

Penn State Women's Basketball
Carolyn Kieger Postgame Press Conference
vs. Michigan State - January 27, 2022

Carolyn Kieger | Head Coach

Opening Statement: Very excited for a day off tomorrow to be able to prep and figure out what we have to do to get this team back on track. Obviously, when adversity hits, you got to become stronger. And we've had a long stretch here of game after game after game where we haven't been able to really fix a lot, more so, prep, so I'm really looking forward to Saturday after a day off because we clearly need a day of fixing and practice, and getting back to the basics.

Q: Hey coach, Niya Beverley returned to the court tonight. What did it mean for the team to have her back in the lineup?

A: I think when she kind of gets back in the flow, it's going to obviously help with our depth and be able to get our rotations back. People playing shorter minutes a burst and being able to give max effort instead of playing longer minutes, so hopefully she can continue to develop and get herself back in full go shape.

Q: Hey coach, obviously you guys had a rough night shooting from 3, 3 for 19. Was it more based on shot selection to you or were shots just not falling tonight?

A: That's a great question. I think it was a combo, I thought our shot selection was very poor. And that's the direct relation to us shooting 35% and them shooting 52%. [When] we shoot a bad shot, we shoot a "below-line" shot as we call it, and they run it back down and score easy buckets in transition, and that's [on] maturity, that's [on] leadership and we got to have better shot selection.

Q: Is there anything that you want to work on specifically in practice going into the Maryland game?

A: Defense.

Q: Hey coach, I saw at the end of the game you were pretty emotional towards the team at half court. Could you elaborate a little bit on that?

A: We gave up. Really frustrating. I told them I'm not going to coach the team again, and we're not going to wear Penn State uniform and give up. Sorry, apologize to the fans, we gave up.

Q: With Kelly being one of the starting players now, what can you say about her comeback and how she's been playing since her recovery?

A: She can do more. Got to give us more. She's gotta be a more vocal leader. Got to, you know, fight through right now. I mean, she's our vet. She's our composed leader that's been in an NCAA tournament, that's been where we're trying to get, and she's got to continue to figure out a way how to get our young players motivated to continue to grow and continue to learn. So, we're very thankful that she came back and we're pushing her every day to give all her leadership and all her experience to these young women.

Q: Since transferring, Ali Brigham has shown how dominant she can be both offensively and defensively in the paint, do you have any plans moving forward of utilizing her more and taking some weight off (Makenna) Marisa?

A: Yeah, a lot of skill work. She's got to get herself back in a flow with minutes and she's got to rebound more. She's got to be a paint presence for us. So you know, we got to get her

easier looks down low. And, you know, my main focus is defense. So, anybody who is going to play defense for me moving forward is going to play.

Q: You alternated between man-to-man and zone and press. You've talked about how you want your defense to improve. How does the switching of those different looks benefit you guys moving forward?

A: Yeah, well, we're trying to find something that the team's going to you know, play hard in. That's my biggest thing, max effort. But no matter what you're going to do, whether it's man, zone, press - if you're not communicating at a high level, we call it battlefield communication. If we don't have our battlefield communication at 100% max volume, early, loud and continuous, nothing's going to work and we got to start there. We have to communicate better, all five people on the floor.

Q: There was a stretch in the second quarter where you guys kind of cut it back to five and seven, and it seemed like you were pressuring them on defense and just making things happen. Was there anything you saw there and wanted to see in the second half that you just didn't specifically?

A: Well, I thought, I mean, we keep saying it a lot, but obviously it goes back to stops and scores. You know, when you get a couple string of stops in a row, you got to take smart shots on the other end, otherwise, it just becomes empty possessions and you're not going to cut into a lead. So, I thought when we did have a couple possessions on defense where we did our jobs and we rotated it at an elite level, then we went down and didn't take care of the ball or shot below one shot and then it just kills you. And then all sudden, it's a 12-point game or a 15-point game, and it's a snowball effect and that's where we lose our composure. That's our biggest thing right now is how do we stay composed? How do we have a leader on the floor that can keep us calm, cool and collected? And just be that voice for us that we need.