

# NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Regional 3 Final - Ohio State vs Virginia Tech

Monday, March 27, 2023

Seattle, Washington, USA

Climate Pledge Arena

**Virginia Tech Hokies**

**Kenny Brooks**

**Kayana Traylor**

**Taylor Soule**

**Cayla King**

**Georgia Amoore**

**Elizabeth Kitley**

**D'asia Gregg**

Elite 8 Postgame Media Conference

Virginia Tech - 84, Ohio State - 74

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement from Coach and then take questions for the student-athletes.

KENNY BROOKS: We don't mind if you want to start over and talk about their regional champion part. It had a really good ring to it.

No, I brought all my friends here, my babies. You know what? We've couldn't have gotten it done without each and every one of their efforts, their sacrifices, everything that they have done for this program. They have sacrificed so much. They drowned out outside noise, inside noise. They let it fuel them in a very positive way, and it showed tonight. We kept hearing it.

Congratulations to Ohio State. Kevin's done a tremendous job with that group. They're a lot of fun to watch. And I'll tell you what, that was a high-level basketball game, and it was a lot of fun to be a part of, and I'm sure it was a lot of fun to watch. But they hear a lot of stuff. We heard about the press, and what are you going to do. We had a couple



stumbles against Tennessee, and I thought these kids, the way they focused, they locked in. We came up with a game plan. They executed it perfectly and I don't think the press was a factor all along -- all game long.

And then we had to play. You give them credit. Mikesell, she got hot early. It seemed like no one was going to miss. But then in the second half, we locked in, understood what we needed to do. The job that Kayana did on her, and Cayla, they really made it tough for her. And then we just did everything else right, did all the little things. So very proud of them, very team effort, tremendous win for this group, tremendous win for our university.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions for the student-athletes.

**Q. Georgia, I think, first of all, we all want to know what happened when you went off the floor. But the other thing I was curious about was early in the game when they were pressing, you turned the ball over, called timeout, Coach walked out and was talking to you and, like, teaching you on the floor, I think. He was motioning you need to go on a here, we need to do this, that type of thing. Can you talk about what type of teacher he is on and off the floor.**

GEORGIA AMOORE: This man is so fit. We have individuals and he does the move and I copy it exactly. But I am definitely more of a visual learner. So for him to explain it, he played the point guard, and with like the press and all of that, I just can't -- I'm small, I have to use that to my advantage, but I also have to use just basic moves to blow by them. So that was a big part of it.

I think for the press it got a bit choppy when we started passing it too much. I really just needed to break it by dribbling through it. For the hit part, I just caught -- I don't even know what it was, in the chin, and it just knocked me off center, but I was fine. Just caught my breath.

**Q. Liz and Cayla, as fourth-year Hokies, what does it mean to you to be part of the first Tech team to make the Final Four?**



ELIZABETH KITLEY: It means everything, especially just with this group. We all come from different places, but this year we came together because we all wanted the same thing. It's so nice to be at this spot, but we know that we don't want to be done either yet because we have so much fun playing together. And that's what we talked about at one point in the timeout. We just said that we didn't want this to be our last game because we love each other so much and we have fun playing. So we're looking forward to the next one.

KAYANA TRAYLOR: Going off her, the same thing, it's just great to see how this program's improved every single year that I've been here and to be a part of a program like that just means a lot.

**Q. You guys all transferred into this program and some of you guys at spots where the program necessarily wasn't in the right spot or needed some work to be done. To sit here now and you guys are going to the Final Four, what it does it mean to each one of you guys?**

KAYANA TRAYLOR: It means everything. It's exactly what I came for, honestly. I think -- I can speak for myself, but I think also Taylor and D Mo, like, we just really bought into what Coach Brooks was already building here, to be honest, as far as like culture and everything like that and, yeah, just led to us here.

TAYLOR SOULE: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Ditto. Ditto. I think -- no, honestly, on a serious note, go Hokies. I'm speechless. I'm blessed. I love these people so much. And like Liz said, I don't want it to be done. I came to Virginia Tech because of the people. I play hard because of the people and I wouldn't want to be anywhere else.

D'ASIA GREGG: For me, I wanted to come here and I wanted to be a part of something that's big. I saw what he was building. I just bought into the program. First year didn't play. Sorry, Coach. (Laughing.) I just kept my head down, just kept working, didn't let that discourage me. It just pushed me to go harder and to play for my teammates.

