

QUOTES | GAME #9



NO. 1 NOTRE DAME 83, NO. 9 FLORIDA STATE 57

NOTRE DAME FIGHTING IRISH

COACH MUFFET McGRAW
NATALIE ACHONWA
KAYLA McBRIDE

COACH MUFFET McGRAW: Well, I thought we looked a little rusty at the beginning of the game. But I thought we pulled ourselves together pretty quickly, had a nice run at the end of the half. I thought Jewell Loyd in particular in the first half was really outstanding, and then I thought Kayla took over in the second half.

Good performances from Michaela Mabrey off the bench in the first half. And I thought some great minutes from Taya Reimer today, as well. But Natasha Howard is an incredibly tough match up. She's just a phenomenal player, an All American type player. She really looked like it today.

Q. How important is it in a tournament where you've got to play back to back to back to get a pretty comfortable win the first day so you can rest some of your people?

COACH MUFFET McGRAW: It was good for us to get our people off their feet, the starters, especially, off their feet. And you need those good contributions from the bench to do that. Because the three days, coming off of we had a two day break, and we just really thought needed to play a little bit more together. So now we'll hopefully be fresher for tomorrow.

Q. This is for coach. This team has been such an impressive team all year long, and in the way you've moved very smoothly through the ACC. Is it hard with the success that you've had and the dominance that you've had to keep this team really hungry on a day by day basis?

COACH MUFFET McGRAW: No, we have really high goals. I think our seniors, these two and Ariel Braker, are really focused on those goals and what we want to accomplish. We know every game is important, and we come into each game with a really great attitude.

Q. Delgado scored 20 points for them yesterday, zero today. What did you learn from yesterday's game?

COACH MUFFET McGRAW: She actually had her career high against us when we played them during the season. We were coming in geared up to play her. Then yesterday topped her career high with 20. We knew she was somebody that was capable of scoring. I thought we got up and guarded her well. Lindsay Allen did a good job on her.

Q. For both players, how much pressure is there, or is there, to be undefeated at this point in the season, to go out and be good every time?

NATALIE ACHONWA: We don't look at it as pressure. I think we took that accomplishment of being undefeated at the end of the regular season and put that on the back burner, celebrated for a little bit, but we have further goals to accomplish. We're looking forward. It's a great accomplishment in being in the ACC and being undefeated. That's all it is to us. We're looking forward to what we can do next.

KAYLA McBRIDE: I think we were in the same situation last year. As seniors, just coming in and just taking it game by game, and not looking too far ahead. I think this team has shown a lot of mental toughness throughout. And we put it behind us and we're just taking it day by day.

Q. Coach, you guys will be playing the Wolfpack tomorrow, and I'm not sure if you're aware or not, one of their key players, Markeisha may be out. Can you talk about the significance of her being in or out of the game and how that will help or not help you guys tomorrow?

COACH MUFFET McGRAW: Well, she definitely is a very good player. I think an All American caliber player.

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She was on the Neysmith and Wooden watch list. When we played them down there we got a really good look at her, she has great hands. She moves so well. She's so tough inside, leads the nation in field goal percentage. She's amazing.

But I think the thing that makes her so much better is Kody Burke. I think the two of them are a great combination. Both of them can go inside. Both of them together are really a formidable tandem in the post. They certainly rely on those two a lot. So we're going to go into the game prepared for her to play.

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FLORIDA STATE SEMINOLES

COACH SUE SEMRAU NATASHA HOWARD

COACH SUE SEMRAU: They're undefeated for a reason. And they know what they want to do and they do it. And they expose you when you're not as confident in who you are.

We've had some ups and downs this year, and part of that is habits. We don't have a lot of the habits that we need to have as a team that has freshmen and sophomores. The one on my left here has habits, and you can see what four years in our program a kid that goes to work every single day.

Everybody keys in on her and she still has 29. I know she's three rebounds away from being our all time rebounder. That's an amazing feat. Extremely proud of her and exciting to play in the NCAA tournament.

Q. Coach, as you prepare for the rest of postseason now what things did you learn positively and negatively about your team?

COACH SUE SEMRAU: Well, I think we showed a lot of resilience and a lot of fight with the young kids. In the second half we could have packed it in, to play them even in the second half and to battle and to fight, I'm proud of them for that. But again I think what we learned is more for what we want to be as a program. And if we're working to build a top ten program then we learned what that takes.

When Ariel Braker is willing to shoot one shot and be in the starting lineup and go to work and do what she needs to do, that's what we've got to have is kids that are willing to do whatever it takes to win. Natasha did that in our program for three years. She wasn't our leading scorer last year. We have five kids that scored in double figures. Natasha has been somebody that's willing to do whatever it takes. Now you see the fruit of the labor. And it's really exciting for her.

Q. What did they do well to take her out of the offense?

COACH SUE SEMRAU: I think she was trying to get more people involved, honestly. We always want to get Tash involved, and we wanted to run some shot clock, as well, because they're so prolific with their scoring ability. Unfortunately she didn't shoot great. But she ran for 40 minutes, and that's always something that she gives us.

You look at Lindsay Allen, she does the same thing for them. And we've just got to get some kids that have some confidence around them, going into the tournament time.

Q. Natasha, you're two games in a row, pretty strong performances. What are you going to take away from these performances, why were you so successful in these two games?

NATASHA HOWARD: Just battling day in and day out, not giving up, just fighting for my teammates every single game, no matter if we came up with a win or a loss. Just battle with my teammates.

Q. You've seen a lot of great ACC teams. How does this Notre Dame compare with the best you've seen?

COACH SUE SEMRAU: They're, I would say, up there. The thing that great ACC teams in the past have been able to do is pass the ball. And I see them as when you have 24 assists in a game, that's pretty incredible. And great scorers on the other side that can knock it down. But they don't want to just play up and down and hully gully, they want to defend, too. And they do a great job of that.

And Muffet has done a great job with this team. She's put people in position where they know what they're good at and they stick with the game plan. And different people can have good nights. They have a lot of good weapons.

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