2018 NCAA® DIVISION I WOMEN'S BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

Saturday, March 17, 2018

POSTGAME QUOTES

UCLA HEAD COACH CORI CLOSE

opening statement

"I want to give a lot of credit to American. They won 26 games for a reason. They are a really well-coached basketball team. I've seen their coach (Megan Gebbia) for a long time in the NCAA Tournament—she used to coach at Marist and I just think they do a great job. Their staff deserves a lot of credit and their kids deserve a lot of credit for playing to their identity. When we made a run early, they just hung in there, so I want to give them a lot of credit. At this point in the year, I'm really excited that we've earned another opportunity to play, and that's what it's about: earning one more opportunity to play and advance. As much as there are a lot of things we can learn from this game, and I really challenged our team in some areas, I'm excited to coach them for another day."

on improvements needed for Monday's game

"I just really challenged them for the things under our control: executing the game plan, being focused mentally, and you can't go into March Madness and watch plays. I thought there were opportunities where we could have made more plays, been more aggressive, had more of an aggressive mindset. We sort of thought, "No, you go get the ball". We would box out, but maybe they would be quicker to the ball. They had 17 second-chance points and out-rebounded us. They're minus four on the year in rebounding, so I think that showed that we just didn't have a more aggressive mindset and we need to be locked in and focused mentally a little bit better."

on message to the team in the fourth quarter

"You can't take this for granted. This is such a privilege to be able to play in the NCAA Tournament, to be able to play at home. There was a sense of that we sort of knew what was going to happen, that we were going to come out with the victory. This is too special of an experience to take one possession for granted so I got into them pretty hard about that we need to focus, we need to communicate, we need to execute the game plan and that we are very fortunate. If you lose sight of that for a second, you won't be fortunate for another game. We had to lock in mentally to that. We had way too many mental errors in executing our game plan. I thought Coach Jenny [Huth] on our staff did an excellent job preparing the team for exactly what we had to do and we need to lock in a lot tighter for the second game."

on admiration for American's coaching staff

"I think the discipline that they have and the versatility, but they have also got their players to believe at a high

level. I watched them beat Penn State on film. They're a confident group and I think they know what their identity is as a team and they play consistently to that identity. Whenever a coaching staff can get a group of young women to share the ball like they do, to play with such versatility, and to do it on a consistent basis, they deserve a lot of credit. I watched a lot of film on them leading up to this game and I told Coach (Gebbia) before the game, "You have my total respect." Not only in the way she gets her team to play, but the manner in which they conduct themselves, so American should be proud of their women's basketball team."

on importance of getting everyone involved
"It's very important. One of the things I think is hard is that when we're playing really well and we create some baskets off our defense, sometimes we can let that make us a little too frantic on the offensive end. We missed 11 layups in the first half, as much as we went on a run. One of the keys to us is to be able to play really fast and frenetic on defense and have some poise on offense because at this point in the year, you're not going to be able to make one or two passes very often and be able to get a great shot; you are going to be too well-scouted. Some other people are going to have to step up. We have to make one more pass, one more ball reversal. I like that they were really trying to establish Monique (Billings) inside. That's something that we really wanted to do and to get her quality touches was one of the keys to the game plan, but we were trying to get it right away. At this level of the tournament, you're going to have to move the ball, you're going to have to screen well, you're going to have to attack the paint, go inside out. But it is very important that everybody gets ready to step up. I did think that we had some good contributions. Obviously, we had 15 points from Kennedy Burke, but I thought Japreece Dean came off and really brought the heat on our pressure and also hit a couple big threes that I think opened it up. We really needed a couple of players to be able to hit a couple threes. We either need Kelli Hayes, Japreece Dean, Kennedy Burke, somebody like that so that Jordin Canada and Monique Billings can play north and south the way that they're best. You're going to have to put it all together in a tournament like this, so we're using our depth and having other people step up. I think we know what we're going to get from Jordin (Canada) and Monique most nights. Jenny (Huth) actually talks about that to our staff all the time, and to our team, that in March, everyone has to be ready when their number is called. I thought Lauryn Miller did some good things for us when she came in. It could be one or two possessions. It doesn't matter. Everyone has to be ready when their number is called."

UCLA SENIOR FORWARD MONIQUE BILLINGS
on team's mindset coming out of the locker room
"It was about finding the easier shots. I think we started out taking hard shots. We're not really a 3-point shooting team, so much, so it was just about finding the easier touches and my teammates gave me a lot of good touches."

on getting outrebounded and what they can do to correct that
"We just have to respect the other team. They're going to give us their best and that's what they did so we have to be ready for that. We had a hard time rebounding. They tried to rebound, I had to rebound, it's just everybody, so that's something we're watching and we'll learn different ways in doing that better."

on what Bruins did well and what they need to improve upon
"I thought our guards did a really nice job pressuring in the second quarter. They were just really aggressive and asserting themselves and the other team was frantic so I thought they did a really good job of that. So, if you can do that consistently throughout the whole game it disrupts them and doesn't let them execute well."

UCLA SOPHOMORE GUARD KENNEDY BURKE

on the importance of getting players other than Billings and Canada involved

"It's very important to get everyone involved because everyone has their own special abilities. Whenever I come out there's always someone on the bench ready to step up. And as a team it's important that we get ready for the next game as this wasn't our best game, especially defensively."

on what Bruins did well and what they need to improve upon

"I think one of the main concerns that we have to work on on the defensive end is communicating because we had a lot of mental errors on defense. That's why we're talking because whether it's a drive or a kick out, we just have to communicate better."

UCLA SENIOR GUARD JORDIN CANADA

on what was behind 22-3 first-quarter run

"It was us being aggressive. That's how we play as a team, that's who we are as a team. When we're able to play aggressive and get stops, that's when we can go on those runs. We started out really slow and coach got into us and then we just went and executed."

on utilizing the full-court press

"It gives us a lot of energy when we're able to get stops and push and run our offense. We're able to get good looks when we're in transition. That's just when we play our best. When we play aggressive and get stops like that we're able to run and get good looks on offense."

on taking control back and role of 3-pointers

"We knew they were a great three-point shooting team and that's something we tried to take that away. They came out strong in the third quarter so that's something we have to take away, because we can't trade 3s for 2s throughout the game. So, we tried to dictate their offense by our defense and we tried whatever we could, communicating, playing aggressive, to try and get them out of that and make them drive a little bit more."

on what the huddle was like when American trimmed UCLA lead to single digits

"We just had to stay poised, keep our composure, know that we've been through this lots of times in the preseason and the regular season. So just being able to slow down and make sure were playing to our potential, playing aggressively on the defensive end, getting stops, that way we can get easier shots on the offensive end."