

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship Final Four: LSU vs Virginia Tech

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American Airlines Center

Virginia Tech Hokies

Kenny Brooks

Georgia Amoore

Elizabeth Kitley

Taylor Soule

Semi-Finals Pregame Media Conference



It's still a little bit of a fever dream, just trying to take it all in. But it's definitely really fun, and I'm happy to be here.

ELIZABETH KITLEY: Yeah, it's really cool because I think growing up, or even like the last few years in college, we would have our season and then it would come to an end too soon. I would enjoy watching the rest of the games, but now we're in those games, and I couldn't be more happy about that.

I'm just so excited that I get to play with these guys for a little bit longer.

Q. Elizabeth, just the matchup obviously down low is going to get a lot of attention. What do you see in LSU's posts in LaDazhia and Angel and the challenge they present?

ELIZABETH KITLEY: They're really athletic. They can rebound a lot. We just know we're going to have to be physical and strong down there and not let them get too many second-chance opportunities because they'll definitely take advantage of that.

Yeah, we just have to play to our strengths also.

Q. First of all, ladies, Coach, great seeing you all down here in Big D. This is for the ladies up there on the stage. Obviously locally we all know how great you are and what you all do, but what's it like finally to get this national attention? Obviously Taylor showing off the great hat, that's got to be cool because you're bringing the swag. What's it like to get this national recognition and attention you all definitely deserve?

GEORGIA AMOORE: Yeah, it's really good for the program, what we've been striving for. Coach Brooks has done a really good job inheriting the program and building it up to this, and obviously this is probably one of the like greatest things a team can achieve, being in the Final Four, aside from winning the whole thing.

It's really surreal, really great for the program. It's good that Virginia Tech is getting some noise.

THE MODERATOR: Good morning. Welcome to the Division I Game 1 press conference featuring the Virginia Tech Hokies. We'll hear an opening statement from Coach Brooks and then hear from the student-athletes.

Good morning. Coach, if we could start and have you do an opening statement, please.

KENNY BROOKS: It's great to be here, obviously, not just because I'm a Cowboy fan, but I'm a big fan of these kids. Watching them all year long and everything that they've gone through, their ability to stick together, their resiliency, and then their just ability to sacrifice has really gotten us to this point.

I'm very proud of their accomplishments and what they've done. There's been many that have been individual, but the biggest ones are the team goals that we've accomplished, and I'm very, very proud of them.

And I'm excited for this weekend because we feel like if we are the best version of ourselves, then we give ourselves a shot. So I'm looking forward to the opportunity.

Q. For Taylor and Liz, I'm sure you grew up watching the Final Four on TV. Given that, what is it like to actually now have arrived here?

TAYLOR SOULE: It's pretty surreal to be here, but I think Coach says it, it's one thing to be here, it's another thing to be in the Tournament. So it's a blessing.



TAYLOR SOULE: I'll just piggy-back on that. I'm proud of the team, of Coach Brooks, the vision that he's had, and I think it all started obviously in the locker room and making sure we all believed in the goals and what we were going to accomplish.

Honestly, trying to block out the noise. Whether you're with us or against us, it's not really going to change what we do. But at the same time, it does still feel good to be on this stage and have people recognize you for the hard work that we've been putting in all season.

ELIZABETH KITLEY: I agree. That was good.

Q. Coach Brooks, is it right that you were at the 2017 Final Four in Dallas when UConn had its 111-game winning streak ended?

KENNY BROOKS: I was, and it was a special, special Final Four for me because I have a middle daughter, Chloe, and she was probably going through some tough challenges mentally. She had an injury with her basketball career, and it was a daddy-daughter date.

We came here. We spent time together with each other, took her around, kind of got a chance to show her how cool daddy was in the lobbies of the WBCA meetings.

We sat up there, and we watched the game, UConn and Mississippi State, and we had the best time. I wish I could give you a story, a Disney story ending and saying, hey, baby, one day we're going to be here too, but we didn't. But it was a memorable moment, and to come full circle to know that 2023 I'm going to bring my team -- like Taylor says, we're not at the Final Four, we're in the Final Four, and that's a surreal moment and something that now I get to bring my whole family, not just one kid.

