

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Chattanooga vs Virginia Tech

Friday, March 17, 2023

Blacksburg, Virginia, USA

Cassell Coliseum

Virginia Tech Hokies

Kenny Brooks

Georgia Amoore

Elizabeth Kitley

Media Conference

Virginia Tech - 58, Chattanooga - 33

THE MODERATOR: This is Virginia Tech. We are joined by Head Coach Kenny Brooks, Elizabeth Kitley, on the heels of her 20th double double of the season, and Georgia Amoore, 22 points, her 11th 20-point effort of the season.

We'll begin with an opening statement from Coach Brooks.

KENNY BROOKS: Hard game obviously going against a good friend of yours, somebody who really helped you build this program. Emotions were -- it was a little bit weird. I guess it was kind of a little bit weird all the way around.

You're playing in Cassell, and some of the things you're used to in Cassell, you're not able to do. But we had to adjust.

Give them credit. They came out, they were scrappy, they played hard. We were a little bit rusty, which I felt like we were going to be, 12-day layoff, kids in and out of the lineup.

But it's always good to get a win to start everything and then to keep it going. The old adage is survive and advance. We want to be a little bit better than that. But we were fortunate to be able to get a win today.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up to questions for the student-athletes.

Q. For each of you, what did you feel like your defense



did pretty well to make it a tough shooting night for them?

ELIZABETH KITLEY: I mean, they had 33 points out, but we all know that our defense could have been better. We didn't finish plays like we needed to. I think we didn't make them feel us enough. I think they kind of were able to dictate what they wanted to do more than we should have let them.

Yeah, they did have 33 points, but we know that we can be better than that. We need to be better to move on.

GEORGIA AMOORE: I would say also a large majority of their points was off of our breakdowns, second chance points, back doors, simple mess ups on plays. So, yeah.

Q. Liz and Georgia -- Liz, you kind of screened Georgia open on her fourth three, and then on the fifth one, you skipped it over to her. Just how is it your on court chemistry for both of you, just continues to grow, grow, and grow to the point where it is right now?

ELIZABETH KITLEY: I think we just know that we need to be outlets for each other. She gets pressured a lot of times, and she needs a little break. Then sometimes if the pressure's on me, I know that she's going to be there moving to be open.

That just benefits both of us. So the more we can make them pay for that, then the harder it will be to take us away.

GEORGIA AMOORE: I would say Liz and I probably conversate a lot more on the court than is shown. I feel like we have too lengthy of conversations. So I'm just trying to help her because she gets absolutely hounded.

Q. Just wondered what you thought of the crowd tonight. What was it like to play in front of that big crowd?

ELIZABETH KITLEY: I mean, that was awesome. That means everything to us. Yeah, just the way that they showed out. At the end of the regular season, I knew it



... when all is said, we're done.®

was going to be great energy in here.

Shout out to the students because I heard it was a hard time getting tickets. So it's really cool that they all entered the lottery and came. So we really appreciate that. Makes a difference.

GEORGIA AMOORE: It's not like they just filled the seats. It was really loud. It honestly makes a difference to the game, like free throws and everything like that. The stadium was literally shaking.

Q. Liz, for you, what's it been like to watch Georgia grow as a player and all the time she spends in the gym, I know, but over the years from when you guys first started playing together, when she first arrived, had to adjust to the American style of basketball, to now where she has 11 20-point games on the year and is consistent in leading you guys on offense.

ELIZABETH KITLEY: I'd say it's a lot, but it's just really cool for me to see her confidence grow because I think the people around her have always thought that she was incredible and could do incredible things, like the crazy moves that she makes.

So it's nice to see her have that confidence in herself, I think also, because we know that oftentimes the ball is best in her hands and good things happen.

Yeah, she's a great player, and you guys don't even know she can do even more. She's crazy.

Q. Georgia, for you, you broke the record for single season threes in Tech's program history. What kind of zone are you just finding yourself in at this point?

GEORGIA AMOORE: Just a level of confidence right now, not really hesitating when I make my shots. That's a credit to Coach Brooks because we shoot often, very often. And even like my teammates just finding me open, like it helps.

I feel sorry for Liz because she does get hounded, but it seriously helps open me up.

KENNY BROOKS: What did she do? What did she break?

Q. I think it was most threes in a single season.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations on the victory tonight.

Questions for Coach Brooks.

Q. Kenny, I think during this 12-game winning streak, 11 of the teams have shot 40 percent or worse. Are you surprised at how good your team has been defensively this season?

KENNY BROOKS: No. I think I've been saying it since the end of last year and even when we had media day at the ACC, that our defense was going to surprise a lot of people. Just the way that the kids are connected. They understand each other. They understand the game, they're older, and they're able to take away a lot of different things for you.

We're not going to try to shut you down, but we're going to make you take tough shots. I thought we did that today, made them take tough shots.

As they alluded to, we had a couple of breakdowns, but we haven't played in 12 days. We were a little slow to the ball, a couple of different plays. It's kind of crazy when -- I was fuming at the end of the game and in the locker room a little bit just because I know we could be better, but then you look down and they have 33 points. I'm not sure if anybody else has held anybody to 33 points on the first day or not.

I'm proud of them. They're really good at taking away some stuff. I just know how good they can be, and we need to get a little bit better than we were today.

Q. Kenny, obviously Taylor left in the end of the third quarter there. Was she just cramping up? How's she looking there?