**Q. Georgia, over the last 15 games, I think since you guys last lost, you've been on a tear. Just how have you just felt confidence growing in you over these last 15 games? And then how exciting was it when the game was over and they played Enter Sandman? Because it just seemed like all of you guys got all this energy. I know it's the Virginia Tech song, but to hear it all the way out in Seattle.**

GEORGIA AMOORE: These girls just give me the absolute confidence and Coach Brooks. I did have some

rough shooting tonight, but like they weren't discouraging at all. They told me that they would take them over everything else any day, and that's what you need and really good teammates and we're so focused on winning. So that really breeds the confidence.

And Enter Sandman, what graphic did March Madness put out where they put the Hokey Pokey or something like that? Did you see that? Enter Sandman, but it was just great.

**Q. So many good teams do not make it to Dallas. What enabled this team to live up to its 1 seed and get there?**

ELIZABETH KITLEY: I think we just wanted it more. This has been something that we've set out for, and I think once this group of girls sets their mind to something, it's going to be really hard to deter us from that. That's just our mindset the last few months, honestly. We just have the most confidence in ourselves and we don't care what anybody else thinks.

**Q. Georgia, Kenny likes to talk about stopping and smelling the roses. I guess for you guys specifically yesterday you said you hadn't done that at all yet. Is there a moment tonight that you feel like it has sunk in or you've been able to stop and smell those roses?**

GEORGIA AMOORE: For me, it was when Liz had her last set of free throws, because I think it was like 40 seconds left to go, I was like, I'm not comfy yet. And then Liz's last set of free throws, I was like, oh, my God, the buzzer is about to go off and this is about to happen. So that was definitely my moment.

KAYANA TRAYLOR: Personally, when I fouled out and got to the bench. I was able to like watch and like let it sink in because I wasn't in the game. But, yeah, that was me personally.

**Q. Along the lines of the earlier question, Georgia, nobody has ever made more threes through the first four games of a NCAA tournament than you have. Can you process that sort of a hot streak while it's happening.**

GEORGIA AMOORE: Hm-mm. Hm-mm. I just like to shoot the 3 ball. And I don't know what else to say.

**Q. Taylor, they pressed you guys originally and then you broke it. Did them shifting to not pressing you, just playing you guys in the half court, did that surprise you at all? And on the other side, what did you like about the way after halftime you guys**



## defended Mikesell better?

TAYLOR SOULE: We knew going into the game that if we handled the press well, that they would back off a little bit, and so kudos to everybody for helping out and doing that. Georgia, I don't know how you do it, man. I just -- I honestly sit back in the backcourt and just watch what you do in awe.

And second half, again, we just knew we had to lock in defensively, help each other out. I think we communicated well. These two were chasing her all over the floor all night. So it was definitely a team effort and proud of everybody.

**Q. You go to do your radio interview and there's about a bunch of Hokies fans sitting right behind me, and you throw them a little heart with your hand. How much does it mean to you guys to have all those people travel all the way from Blacksburg all the way out to Seattle to support you guys when you're going for this first ever one and to do it with all these fans? Because they were loud all night right behind us.**

TAYLOR SOULE: Hokie Nation is the best nation out there. Shout out them. I was talking to someone in the crowd and she was like, Oh, yeah, I came from Blacksburg yesterday. And I'm like, Dang, like, you're a real -- Hokies are crazy. Don't you got work or something? I don't know. But I absolutely love Hokie Nation. They have taken me in with open arms and loved on me, so it's only right that I give that love back.

**Q. Georgia, when you went out and then were getting ready to come back in, what was going through your mind? I talked to your cousin and she told me, she was like, There's no way Georgia's going to stay off the floor. And then just also what does it mean to have her here, be able to share that with her?**

GEORGIA AMOORE: I just had a little bit of rage and some catching up to do. They're a strong team and I think they were playing physical. I don't like when people beat down on my teammates, so as soon as I copped the beating, I went back and I refreshed, and I came out with a different mindset.

But it was great to have her there. I'm so happy that she was there. And then I got a FaceTime from my mom after the game, and Mom and Dad are flying out tomorrow to Dallas. That will be like a 16-hour flight for them. But, yeah, it will be good.

**Q. Liz, when Kenny was up and cutting the net down, he got some "Kenny," "Kenny," cheers. I know he's**

**very humble, but how would you put into words what he's done with this program to be able to kind of get you guys and get the program to these new heights?**

ELIZABETH KITLEY: Yeah, I mean, just the places that he's taken it compared to where it was at when he inherited it is just insane. I'm just so happen to be a part of that and to be able to witness all the hard work that he puts into us and the coaching staff and everything. He just has crafted everything and stuck by his vision and what he wanted no matter what other people had to say or whatever and I think that's so valuable in a leader and we wouldn't be where we are without that mindset from him.