That's something that not only we're experiencing, but all of our families are experiencing, and it's just a wonderful, wonderful moment.

Q. Do you use that as any kind of example to your kids that anyone can win the tournament no matter what their record is?

KENNY BROOKS: I've told these kids all along that they can win it. They have the talent to win it. They just weren't good enough to beat themselves and to try to beat these tough opponents. And they bought into that.

They're selfless, the most unselfish group I've ever been around in my life. As a matter of fact, all their individual trophies and accolades, they're in my office because they just haven't come to pick them up. The only thing they

want to do is win.

So if you walk into my office, you might think I'm a decorated basketball player with all the trophies in there, but that's just their unselfishness, and that's what's gotten us here.

THE MODERATOR: Before moving on, we're going to take a question virtually.

Q. Congratulations, ladies, making it to the Final Four. This is for the players. What is it like representing the Commonwealth of Virginia and also representing the ACC as well?

ELIZABETH KITLEY: I'm not from Virginia originally, but the last four years that I've had there, I've just had a real connection with the community there and Blacksburg especially. It's just a really special place.

Hokie nation is incredible. I'm just so happy to be able to represent that population, and it's cool to get somewhere where the program hasn't been before. I'm just really glad I'm doing it in a Hokies uniform.

TAYLOR SOULE: It's been awesome. I've had people back on campus that work for like dining hall services texting, saying the whole campus is behind us. It's a great feeling because I feel like we're just kind of having fun and doing our job, but to know that people are genuinely looking up to us is awesome.

Same thing with people in the ACC. Other teams are saying, bring it home for the conference. It's fun. It's awesome.

GEORGIA AMOORE: Yeah, I was just going to say a few of the ACC girls that we play against all year round have reached out to me and a lot of the other girls too. It's pretty cool to see those girls getting behind you. It obviously goes to show how great the connection the ACC has and how it's prepared us for this.

Q. Each of you have had different experiences deciding to go to Virginia Tech, but what was it about Coach's vision specifically that made you realize this is something I want to get on board with? Like what was that? You can sell a vision, but for us not being in the room, what did that look like? For Georgia and Elizabeth getting recruited out of high school versus Taylor coming in as a transfer. If you could each answer what that looked like.

GEORGIA AMOORE: My story was definitely different because I was international, and I never met Coach Brooks

in person until I was in his office pretty much committing. So I think he did a really good job recruiting, selling his vision online. I had a lot of other coaches recruiting me, and I didn't feel that connection or that vibe.

Coach Brooks is always so genuine. Him and his staff, his whole coaching staff, had that vision. I could just tell that it was a family. For me to come all the way over here, I had to have that.

So a huge part of that was just the family feeling and the vision that came along with that. Sitting in his office, I committed on the spot. So he sold it pretty well.

TAYLOR SOULE: I think for me it wasn't even like when we talked on a Zoom that he sold it to me. I think it was over the four years of getting to talk to him, just after competition when I was at Boston College.

You get a vibe, you get an energy from somebody in how you interact. It was always genuine. There was always a lot of respect there. So when it came down to him recruiting me to come to Virginia Tech, it was like, okay, I hear what you're saying. I see who you have on the team. And I've liked you as a competitor so far. So it was a pretty easy decision for me.

ELIZABETH KITLEY: I committed like five years ago now, which is crazy, but that was after Coach Brooks had had a couple seasons, and I could already see the improvement that he made. I just knew that he had a vision, not just for the success of the basketball program, but also the culture, and I felt like I could help out with that.

So, yeah, it worked out pretty well.

Q. Taylor, this is for you: You mentioned blocking out the noise and making sure everybody in the locker room believes about the vision. Through the ups and downs this year, what do you think has been the key to you guys as a whole just staying focused and locked in? Even when people are saying whatever about you, being able to block out that noise. Is it the experience? Is it the fact that everybody's connected? What do you think it is in your mind?

