Kamie Ethridge, Northern Colorado Head Coach

Q. How much of a normal schedule do you try to keep? This is old hat for you when you were competing. How much did you learn from that now coaching?

KAMIE ETHRIDGE: Well, I go back to this team is doing things that we haven't done. Then spring break came on us after Reno and our conference tournament. We just flew kind of right into the watch party. It's not a lot of time to think. It's not like it's real difficult that you have to deal with.

We have tried to keep a little bit of a normal schedule, but it is spring break for us. We got some rest after our tournament, since our conference tournament just ended on Saturday. We just have had about two days to get ready for this game, kind of prepare who we're playing for and against.

The excitement part is just, you know, with your team. They don't get to do this. It's all brand-new to them. We want to make it special. We want them to enjoy it. We want them to make memories with it. We're making a point to do all of that along the way because no matter how many times you're here, you want to make it special and you want to understand what you've done and accomplished, especially for a group that's never been here before.

Q. The tough schedule that you had in front of you, and your goals, how good is it to reach to your goal? How do you look at this Michigan team, put them into perspective?

KAMIE ETHRIDGE: It's really hard to compartmentalize. You look at your season as a pre-season. You have those games. We finished 8-3, played some great basketball, some great competition. So you feel prepared for that.

Conference was its own challenge. We had to face some demons, our own demons in the conference tournament where we've gotten knocked out. To accomplish that, we got through those, now sitting here at a 13-game win streak, it feels really, really good as to where we are.
I'm glad we played a non-conference schedule like we did. I'm glad we played LSU, Brigham Young. Colorado State is a little bit longer than us. DePaul obviously. We played some length and some size and some really great athletes in our non-conference. I'm glad we did that just because it gives us a chance to kind of already have some things in our mind about what we're going to face against Michigan.

They're a power team. They're probably more traditional than we are in the sense they play two posts most of the time, got great shooters, skill players. Really good in the open court. They present a lot of problems and a lot of challenges for us.

But I do feel good that it's not going to be brand-new to our players.

**Q. What were your thoughts when you saw who the matchup was? What did you know about Michigan before you got into the real scouting process?**

KAMIE ETHRIDGE: I know Kim a little bit. I think she came to K State when she was at St. John's, then I met her a little bit through USA Basketball. I think she's done a tremendous job. It's been fun to follow her team and see how it's progressed, from her WNIT run last year, then making the NCAA tournament. I know they've got to be thrilled about the direction of their program, the steps they're taking.

You're never really satisfied with your draw. You don't look up and go, Oh, good, I'm glad we get to play them. You just shift. You're just a coach. You just shift to, All right, let's start scouting, take a look at their games, try to find a way to make your team successful.

It's just exciting to be in the 64-team field. You got to play somebody. You know it's going to be a quality opponent, so just do your best.

**Q. After all your success at Kansas State, what all did you learn there that you took with you? You brought pretty much your entire staff from K State.**

KAMIE ETHRIDGE: Gosh, I just think it's a career of being in this business. As a player, what it was like to play at a high level. Being in a power conference at Kansas State, you learned how to compete against different types of teams and programs and styles of basketball.

That's really how basketball is. It's not perfect. Everybody can't build the perfect team. We probably can't go out and get more talent than a lot of teams out there, but we have to figure out a way to play, compete, build a team that can be successful in our own league and hopefully across leagues, as well.

I think that's what we've learned. Again, we're not going to go out and get a bunch of 6'5", we can't do that probably. But we try to play a style that can be successful even if we're playing against bigger, stronger and sometimes even faster teams. That's what I've learned.

Basketball is a great game. It doesn't have to be played the same way. You can be successful in playing it in a lot of different ways. I think what I've learned over the years is just have a high standard of what you want in a program and what you want out of your players, and build a program to that standard, try to get your kids to want to achieve those kinds of goals and accomplishments.

In year four, really feel like we've developed our program to that level. These seniors, upperclassmen, they've really grown from when they came in as freshmen. It's nice to see them get to this point by the time they leave their career.
Q. When you practiced yesterday, was defense of Michigan part of that practice?
KAMIE ETHRIDGE: Yes, yes. I mean, you try to find their highest frequency plays. You try to have an idea of how you're going to do those. At this point you're not going to change who you are. We're not going to morph into something different. Hopefully you know how to defend most of the things that Michigan does, no matter how they get to it, because you're 30 games into your season or more.