**Q. Cayla, I would ask Liz about it, but I know she would be way too humble. She broke the double doubles record in Virginia Tech history today. 56 in her career. You've played with her every step of the way. To see her growth in the same trajectory as this program, how would you describe it? She had 25 tonight and 12 and everything she goes through down in the post, from your advantage point what has she meant to this program?**

KAYANA TRAYLOR: Honestly, I've never seen someone that worked harder. Like, if we were back at home, I bet she would be in the gym tomorrow, honestly. She works out with Coach Brooks and I feel like she translates it to the game like no other. Her and Georgia, I've never seen someone like continuously get better in season like they do. But she also is just willing to do whatever the team needs and sometimes her role is to kick it back out and she gets tripled, doubled, and she can still produce those numbers, which is insane.

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll excuse the student-athletes and take questions for coach.

**Q. You talked the other day about you understand the significance of being a Black male coach. There aren't very many in the women's game. Last year at the Final Four, Dawn talked about that she wanted to use her platform to lift up male Black coaches too. I don't know if you're friends, if you're close, but I wondered what that means. She is the face of the sport, to have her be an ambassador for you. Also, do you have a piece of the net? Did she send you one?**

KENNY BROOKS: I do not.

**Q. You got to go get your own?**

KENNY BROOKS: I got to go get my own. Maybe I'll send her -- no.



When Dawn said that, it was everything. It meant everything because there's some rhetoric out there that men don't belong. There's actually from some prominent people saying that they would never hire a male. That breaks my heart because this is all family, and families need mothers and they need father, and I think that so many Black males, males in general, can be father figures. It goes to -- I think we fought so hard to get to this point where we're not talking about race, we're not talking about gender, and when people won't give you an opportunity because of your race, I don't think that we've gotten where we need to get to.

So I did hear that and when I heard it, I mean, I wanted to stand up and applaud her because she is the face of women's basketball right now. For her to be able to say that, it gives me credence, it gives me credibility that I can echo the same sentiment because I do think -- and eventually what we want to get to in a women's game is to get the best people. And I keep screaming it from the mountain tops too. I love the fact that there's so many females getting opportunities in the NBA.

Kristi Toliver, I've known her since she was six years old. She texted me the other night congratulating me. And I think she's going to be a head coach, maybe -- maybe in the NBA one day, but what she's doing. Basketball is basketball, and when we get to the point where we're just getting the best people there, then the game's going to grow, the sport's going to grow, and I think our society will grow from it.

So I'm going to use my platform. I've said this before. I think I have a little bit of credibility now, a little bit of equity, that I can go say some things that would help people that look like me because there are a lot of 'em out there that are really, really good and can be really, really good for this game. So if anybody can watch me run the program -- you sat here, you saw my team. Okay? They were White, they were Black, they were both. And it's all about just being a family. I think that we have tremendous people out there that are looking for opportunities.

**Q. In both stature and playing, why is Georgia a perfect Robin to ELizabeth's Batman? And then what Jurassic Park reference do we have for this win?**

KENNY BROOKS: (Laughing.) I'll answer the first question. She is a tremendous Robin to Liz's Batman because Liz is a tremendous Robin to Georgia's Batman. They don't care. They do not care. When Georgia wins, Liz is jumping up and down. When Liz wins something, Georgia is jumping up and down. They just love each other. They just want to win. These kids do not care. They just want to win. All six of 'em sitting up here they

just want to win.

So coaching them is a joy because they don't pout when they don't get the ball. They share it. We call our offense like a boomerang offense. You pass it, it will come back to you. You just got to keep moving. Keep moving, and then eventually it will come back to you. And we created that with the kids. We brought 'em in, the sacrifice they were willing to make, and -- and I'm stalling right now because I'm trying to come up with a good Jurassic Park reference.

Jurassic Park, they're all my favorite movies. As a matter of fact, the vehicle that I drive is a Ford F150 Raptor. So I think I have taken it a little bit too far. But no, but you know what? I do tell them all the time, the way we play defense we're not -- we're not a T Rex, we're not. We can't go out there and just one-on-one guard you. We cannot. But we hunt in packs. We hunt in packs and that's the way the raptors hunt. They can't do it by themselves. They have to force you one way and then there's some help and then all of a sudden they pounce on you. And that's our defense because -- as much as I love all of them if it was a one-on-one tournament, they would all lose. But as a group together and the way they connected we're pretty good defensively.

**Q. You're standing on the ladder, your name's getting chanted, sandman is playing. Can you describe what that moment was like for you and what it means for the program?**

KENNY BROOKS: Well, first and foremost, if you are a Hokie or you're associated with Hokies, it doesn't matter where you are, when Enter Sandman comes on, you just start bobbing your head. It doesn't matter -- I mean, I have a video of myself I had -- after we won the game against South Dakota State, I had some wings and I really wanted to just eat, because you're worried about everything. And I sat down and I had a beverage, I had my wings, and then one of the girls played Enter Sandman and all of a sudden I just started bobbing. I'm like, this is great day.