TAYLOR SOULE: I think it's a mix of a whole lot of things. I think it starts with having great people on the team, and I credit Coach Brooks for recruiting, not just great basketball players, but great people who I can confide in and look at them, and I think we all have the same goal and this insane desire to win and just have each other's backs.

I think Liz has touched on it a whole bunch, we're just having fun with each other. So why let outside noise that

isn't going to change the outcome of a win or a loss distract you from those goals?

So it's been great being locked in, being motivated with this team. I think it does go to show how mature this group is. So it's great.

Q. For Georgia and Liz, you talked some about this, but how did your friendship blossom out of the season, and how has it translated to the on-the-court play for you all and chemistry?

GEORGIA AMOORE: I think, when I first got here, I obviously had no friends and no one really. But I think that I always said that Liz's relationship with Raven, she's so caring, and she's learned to like be passionate and emphatic and all of the above towards people and their situations.

So she just really reached out to me and helped me get comfortable with Virginia Tech and America. Like I was not comfortable with America.

And then COVID hit, and I lived with her. Even though it was only like, what, two months? I can't even remember how long it was. Four? Okay. That's what I'm saying. It didn't even feel like that because I just got accepted into her home. That was so like comforting and welcoming. So I would say COVID definitely helped with that.

ELIZABETH KITLEY: It was kind of by force because she just got immersed into all my family issues and whatever, like she was just surrounded by it. So she had to learn me really well, and then in turn, I think, she felt more comfortable confiding in me. So I think that just helped us get really close.

Then translating onto basketball, we just have that special relationship, and we spend so much time together. Coach Brooks also helps us learn each other on the basketball floor, so that just translates into games.

Q. Georgia, I saw on Twitter that your parents are going to come to this game. Have they ever gotten a chance to see you play live in person in a Virginia Tech uniform? When was the last time? How awesome is it to have them here?

GEORGIA AMOORE: They both -- my whole family, brother, sister, mom, and dad, came over last year. So they saw about four or five games. Then this year my mom came over, just herself.

I wasn't expecting them to come to the tournament, but they landed yesterday. Mom was like, did you have any

idea that we would come? I was like no. To be honest, no. It's like a 16-hour flight direct.

But they got here, and I'm very happy they get to experience this because this is a whole different level -- like our home games are great, but oh, my gosh, this stage is incredible. So I'm very happy they get to experience it too.

Q. Along those lines, you got to play in the arena where Australia's best basketball player played in her career. What was that like, and what kind of motivation did that give you? Have you heard from any of the Australian stars and legends in your run up here?

GEORGIA AMOORE: When I first walked in, I saw her jersey hanging. That was a pretty surreal moment. We won the game against Ohio State, and she DM'd me, which was pretty cool. She reached out to me. Sami Whitcomb also plays for them and she reached out to me. It's awesome to have that support from back home, specifically true from the Seattle girls, obviously from where we played those games, but it's been very, very cool.

Q. Georgia, Coach Brooks mentioned the other day in the bubble in San Antonio two years ago after the Baylor game, Coach Mulkey said to him, behind your mask you should be smiling because I see potential in your team. That result notwithstanding, did that game teach you all anything? What were your emotions after that game? And did you think it was an encouraging moment, the result aside?

GEORGIA AMOORE: I learned a lot from that game. I remember walking up to the presser and DiDi Richards walked past me and fist-bumped me and said, good job, baby girl. I was shaking, fist-bumping her. I was like, oh my gosh. This is not real.

But that Baylor team was incredible. To play against them taught us a lot. They were a mature group. They were a confident group. I think it's translating now because we're mature and confident and we're playing on this stage that they did. It's been a journey, but very happy to be a part of it.

Q. Georgia, you talk about the Australian, LSU has Last-Tear Poa. Are you familiar with each other? Stories you can share?

GEORGIA AMOORE: Yeah, we're both from Victoria. She's from the metro, I'm from the country. We played against each other all juniors. We even went to India together as part of the national team.

