

WOMEN'S GAME 8
March 11, 2020



Kent State - 72
Buffalo - 66

KEN MATHER: We're going to go ahead and let Head Coach Felisha Legette-Jack open with an opening statement and we'll take questions for Hanna Hall and Dyaisha Fair.

COACH FELISHA LEGETTE-JACK: What a season, what a season we had. What fun. These people that I call my players presented to you guys throughout this entire year. My goodness, we've come a long way. We've done so much with the third youngest team in the country. They just bought in and believed in this crazy old lady and we just went in and we just fought and we just believed and we just kept firing away.

We went to a little slump, lost five or six games in a row, but we didn't lose those games. We may have lost three or four of them, but we were really, really good through two losses. I really am so proud to call these young players my players, our players, Buffalo players. The City of Buffalo should be very proud of what we've endured, what we've overcome, what we became. These young ladies are going to be phenomenal women and the neat thing is these two on my right, they'll be back.

KEN MATHER: Questions for Hanna and Dyaisha.

Q. I'd like to start with Coach Jack. Coach, Dyaisha Fair, holy smokes, 36 points, 11 rebounds, really willed this team in the first half, kept you guys in it and came back in that fourth quarter and tried to drag you to the finish line. Can you talk about her performance as a freshman on that stage?

COACH FELISHA LEGETTE-JACK: We don't think about freshman, sophomore, junior, seniors when we out there and we competing, we just get out there and do what we do. That's what our language is. This young lady here, I tried to share with the world that she's special. To have her come to my camp and really want to be coached by this crazy lady.

You had the opportunity to be coached by some other people. Why did you choose me, man? I know, you kind of like me.

She's a substance kid and the reason why she said yes to us is because she believed that we had substance and we were going to grow her to this woman that I know she's on her way to become, and because of that she doesn't really play for Buffalo or for me, she gives God the glory in everything she does and we're just witnessing how God manifests Himself through the body of this young lady. I am as in awe of this young lady as you are, sir. Thank you for your question.

Q. Your first performance in a postseason tournament on the floor putting in the night you did, despite the loss, talk about your individual performance and what you were able to accomplish tonight.

DYAISHA FAIR: We just have to take it one possession at a time. Would don't have a go-to player on this team, we are a go-to team. I just do what I have to do as my role. I just take whatever my coach tells me to do and I do it along with my upper classman here. I follow behind her and just do what I have to do.

Q. Hanna, in the fourth Kent State pulled away with a little bit of a lead and you went on an 11-0 run and really made it close with a four-point deficit, I believe, late. Talk about that push and that consistency of continuing to push forward.

HANNA HALL: The season we've had has prepared us for that moment. We've had to work through adversity the entire season so we knew coming down the stretch whether we were down 20, we were down 5, we weren't going to finish without a fight. We really showed that tonight and that shows the true character of the work that Coach Jack has put in for this program and the work we've put in and all the adversity we fought through, it shows in the end. It didn't turn out the way we wanted it to, but I couldn't be more proud to be on the court with those five ladies and everyone else on the team.

Q. Hanna, this has been one of the more unusual weeks in sports, you're playing in an empty arena with very few fans. What was it like to prepare for today knowing it was going to be a different environment?

HANNA HALL: It's easy for us to prepare. Personally I think it's easy because I think that, like I said, the adversity we've been through this entire season, March is a blessing. We've put in the work now, now it's just time to let it go and perform.

I trust everything I do in God and I know the two women beside me do the same, so with that behind us, it's easy to prepare knowing that we have that with a coach like Coach Jack as well. We trust in the process and we know that what she gives us is what's best for this team. Regardless of the situations, we knew that we were going to have to fight whoever we played.

Q. This is for Coach Jack and for Hanna. You guys won the MAC Tournament last year. They say the hardest thing, the only thing harder than winning it is staying at the top. How much of a grind was this season, because you knew coming in that the target was going to be on your back the entire season?

HANNA HALL: I mean, it's fun for me. I love the fact that everybody called us young, I love the fact that everybody doubted us, I love the fact that people didn't think we were going to be back this season let alone make it to Cleveland. There was never a doubt in my mind that we weren't going to be.

It's a little bit different sitting in this same seat as I sat in last year after winning, but I think in a few days when I get over this one, I think I'm not going to want to change it because the lessons that we learned through this game are incredible. We had to fight all season. I don't think anybody's ever going to know the story that's behind this team, but that's what makes us the strong women we are sitting here today, so I'm very, very proud of that.

Q. Coach, your perspective in that fourth quarter, that 11-0 run that you had to make that push to cut it to 4, just talk about the resolve.

COACH FELISHA LEGETTE-JACK: There was still time on the clock and as long as there's time on the clock, we're going to fight, we're going to fight to the end. What we teach in our locker room is not this game, it's a microcosm of life. You don't quit when you're behind, you don't quit when you almost die, you keep fighting to the end when there's no breath, no just more life, no more sound. Then you have to surrender.

And that's the lessons that we're teaching our young people is that this game's going to take you through so many emotions, so much enthusiasm, so much sadness, so much anger, so much everything. As young people, you've got to stand in it, you've got to stand in it, and through standing in it you become something different.

This game's supposed to change you to the person you're supposed to become. Sometimes you win games and you're still losers. Sometimes you win games and you're still losers. Let that resonate. But sometimes you lose games, but you won.

I don't know if this team lost today. I think that we really pushed to another level of womanhood and I'm so grateful that we had this opportunity and this story to tell. Sometimes the best lessons are through a loss and I'm grateful to be a part of that. An 11-0 run, 12-0 deficit, bring it on, we're going to fight to the bitter end and these young ladies are learning different lessons every single day.

Q. Felisha, kind of the same question I asked Hanna as well with the decision to restrict the tournament to the general public. How did you explain that to your team when the decision came down and how do you prepare for something like that?

COACH FELISHA LEGETTE-JACK: This is a place where we have an adult and you can be a kid and you can just do what you do. Right now the adults are the governor, the president, the people in charge of our -- our commissioner and once they do their adulting, then we have to surrender to the process. It's not easy for the adults to make these decisions. It's not based on their emotions, it's based on the safety of all. And so we have to trust that and we have to trust mom, dad, we have to trust people that have to adult this opportunity here and we going to have to do what we need to do.

We also talked about AAU basketball, a championship game, they all played it, there's like seven or eight people left, all your moms and dad, it's been a long day. This is the same kind of fun, 94 feet, the ball's still in the air, it still bounce, you still play. That's how we

talked about it and I think they understand that.

Q. Hanna, Dyaisha with 36 points, 11 rebounds. As you're kind of watching the game develop and seeing her to continue to step it up and step it up, is there anything that surprises you with her game anymore after playing with her an entire season now?

HANNA HALL: I mean, she's incredible. She's taught me so many lessons as a junior. It's hard not to show up when you have a player like that.

The first half was tough for me, there's no way around it. I was struggling to get into my groove, but the only thing that kept me in it was her intensity, her energy. The stuff that I've seen her grow from from the beginning of the year to now is incredible. She was a girl coming in here and Coach Jack and I and our team, we really trusted that she was going to be able to come out a woman, and she really did because this woman sitting beside me is phenomenal, she's grown so much. As someone who's older, I look up to her as a freshman and she's going to be incredible. It's no surprise to me, but to be able to do what you do as a freshman, it's a strong woman, it's amazing, so I'm really proud of this one sitting beside me.

KEN MATHER: We'll let you go back to the locker room. Thank you for your time.