

Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA

Pete Maravich Assembly Center

LSU Tigers

Coach Kim Mulkey

Flau'Jae Johnson

Aneesah Morrow

Media Conference

LSU - 103, San Diego State - 48

Q. Flau'Jae, seemed like from the very start you were flying around out there. The energy was obvious that you had kind of pent-up energy. Could you talk about your start?

FLAU'JAE JOHNSON: Yeah, I told myself when I came back that I want to be the energy for the team. I feel like when you don't get a chance to play basketball, it really changes your perspective on coming out and giving everything you got.

So that was kind of that, just trying to bring the energy for the team because that's what I know we need.

Q. What did you ladies think about your offensive execution throughout the game?

ANEESAH MORROW: I feel like it was good. There was a lot of plays, set plays that we called that we executed tonight. I thought we did a good job.

FLAU'JAE JOHNSON: I felt like we moved the ball very well, just like we do in practice. You've seen how easy it was for us to score when we were moving the ball. We made the extra pass. We made the pass to the post. They dug in. They kicked out.

I felt we always made the right plays. I think it helped us get in our flow. It helped everybody, it balanced the floor. That's what we've been practicing on. I felt like we came out, executed, even the quick hitters.



Q. Flau'Jae, this is your first action in a few weeks, you're recovering from shin injury. Of course, you had the week-long layoff between the SEC Tournament and this first-round game. Looked like it was very easy for you to just pick up right where you left off out there?

FLAU'JAE JOHNSON: It wasn't easy, but it was fun. The crowd, there was 9,000 people -- I didn't know there was going to be that many people for a 9:00 o'clock game. It's almost 12. Our fans, they just do it for me. Our students came out. Shout-out to our students.

It wasn't easy, but I've been on that bike. That bike is real. That bike in Thomas is real. Just keeping my wind up, I feel like I was trying to like push through some spurts because I know that's how you get in game shape.

I feel like you can't get in basketball shape without playing in games. So this was just a good first outing for me. I was excited.

Q. You said you need all eight. The bench, you got 45 points from the bench tonight. I know they got a lot of minutes. But everybody almost who played scored. That's probably exactly what you wanted. Could you speak to their contributions?

FLAU'JAE JOHNSON: Coach Mulkey challenged them. Said I think that team was 13th in the country in bench production. So she challenged them today at shoot-around, like, is their bench going to be better than ours? I think they took that personal.

We saw Lee Lee come out and get up and down that floor and get rebounds and get and-ones and do her thing. Everybody is coming into their own.

Shayeann played a great game. Hit shots when she was supposed to hit them and transition, pushed the ball.

Poa was really good for us today just pushing the pace. Every time we got a rebound we were running up the floor, running our controlled breaks.

I think everybody did a lot of good things. K.G., she didn't



hit a lot of shots but her defense was immaculate and she made the right plays. And shots are going to fall.

I feel like everybody on the bench contributed. I'm really excited for them. They got what it takes.

Q. A big standout for you guys these last couple of games has been Mjracle Sheppard. Could you talk about the physicality she plays with and the energy she brings off the bench to this team?

ANEESAH MORROW: I love Mjracle. Her work ethic is through the roof. She comes in practice and works hard every day. And if there's one person I know I could depend on every day to show up and be a defensive stopper and get those rebounds it's Mjracle.

So it's what she do in practice. I feel like her practices are tougher than the games. Honestly, she is just cruising out there.

FLAU'JAE JOHNSON: She played great, went 4-for-4, made some defensive stops, talking to Jada, making that switch and getting 30 seconds. Mjracle is our unsung hero a lot of times.

Q. Do you guys really like the production, just the complete game of it all from you guys and the bench and just the game as a whole, your performance as you go further into the tournament?

FLAU'JAE JOHNSON: Absolutely, because it's hard to stop three people that's really good at what they do. But then people come off the bench in other waves -- oh, my God, when does it stop?

That's what it felt like tonight. It wasn't a drop-off. When we came off the court, kept going, kept getting stops. That's what you need for a championship team.

Those are our aspirations. I hope that they see that this isn't -- we're going to play Florida State Monday, and this was just preparation for that. So continue to keep that confidence. That's the biggest thing.

Q. Can you guys just speak to what it means to set a program record for the first time in the first round and what that means going forward for the rest of your momentum in the tournament as well as you coming off your injury and this being the first game you've played in three games?

ANEESAH MORROW: I want to say, kind of for me, it was a confidence thing. Just being back on the floor, kind of being a little bit in your head. But also setting the record

that's something no one can ever take away from you. That's something that's very powerful. And being able to come together as a team and accomplish that is big. I know it was more than they scored in the national championship. So it's a momentum builder for March.

FLAU'JAE JOHNSON: I was nervous today. I was talking to Coach Bob. I'm, like, I was looking good in practice, right? You know what I'm saying? You know what I'm saying? Arms straight, you think?

So, I was nervous. I ain't going to lie. I'm always nervous before games. This time I was like I don't want to be the odd man out.

But as far as the record goes, I think it's cool. But it's like, we did that record against Caitlin Clark, you know what I'm saying? When we get tougher competition, it's going to feel a lot better to do things like that.

But for this team right here and the momentum we're building is big for us. It's big for the people that haven't been to the Elite Eight and the championship game.