I'm very familiar with L.T., great family. Her mom's so cute. I'm so proud of her. She went to juco, came up, landed at LSU. I'm so proud of her because she stuck through it, and it's paying off for her.

Q. I think, Liz, before the Ohio State game, you had said this game's going to boil down to how we handle the Ohio State press or not. What do you feel like tomorrow's game is going to boil down to?

TAYLOR SOULE: It's definitely going to be rebounding and just being the type of team, making sure that we're not playing back on our heels, just running our offense.

I think I said it the other day, there's nothing that we have to do that's going to be different than what we've done to get us here. It's just going to be playing confident, playing together, playing smart, limiting second-chance opportunities. And the rest will work itself out.

Q. Georgia, is this right that you grew up playing Australian rules football, cricket, and Tae Kwon Do against boys?

GEORGIA AMOORE: Yes, swimming and track and netball, everything.

Q. Do you feel like that kind of helped you develop a toughness that you've been able to bring into your college basketball career?

GEORGIA AMOORE: Yeah. When I used to play football, I used to be really fast, and boys would grab my ponytail to stop me. So I've definitely learned a lot from that.

In terms of toughness, football is purely about tackling and dodging all those instances. So it definitely helped me be tough. Definitely taught me that, when I get hit, get up, test it out, and then go out if you're really hurt.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, ladies.

Q. Kenny, obviously basketball is the family business for you. I'm curious, going back to when you took the Virginia Tech job, what were those discussions like with your family about leaving a pretty good situation at JMU? Were they on board? Did you imagine this was possible back then?

KENNY BROOKS: Congratulations. Welcome back. My family is everything to me. I played for Lefty Driesell. Lefty not only taught us basketball, but he taught us family. Everywhere we went, family, his family was there.

Ms. Driesell, even if I was mad at Coach Driesell, Ms. Driesell would come up and give me a hug and tell me she loved me. That's something that meant a lot to me.

When I was at James Madison, I felt like I was so busy making a life, that I wasn't living a life. It was a blur. I watched my kids grow up, and I missed a lot. I missed a whole lot.

So when the Virginia Tech opportunity came along, my wife was on board because she understood that the challenges that I wanted to accomplish, I wanted to test my wits against the best, and she knew that. But my children had never moved. Unprecedented, they had never moved before in their lives. They lived in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Their grandparents lived there. Their cousins lived there, their aunts. They had a normal life. They didn't have a coach's family life.

I taught them to hate Virginia Tech because we were James Madison, and we were always battling. My oldest child was on board. My baby girl, she didn't know what was going on. She was just going where daddy and mommy went. My middle child was reluctant. She said, I'm not going. She said, I'm staying here.

Ultimately, one day I was sitting, as I was contemplating, I was sitting on my bed actually, and my middle child Chloe, the one who came to the tournament with me in 2017, she laid on the bed with me, and she said I don't want to be the reason that you don't go out and get what you deserve. So she said, I'll go. When she said that, I just lost it.

Right then and there, I knew that they were going to be incorporated in everything that we did at Virginia Tech. As a result, it's helped us -- family atmosphere. They're around. The kids know them. Georgia and Liz come to my house all the time, whether I'm there or not, to see my wife or to cook, to bake, or do whatever.

So it's just really helped our culture, incorporating my family into everything, and it's helped me become a better father. I've had more dinners at the dinner table with my kids since I've been at Virginia Tech than I ever imagined having at James Madison.

Q. Georgia kind of has a commanding presence on the court. How have you worked with her in developing that and honing that?

GEORGIA AMOORE: She came here, and immediately I knew we had something special, and I told everyone. I told everyone we stole one, and not just because of her basketball ability, but because of her work ethic, her demeanor.

She came over here in a very tough time. COVID hit two months into her being here. Then the very next year, the season was cut short, and she had five nonconference games before we threw her into the ACC battles.

She and I -- I knew she was going to be special, and I challenged her, and I coached her like that. If you had watched my practices with her, you might have thought it was child abuse because I was really going after her because I knew the toughness level that she needed. She handled every bit of it, handled every bit of it.