KENNY BROOKS: Yeah. I guess when you have that many muscles, you're going to cramp up. She's a strong kid.

The word I got was I could have put her back in at the end if I needed to. If I didn't need to, then don't. So we'll get her some fluids, let her rest today, see how she feels tomorrow, but I think she'll be fine.

Q. Did their defense do certain things to make it tough for you, or was that just rust today in terms of offense?

KENNY BROOKS: No, I think it's a little bit of both. They did a really good job. They had a game plan. We kept it -- no disrespect to anybody. Obviously Poppie is near and dear to my heart. But we kept it vanilla. We didn't want to do a whole lot of the stuff that we were going to do.

They made it tough for us, and it's kind of one of those games where, okay, just figure it out. We just needed to figure out, just try to get back in rhythm because I don't

know who we're going to play on Sunday. But they're going to do some things to take it away, and we just need to get back into rhythm.

Give them credit. They had a good game plan. But we just really kept it vanilla so we could work out some of the kinks but also not expose everything we wanted to try to do.

Q. Kenny, what was -- from your perspective, what was the crowd like? You've coached here for so long highest attended game in your history and all time for Tech women.

KENNY BROOKS: It's awesome. The kids are fantastic. I think one of the girls said it, they don't just show up and sit in the seats. They make a lot of noise. I wish they would let us play Enter Sandman. I think the roof would have blown off. NCAA, you want to see something electric, let us play Enter Sandman. This roof will blow off.

Because we have great atmosphere. We have great fans. We have so much tradition. It's almost like South Dakota State and USC, they might get cheated a little bit because this could be really an electric environment.

But it was good. It was fantastic. I thought they were loud. Did they give away bacon, or are they just practicing for bacon next year?

Q. They just like bacon.

KENNY BROOKS: They just like bacon, okay. It was great. Really I'm so proud of where we've come, and for my kids to be able to experience that is tremendous.

Q. As far as USC and South Dakota are concerned, that tip is in a couple minutes. Is there anything specific you're interested to watch? I know you probably haven't had a chance to look at them, but to play a second round game now in Cassell in front of another soldout crowd, what are you expecting, I guess?

KENNY BROOKS: It's kind of crazy because they are two contrasting teams, one end of the spectrum and then the other. So we're just going to sit back, figure it out. You don't dare want one over the other. My grandmother always told me be careful what you wish for.

But we're just ready to play whoever. But they're so different. They're so different. South Dakota State, I don't think they've lost since like, what, ten years. They've been beating a lot of people.

Then obviously Lindsay does a tremendous job with her program at Southern Cal. So we're going to have our hands full. We understand that. So we're just going to sit back and see who it's going to be.

Q. In light of what happened last year in the first round, how important was it to break out and get that double digit lead early in this game and take control?

KENNY BROOKS: It was good. We understand. We keep a lot of stuff in house. Last year we lost to Florida Gulf Coast, and we weren't healthy. Cayla King had sprained her ankle really bad in the tournament. Liz had a shoulder problem in the tournament. Aisha Sheppard was limping a little bit.

Give Florida Gulf Coast credit, but we learned that we just need to take care of business. You can't take anything for granted. We wanted to make sure we hosted. We were almost hosting last year, and we had to go to Maryland.

It also fueled them to understand -- now, these kids are older. This is not their first, second, or third game in the NCAA Tournament. They've experienced it. They've learned valuable lessons every time we've played, and they take that. They take it, and they make sure that it motivates them.

So last year's loss motivated us because we lost. But we also knew we weren't very healthy. Coming into this year, we were as healthy as we can be, minus Taylor Soule's cramping. We just want to make sure we stay healthy so we can try to make a long run.

Q. UConn joked on Selection Sunday about how they know your plays, you know theirs, but did Coach Poppie give you any kind of surprises in that aspect?

KENNY BROOKS: No. The last couple years that Poppie was here, I let him do a lot of the defense, and I know what he likes. We could have walked into this game, and I could have told you exactly what he was going to do. He did it.

Like I said, we wanted the kids to be able to play through it, play through some of the rust. His kids did a good job of executing some of it, some of the stuff that they wanted to do.

Took Liz away. We kept it vanilla with Liz and really just let her try to figure it out instead of trying to move her around a little bit, but it was a really good game plan. Their kids did a good job executing it.

Q. Kenny, among the many faces in this soldout crowd was Aisha Sheppard. I know we talked about

this through the season, but what does her presence do for your team? And talk about how she has a hand in your success this season?

KENNY BROOKS: Sheppy's here? Good. She told me she'll -- she'll get a piece of the net, I know that. She's fantastic. As soon as we won the championship, she's texting me. She and I had a long face time conversation, albeit she was sitting on the beach while we were having it. They had a beautiful location.

But she's -- a lot of times kids would get or people might get a little angry that it happened when they left, and she couldn't be more happier for this program. That's just the kind of person she is, and that's the kind of person we wanted to build on, build this program around.

Just her pride in Virginia Tech, her pride in this program is second to none, and she will always be an ambassador for us, even as she continues on a new legacy that she's creating for herself. She's always going to represent Virginia Tech and be a tremendous ambassador for us. That's why I love her to death.

She's a staple in this program and the development of this program, and she's had a big hand in any of the success that we will have in the future because of what she sacrificed and did.

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