

NCAA Women's Regional Semifinals and Finals: Albany

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Albany, New York



Napheesa Collier Katie Lou Samuelson Connecticut

THE MODERATOR: Once again, good morning. We're joined by Connecticut senior student-athletes, Katie Lou Samuelson and Napheesa Collier.

Q. I guess for both of you, what have you seen from UCLA so far on film that's impressed you about them this season?

THE MODERATOR: Katie Lou?

KATIE LOU SAMUELSON: I think they're just super aggressive and one of the best rebounding teams in the country. For us, that's something we've struggled with, and so that's something we've really got to focus and be ready for.

NAPHEESA COLLIER: Yeah, they're really aggressive. They're really athletic. Someone had asked if you think it's going to be harder or not because of their size, and I thought that's something that we looked at too. They're all kind of the same size, so it's something that we're going to have to be really conscious of. Like we said, boxing out and making sure that they're not getting the things that they normally do.

Q. Katie Lou, last year you missed the UCLA game because you were home with an ankle injury or foot or whatever it was then. Did you look at this, when you got the chance to play UCLA, irony, coincidence? How close are you to any number of players? I know there's one high school teammate, but any number of those players growing up.

KATIE LOU SAMUELSON: I think now, being a senior, there's definitely less players overall on the team that I played against growing up. But just getting the chance to play a team that's so close to home, it's going to be a lot of fun. I'm excited to kind of get that chance. I didn't get it last year. So should be fun.

Q. Katie Lou, were you surprised that you guys didn't get the No. 1 seed, and does it matter?

KATIE LOU SAMUELSON: Oh, I think definitely it was a little bit surprising to see that, but we can't control

anything that people decide. That's out of our control. For us, it hasn't necessarily changed anything that we've done as we approach these games. It might have given us a little fuel or added some fire there, but there's plenty of teams that are deserving of what they get. And like I said, we have no control over what the committee decided, so we're just going and taking care of what we can control.

Q. Napheesa, can you address that as well? Were you surprised you were a No. 2 versus a No. 1 seed?

NAPHEESA COLLIER: Yeah, I think almost everyone was surprised. We were surprised. But as Katie Lou said, it's not something we can control, so there's no point in dwelling on it or getting angry about it. We're just going to do what we have to do and prepare the way that we need to in order to continue on in the tournament.

Q. For each of you, I know you guys are used to playing in front of huge crowds, and you've played here specifically, but to be less than three hours away from Connecticut and to play in front of 10,000 people on a stage like this, how cool is that for you guys to be able to play? Obviously, I'm sure, a lot of family and friends come too.

NAPHEESA COLLIER: It's really cool, especially, like you said, being so close to Connecticut. Our fans are amazing, and I have no doubt that they'll probably make the trip up here. So just being here again, especially it being our last time, it is really special. We're just so grateful to have this opportunity, and we're really excited for the game.

KATIE LOU SAMUELSON: Yeah, like she said, we got the chance to play here last year, and it was a great turnout. We're hoping that we get the same kind of support from our fan base.

Q. Again, for both of you, you have some younger teammates that have not been to the Sweet 16 before, whereas you guys have obviously been here a fair amount. Have you said anything about the bigger stage? Obviously, you play on a big stage to begin with, but any advice you've given them about this round and potentially the next round?

KATIE LOU SAMUELSON: I think the biggest thing is just not putting too much on them and not giving them too many things to worry about. Just breaking it down, doing what they know they can do every day in practice. As soon as they know that, Phee and I tell them we've got their backs for anything that happens during the game. We can control that. So as long as they're putting forward their best effort and what they're great at, we'll be okay.

NAPHEESA COLLIER: Yeah, it's kind of hard to tell them what it's going to be like because you don't really know unless you're in that situation. Like we said, we just told them you focus on what you have to do, what you're really good at, and like she said, we have you back. We'll handle the rest. Just do what you need to do, what you've done every day, and you guys will be fine.

THE MODERATOR: Seeing none, we thank you for being here. Wish you well in this tournament.