She has a very demanding -- not demanding. Her demeanor is one of confidence. The kids will follow her. She's like the pied piper. If she said let's do this, the kids will do it. She's the funniest kid on the team. She's the most quick-witted kid on the team. And she's our leader.

She and Liz, watching them two at practice, they'll go at each other, and it's funny because they speak a different language. But at the end, they respect each other so much, and that's a big reason we're here is because of Georgia's toughness mentally and physically.

Q. A first-time Final Four participant and an opposing seed. How do you use those two things in your messaging?

KENNY BROOKS: The No. 1 seed means we belong here. We're not a No. 6 seed who's made a match or a run and it's very surprising. We should expect to be here. A lot of people should expect us to be here. Because of the name on the front, because it hasn't had a history like a Tennessee or a UConn had, people are really quick to doubt you.

Our kids have seen that. Like they mentioned, they're basketball junkies. They know everything that Charlie Creme says. They know bracketology every second. They know everything. Before I can text them because somebody made a really good move, they're texting me, did you see that move that such and such made? They're basketball junkies.

So when they see everything that's written about them and people writing them off, I love the way they've handled it. They're not angry. They're not angry like, we're going to prove you wrong. They're so confident in themselves, okay, we're going to prove ourselves right. We know how good we are. We know we belong here. We know we are a No. 1 seed.

We didn't just happen to get lucky to get a No. 1 seed. We beat a lot of really good basketball teams convincingly, and



we expect to have that. So as a result, being here is not a surprise. We're very fortunate, we understand that it takes a lot of hard work and some luck, but we expect to be here.

Q. Dallas Cowboy fan, you're here in Dallas. Anyone from the Cowboys reach out to your organization to come out to AT&T Stadium, come out to the Star? We talked about it earlier. You said it would be a dream to be here, and now you're here. Has Jerry reached out to you, anybody?

KENNY BROOKS: I haven't, but I'll tell you, I got a text -- sorry, a tweet from Magic Johnson, and that put me on cloud nine. I was a fan boy when I got that. I already got my staff going to print it out, put it on a big cutout and put it in my man cave for anybody to come and see.

Then a really cool moment -- I mean, I've watched the video a hundred times. I'm a big Dodgers fan, big Dodgers fan. People ask me why are you a Dodgers fan? My grandfather grew up watching Jackie Robinson and everything that he accomplished breaking down barriers, and I just became a Dodgers fan because my grandfather was a Dodgers fan, and then he talked to me about the history. So I'm a big, big Dodgers fan.

And Dave Roberts reached out, and he sent me a video message. He said, when I got it, I saw his face, and I'm like what is this? And it says -- he started off, he said, Coach Brooks -- and I'm like, he said my name. And it was personalized, and he talked about the culture. He's watching our games, and the culture that has emanated through, just resonates through the TV.

At the end of it, he says -- first, he said hope to see you at a game. I took that as an invitation, so I'm going to take him up on that. And he said go Dodgers and go Hokies. That's two of my favorite teams. That's all I needed right there.

So it was a special moment for me and for him to reach out, because he's somebody that I try to emulate his persona and the way that he goes about his business.

Q. Does LSU remind you of any of the opponents that you faced during the season or during this run? And how do you feel as if your ACC schedule and the talent that was in the conference this year has prepared you for this stage?

KENNY BROOKS: Yes, LSU, extremely well coached. They're physical. They're fast. They're tough. They're confident. I think it reminds me a lot of the team we played two games ago, Tennessee.

We played Tennessee twice this year, and very similar styles and what they do. They're very reliant on their athleticism, their length, their ability to rebound the basketball. So I think that game has prepared us -- both of those games have prepared us.

We played two games earlier in the Bahamas. We played against Kentucky and Missouri, and maybe they're not as talented as those groups, but they play a very similar style, very physical.

Then when we went through the ACC, we have a lot of good teams in the ACC, to go through our conference and get the championship, we had to go through Miami, who was in the Elite Eight. They play a very similar style. It was on display when they played against LSU. We had to play against Duke, who plays a very similar style, very physical, reliant on the press pressure. And then we had to play Louisville, who was also in the Elite Eight, to get to the championship.

