

Penn State Basketball
Carolyn Kieger Postgame Press Conference
vs. Michigan - January 13, 2022

Q: How much has the COVID break impacted these last two games coming back?

A: Everyone in the world has been impacted, so no more than anyone else. But you know, you have to control what you can control, and I think our team's done a great job keeping their heads and sticking together to fight through this. It's not easy. It's not easy for anyone. I think we've become stronger because of it. Now we have to get back into basketball sync and get our chemistry back. It was great to have Ali [Brigham] back in the lineup tonight, I thought she did some great things coming off a long break, she almost had a double-double and we have to get her more looks and get her more involved in the offense.

Q: So, Makenna Marisa, she didn't have the most efficient game from the field tonight, but she's the leading scorer on the team, certainly one of your better players. So when one of your top players has a game like that, are you trying to encourage her to just keep firing away and stick with what she normally does? Are you trying to get her to play more within the team?

A: Makenna is always team first. That's never a worry for us. In fact, sometimes we're trying to get her to be a little bit more selfish, but Kenna is only worried about one thing, and that's Penn State and Penn State winning. We're just continuing to work on her IQ so she can continue to command and direct, I think she's one of the best guards in the country. The more she can get composed and get her head, understanding what we want, when we want it, I think she's just going to keep flourishing. That's something that she's bought into, she's really into being a gym rat, and now she's become a film rat. I think you're going to continue to see as the season goes on her IQ continuing to flourish, but she needs more help. When teams are locking in and pressuring her, we have to take her off the ball a little bit and have Shay [Hagans] playing point guard. We missed [Niya] Beverly tonight, handling the ball a little bit.

Q: You mentioned back at the start of the season in November that one thing you really wanted to work on as a team was consistency and remaining more consistent. What aspects of the game do you feel that you're seeing consistency? And what do you want to work on?

A: We're not consistent. I think we started off the year positive in that direction. It's kind of been heading in a different direction, we need to get back to sharing the basketball and limiting our turnovers. I thought we had some really great possessions tonight, but we have to lock in.

Q: Coach, you mentioned Big Ten play right there. So your last two games, you did lose to two Big Ten opponents ranked highly opponents 10 and 11. Coming up the rest of the season, you got plenty more Big Ten games to come. How do you anticipate the team's response? What will that look like?

A: We got one goal, that's Illinois.

Q: What did Michigan do effectively to limit your scoring this game?

A: They were hedging the ball screens and that was affecting what we did. We try to slip it and be a little bit more cognizant of not over dribbling in the second half. I think that helped a little bit for us, but they got up in pressure. That's one thing we really got to work on when they take away Makenna Marisa and they're pressuring it seems to be an issue for us and we got to keep turning the heat up in practice with our practice squad to make sure we're practicing that. Not just letting Makenna run the offense and take it out of her hands but credit to them. They did a great job with their hedge-ball screen schemes, and we missed a

lot of opportunity seeing open people in the corners and open skips and exploiting. We didn't do that tonight.

Q: What does it mean to be able to represent THON and other causes like it as a team?

A: It's everything. Kelly Jekot sent a great text in our team chat today. She sent a video of THON and she said tonight's bigger than basketball. Before shoot around today we watched the video, and you know the history of THON and how it began. It's moments like this where you can support a cause way bigger than yourself. It's why we do what we do and to be a part of a university that raises \$11 million a year, that's special. We want to be a small part of that and give as much as we can. For the Pink Zone and the Play4Kay game coming up, there's so many great causes that basketball allows us to have our platform for. We talk about that on a daily as a team. As young woman we can use this game and this round orange ball to do so much good in the world and pay it forward.

Q: How satisfied were you with your team's play tonight?

A: Satisfied, and my team knows this, is something I'll never be after a loss. So, I wouldn't use that word. But we did not have a very good defensive effort against Maryland so for the last four days, we spent a lot of time on defense. I think it clearly showed up on our offense tonight. I thought our team locked in in moments that we needed, we got to be tougher, we got to finish plays. We have to have better rotations and our press, have higher hands, but I thought collectively, we showed a much better fight than when we did against Maryland and that is something absolutely to build upon.