And it doesn't matter. In the summertime we play Enter Sandman in our house and we just run around and just start jumping up and down. Because it's a part of Virginia Tech. And the fact that we can bring joy to Virginia Tech to Hokie Nation, that song comes on, it means everything. It means everything.

One of the coolest moments, I don't know if you saw it, but the NCAA wouldn't let us play Enter Sandman and the student section started sinking it a cappella. That was chilling. I mean, they were so good with it. They were singing it a cappella and Georgia hits a three to start the game. They stopped for a second and cheered and then

picked up right where they left off that's how good they were with it.

**Q. A lot of people say this is the hardest game to win. A lot of people get tight in the big moment. Early in the first half, you know, like you said, being played at a high level, great back and forth shot making. You just had this little smile on your face the whole time. And I wondered how much fun were you having and were you aware of the fact that you were smiling and not looking angry?**

KENNY BROOKS: I wasn't having fun. I think I was smiling because they were making big shots and we were where we were supposed to be, for the most part. Like I think our defense is underrated. It really is. We are really good defensively. Like I said, we're not going to steal, it's not glamorous because we don't get out there and press you. But we really take away a lot of things. And we were where we were supposed to be. And then Mikesell was hitting shots. I think that was the little smirk I had.

And I had another moment with Kevin. I think we were up 10, I don't know how many, I think maybe two minutes to go in the game, maybe a little bit more. And Georgia hits that three right in front of our bench and it was unbelievable. And I think when I turned around my eyes were as big as saucers, that he looked at me and he just went, and he winked at me. And I'm like, hey, you know, it's just, that's how incredible she is. But it was -- the kids were loose. This group is as mature and professional as any group I've ever seen, I've ever been around. And the moment's not too big. And I think we'll go to Dallas and I think that we'll be ready to play again and so I'm excited about it.

**Q. Wondering, what do you remember when Whit called you and offered you the job, what kind of surrounded that and was there ever any doubt that you would take it?**

KENNY BROOKS: There's always doubt because I would have been leaving, I was leaving my alma mater, my home. A place where I grew up. A place that did so much for me in James Madison. But it got to the point where, I think my last three years, I saw a stat in the CAA, I was 60-3. Yeah, 60-3. And it was like, okay, it's time. It's time to not leave, but it's time to see what I can test my wits against the best.

And going back to the opportunities part, I didn't get a lot of opportunities. I had schools right across the mountain that wouldn't call me. I had Power 5 schools that would have an opening, I would never get a call. But then at the same time I'm like, you know what, I don't have to leave. When

Whit called me, there was a familiarity with Whit. We went to the same university, played against each other in high school basketball. But his father was a mentor of mine. And so if I was going to leave it was going to be for a place that I felt comfortable with. And we inherited a program here, I knew the sky could be the limit. And I took that leap of faith. And it was tough because my teams at James Madison were really good. The team I left at James Madison had a first round WNBA draft pick. I came to Virginia Tech and we had none of those. And we had to start all over again.

But it took a leap of faith, a lot of hard work, a lot coaches' efforts, kids, these kids up here really changed the culture. And it's funny, because when I talked to my presser when he hired me, I got a little overzealous, and it was right after when Syracuse went to the final game, and I said, if Syracuse can do it, well why can't we. And it was great. People erupted, yeah yeah, yeah, yeah. And I thought I stuck my foot in my mouth. But seven years later here we are.

**Q. What does it mean to you that, I think your 7th anniversary of your hiring was just the other day. Did you envision at some point that you would get to this point and what does it mean to have gotten here, and then also as far as the game why was that press of theirs not as effective against you guys as it was against UConn on Saturday?**

KENNY BROOKS: I don't know if you envision it or more if you dream it. And I think we were dreaming it. Obviously this is not easy. One day I'll sit back and realize how hard it was for us to get here and realize we're one of four teams still standing. So I don't know if it was a vision, it was more of a dream and now that dream's come true. And now we need to build upon it.

But the actual game, we watched, we watched, I watched a lot of film, last night, the night before, the day before, and watched how different teams handled their pressure. UConn, they were trying to pass the ball through the press. We felt like that Georgia could dribble through it. And she didn't do it by herself. We set screens on them so Georgia had one-on-ones instead of dealing with two people. And Georgia one-on-one with anybody in an open court situation, I'll take that bet any day. So that's why we were successful. That's why they say, yeah, Georgia broke it, and everyone was watching Georgia, but Taylor Soule or Kayana Traylor, they set some good screens to get her free.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you.

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