I think our schedule has really prepared us for moments like this because of the way our teams have played, and I think our kids have seen it all.

Elizabeth, we don't know what kind of coverage we're going to get, but we've seen it all. We'll to adapt to whatever they do, whether it's single coverage, whether it's double, whether it's triple, and we'll be ready.

Q. Obviously both teams have benefited from the transfer portal, but in this era of the transfer portal, NIL, to do what Coach Mulkey has done so quickly at LSU, to join the handful of coaches who have led multiple programs to the Final Four, what does it say about the job she's done? From a coaching perspective, knowing how difficult it is to build a program.

KENNY BROOKS: She's capitalized on the opportunity with the transfer portal, but she's done it the right way. A lot of people want to go in through the transfer portal, and they just want to collect, have a collection of talent. This kid averaged 14 points at such and such. They should be able to do that here. Well, that's not always the case.

And she's done what we've done, and we've gone out and got kids who are a good fit for your program, not just because their stats are really good. And she's done that. She has some personalities on that group, and she's the person to really handle that situation.

She's taken them, and they've sacrificed a lot for the betterment of their team, and it shows because the way they played and the way they've been here. They've lost

one, two games this year, and that's special.

I don't care who you play -- they play in the SEC, and they've only lost two games all year long. So she's done a magnificent job.

Q. Have you heard from anybody from Harrisonburg, Virginia? Has anybody reached out to you and said, hey, congratulations, or anybody from the old area?

KENNY BROOKS: Absolutely. I probably have 300 unread messages right now. If you are listening from Harrisonburg or whoever's reached out, I promise you, I'm not trying to be big time. I just don't have time to get to it. I'll have time next week to try to answer all of them.

I did hear from Coach Driesell. I got a message from him, which is very, very special. I know there's a lot of supporters in Harrisonburg, in particular. I think I've done a really good job of kind of converting a lot of people in the Shenandoah Valley into Virginia Tech fans. So that's a big feat in itself.

Q. I was talking to one of your friends the other day, who's been in the spot you're in right now and said that his advice to you was to take a second and enjoy the moment, and not just focus on basketball because that's obviously the thing to do, but to take a second and soak it all in. Have you had a chance to do that yet, or is it just I've got a game tomorrow and focused on that?

KENNY BROOKS: Absolutely. I've heard from a lot of people who have been in this situation. Quentin Hillsman, who you're probably referencing, who was here in my situation a few years back. As a matter of fact, Syracuse went to the Final Four, the final game the year that I was hired at Virginia Tech. When I took the job -- you're always trying to win the press conference. And I remember saying, well, if Syracuse can do it, why can't we?

There was a huge eruption, and everybody was like, yeah, we can do it. Immediately I was like, did I just stick my foot in my mouth? Because it's a very tough task to get here.

But I've heard from Quentin. I've heard from Jeff Walz. I've heard from Mike Neighbors. I've heard from Kelly Graves. And they all say the same thing: Enjoy the process. Enjoy it. Enjoy it because it's not easy to get here.

They said, you have a mature group. They're well coached. You know what you're going to do. I know you guys are going to get down to business, but make sure you allow the kids and yourself to enjoy the process, and I feel

like we've done that.

Q. Do you feel like Angel Reese is perhaps the best player you've gone up against this season, and what are the keys to dealing with her tomorrow?

KENNY BROOKS: Obviously she's tremendously talented. She has great stats. I don't want to discredit anybody we've already played against because we have not played against her live.

We've played against some great kids. Look at the two we played against in Tennessee. They're as talented as anyone in the country. We've been able to play against them. Mikesell the other night, she looked like she was Steph Curry. I was smiling sometimes when she was hitting some of the shots she was hitting.

Obviously when you get to this level, you're going to play against very tough, talented players. We know we're going to have our hands full, but the kids will go out and execute the game plan. We're not going to shut her down. We don't expect to do that. But we just want to make it tough for her and put her in situations where she's not comfortable.

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