

**Penn State Women's Basketball**  
**Head Coach Carolyn Kieger Postgame Press Conference**  
**Vs. Rider – November 11, 2021**

***Opening Statement***

It's definitely a sign of a more mature team when you can win when you're not playing your best and win an ugly game. But a lot of credit to Rider, I thought they were really gritty tonight. Obviously, they returned four or five starters, and I saw their maturity down that spread, so great job to them. At terms of us, we obviously have to continue to get better. We're happy with a 2-0 start, but tonight, I think we showed toughness in that fourth quarter, but other than that, we have to really put four quarters together instead of a good start and a good ending. So, a lot of talk after film here of how to improve those stretches, but what a game by Niya Beverley. I thought she played fantastic and was a huge spark for us and really was that catalyst to us closing that gap after they got to five, so huge job by her. Obviously, Ali Brigham with another big game down low for us, which is huge as we have that paint presence for us. So once again, fans, amazing to have you. The energy really helps us, especially when they cut it to five and to have that juice and the energy in there is a game changer.

***Q: You have three players that scored over 20 or more. How big was that for you all to be able to get the spark from three different players and not have to rely on just one?***

A: I think that's going to be a story of our team this year. I talked about that after our first game as we have a lot of depth. I think every night is going to change for who's got the hot hand. Tonight, I think each quarter somebody else was stepping up, which is great. What we got to get better at is feeding the hot hand and recognizing where we have the mismatches. I think we kind of did that a little bit more in the fourth quarter and started to get layups instead of just taking contested jump shots and settling, so we'll get better as we go at reading the mismatches and that kind of stuff, but when you could have three 20-point scorers, obviously that's great when it comes to assists, which is why we had 21 tonight, which was I was really impressed with. The 19 turnovers, obviously we need to fix.

***Q: McKenna [Marisa] talked about grabbing more rebounds on Tuesday, and you out rebounded them 41 to 24. How important is that for you all having the ability to go out there and beat people up on the boards and get those second chance opportunities?***

A: Well, it's going to be vital for us when we run our zone defense. We have to be one and done. We can't give them a second-chance points. You do your work and you do it early and then secure the ball so we can run on offense. It's funny you brought up McKenna because she had zero rebounds at halftime, so we really challenged her, so I'm glad she stepped up and talked about that, but it's got to be everybody. It's got to be a committee, five people rebounding and not just our fives or fours. It has to be the guards getting in there too and help us out.

***Q: I wanted to ask you about Shay Hagans a little bit. She's really strong. She's really fun to watch. She moves the ball really fast. What can we expect from her in the next couple of games?***

A: I think Shay is going to be our energy player. You're going to see her flying around. You're going to see her trying to get tips and deflections and get as many steals as she can. We really want her to set the tone for us on the defensive end. We've asserted her as a defensive captain for us to really get that juice and start at the tone. I think the team really feeds off for her when she's in there. We're trying to get her to punch gaps more on the offensive end and get into open areas to find assists or her floater. She really worked on her floater this summer, and we've seen it a couple times so far, but I think she'll just continue to show that as the season progresses.

***Q: You guys lead for the vast majority of this game, but Rider had a bit of a third quarter rally there, but you guys were able to overcome that and get a strong lead once again as the game went along. What do you think was the key, from your perspective, to getting that lead back?***

A: I think after the third quarter we kind of had a real conversation there at that timeout. It was a five-point game and we just kind of looked around and said, hey, this is where our toughness shows up. This is what we've been working for, to weather those storms. Last year, I don't know if we would've been able to do that. We might have folded or kept it close. They all just looked at each other and said it's time and everybody did their part. Defense was a spark for us, but we started to get the ball in down low and started getting easy shots. I think at the beginning of the first or the third quarter we missed some layups, and we missed some wide-open layups and then it started to snowball from there. We got to be tougher, those were great looks, but just move on, finish them and we'll be fine.

***Q: Before Leilani got injured, she was doing a terrific job on the boards. As her coach, how do you describe her impact on the game?***

A: That's going to be what she does. She's got to rebound for us, she's got to get deflections, she's got to get steals. She's the other one that's setting the tone for us defensively. That's her and Shay's job and they're taking that personal. I think you're going to see her running around there, causing havoc on the defensive end. As she continues to grow and get older, her offense will catch up with her defense. She comes in as a freshman who loves to play defense. You don't see that very often. Most of the time freshmen come in and they want to shoot the ball. They want to prove that they can score. This is somebody that comes in and she wants to guard the best player and she wants to be one of the best defenders in the country and that's rare. I'm excited for the offense to catch up, but obviously when you have somebody who loves defense that much it's contagious to the rest of the team.

***Q: It was a really efficient shooting night for your team, especially for your 20 points scorers. What led to that efficient shooting tonight?***

A: I think we have just been getting up a lot of reps. We haven't seen that anybody can shoot a three. You saw Ali almost pull that today. I thought she was going to do it. Even our pulse players are shooting threes in practice, and we want to pride ourselves in all 13 of us being able

to stretch out and stretch the defense. We've been getting in the gym, they've been getting up individuals. Shooting, it's all about reps and it's all about consistency.