So for me, my mind is always, like, hu-huh, you know what I'm saying? But I feel, like, for all of our players that never got to experience this, Lee Lee getting to slap LSU on the board. We set a record. It's beautiful and it's a dope part of the game to be able to make history, especially for LSU.

Q. What's with the kisses? You both were blowing kisses?

FLAU'JAE JOHNSON: I'll be blowing kisses to the student section. And my boyfriend was there. (Indiscernible) to the student section because they come out and -- you were blowing kisses, too.

ANEESAH MORROW: No comment. (Laughter).

Q. As you get ready to go on this tournament run, how big of a confidence boost to see your team play such a complete and unselfish game tonight?

KIM MULKEY: I think your word "unselfish" is pretty spot on. I said that to them in the timeout. We had a lot of ball reversal. We shared the ball. We also have a talented team in that they don't have to share the ball sometimes. They can just take you off the dribble. And we did some of that in spurts tonight.

But I thought that everybody was excited. Everybody was excited for each other. When everybody gets to play and contribute, they all go home feeling good.

And the crowd was good. Is it almost midnight? Midnight, Cinderella, wasn't it? Pumpkin. Then they tell me we play at 5:00 on Monday. They're not doing us any favors. They don't think we work down here?

Yeah, you must have played a little basketball in your day. We were very unselfish tonight.

Q. What did you see from Aneesah and Flau'Jae in their first game since they've been out with injury?

KIM MULKEY: I think Aneesah got a little frustrated, 4-for-11 from the field. I said those are great moves down there. She was spinning down on the block, trying to go with her left hand. And they'd rim in and out. Just keep shooting it.

We ran a couple of quick hitters for her. I needed to get Mikaylah some more quick hitters. But Mikaylah is the best passer we have, so she probably turned down a lot of shots tonight.

As far as their conditioning, I didn't notice fatigue, really. But I was moving players in and out. So I never left them in there for long periods of time.

Q. You started your most experienced starting lineup for the NCAA Tournament, all these people have a ton of tournament experience. How much difference did that make at the beginning? And also, five starters with 25 minutes or less, five bench players with 10 minutes or more. You couldn't have worked it out better.

KIM MULKEY: Well, exactly. I'm watching a lot of these first-round games where their main players are having to play extended minutes just to win a game. Fortunately for us tonight we didn't have to do that.

Poa was very valuable. Didn't score -- I don't know if she even attempted a shot. But she was our quarterback. She managed the game. She pushed it up the floor. She did what we asked her to do defensively. And then Shay comes in to relieve her and had one of her better offensive games.

But more important they didn't turn the ball over. They executed what we needed them to execute. And I was proud of both of them.

And Jada came in as well. And Jada played some off guard. Jada is going to look for her shot now. As soon as she gets in the game, it's a bucket. It's going up.

Q. You all got San Diego State to shoot well above

their season average on 3s and only got to the line 15 times. How well did you like the discipline defensively?

KIM MULKEY: Yes, but they also missed some open looks. We talked to them about that at halftime. Those guys, maybe we rushed their shots some, but they missed some wide-open looks.

I thought that, to change the subject a little bit, you know, we missed 11 free throws -- 11 free throws. And then if you look at the number of layups we missed, we missed 15. So we were not what, I would call just smooth out there, even though we scored a lot of points and a lot of people did some good things. You make your free throws and make half of those layups, it would have been a big margin difference in the score.

But I just thought that we were very active. We didn't let them in the paint much. So good night for everybody.

Q. What's the significance to you attached to the point total and the victory margin? Could you put that in context?

KIM MULKEY: Not really. Didn't really know until about maybe a minute and something to go. I think Coach G said something that if we score another bucket here, we break some record. I was like, okay, well, we've got to shoot it.

But I did get disturbed when K.G. was going in to score and they fouled her. And she got the two free throws to break the record. We don't do that. If it's 30 seconds or less on the clock, you hold that ball right there.

Q. What did you think of Aneesah's defensive effort tonight, and what do you want the team to improve on going into Monday's game?

KIM MULKEY: Well, Aneesah can get her hands on a lot of balls, particularly if we are kind of not trapping. But we let her, when they come off on ball screens, we'll let her get up there and get after it.

She did fine. I think Aneesah is hard on herself because she missed some shots that she doesn't normally miss. What do we need to improve on? Well, I'm going to always say defense. Make your free throws. We're getting ready to play a very talented Florida State team, leading scorer in the country. We've got our hands full. They have so much length and they alter shots, and they're athletic. They just get over screens, and they run. It's going to be quite a challenge for us. I hope we're a challenge for them.

Q. You mentioned Shayeann, about how she was a floor general off the bench. She also made three 3-pointers. How important can her perimeter shooting be down the line?

KIM MULKEY: Well, she was confident tonight. When you make that first one, it makes you a little bit more confident. As I tell the point guards, you've got elite wing players. All you've got to do is get them the ball, make them look good, and guess what, they'll get it back to you. I thought by sharing the ball and having a lot of ball reversal, she looked for her shot.

Poa really didn't have as many looks as Shayeann did. But it makes us better if you can score those. But I thought she pushed it up the floor as good as I've seen her push it up the floor. But the most important thing of all is turnovers. How many did the two of them have? I haven't looked at it.

Poa had one turnover and Shayeann had one. So that's good.

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