Clearly you start presenting personnel. I think that more than anything. We got a great team with a high IQ. They want to know personnel. They get into that. They want to know how to guard people and tendencies, a little bit of what they do, how we're going to guard certain sets.

You're pretty much what you are by this time. You need to be able to defend it at this point. You're not going to figure it out today probably.

Q. Do you dare look ahead to the possibility of Saturday?
KAMIE ETHRIDGE: It's the same thing. It's the same answer. It doesn't matter. If you were to win, you are what you are. My coaches certainly have to go forward and have a scout and kind of look at the same thing, the two teams playing after us.

On such a quick turnaround, again, you're not going to get a lot into great depth of sets or things that other teams do.

We're just going to live in the moment right now. We're going to play this game. We're going to compete really hard. We'll see what happens at the end of the game.

Q. You have two seniors, one underclassman, two little freshmen, Tiarna and Alexis. Those freshmen in the last month have been huge contributors. They're the future of your backcourt. Is it too late to be concerned of the size of stage those two are on tomorrow?
KAMIE ETHRIDGE: No, I'm not going to worry about the freshmen. I'm just going to trust our upperclassmen, these three that were up here. I think they prepare unbelievably well for games. I don't think they're going to change. I think they're going to have their teammates ready.

Again, this thing has gotten a little bit bigger than me. They're really good at that. I think they're really confident in who they are as players and leaders. I think they'll have their team ready.

I love our underclassmen, the freshmen in particular, because I think they've really risen to the occasion. Knowing these are last days of the senior class, they want to do this for them. I think they've really played up to the level of these seniors. That makes us have a chance at least against most teams.

Q. You're a native of this state. Do you feel at home? Does the humidity bother you?
KAMIE ETHRIDGE: No complaints. We have zero complaints right now on our team (smiling).

I certainly love the state of Texas. I'm not unbelievably familiar with Waco. It's good always to come back to Texas. Got a lot of people coming to the game. It's a little easier trip for most of them.

Savannah Smith, Northern Colorado Guard
Q. You do you feel like this is just one in a string of normal road trips? Are you feeling this is different?
SAVANNAH SMITH: This feels a little different. Even this press conference is a little different than what we do. Just flying charter, the whole experience just seems a lot different than what we're used to.

Q. Savannah, you have another chance. Can you imagine doing this like some programs year after year after year?
SAVANNAH SMITH: That would be so awesome if that did happen for us. I don't know. I think just we're trying to think about this year right now, focus on what we're here to do, not think too much about the future.

Kianna Williams, Northern Colorado Guard
Q. What did you learn from the film?
KIANNA WILLIAMS: They like to push it in transition. We're going to have to stop Katelynn Flaherty, No. 3, she's a really good shooter. No. 30, they'll give it to her in the post all the time.

We're scouting them.

Savannah Scott, Northern Colorado Guard
Q. How has your several days been so far? Hectic? Normal schedule? Do you feel like residents already?
SAVANNAH SCOTT: It's been a little different than our usual trips just because we're traveling with a cheer team, just a lot more people coming.

It's been great. We got to fly charter, which is like a cool experience. Never done that before. We're really just enjoying the new experience we have.

Q. Does it raise some good anxiety?
SAVANNAH SCOTT: Yeah, I think so. This is what everyone wants to do when you're a little kid. You want to play in the NCAA tournament. We've finally gotten here, so I think so.

Q. You've had a year of many firsts and lots of records. What has been your favorite part of the run?
SAVANNAH SCOTT: I would say definitely just winning league championship, then winning our conference tournament, because that's been the goal all year, and we were able to complete that.

Q. When you talk about it's been different, when did it start feeling different? Before you left? Was it the charter that started sinking in that this is a different kind of trip?
SAVANNAH SCOTT: Yeah. I think for me it started feeling different just when we were having our view party because we've never done anything like that before. Just seeing all the support from the community, which we had all season, but just to have everyone come together, that's when it really felt like it for me.