Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Friday March 3, 2017

Robin Pingeton
Sierra Michaelis

Missouri Tigers

Texas A&M - 62, Missouri - 48

THE MODERATOR: I'd like to welcome Missouri.

Coach, if you could start out with an opening statement, please.

COACH PINGETON: Well, obviously disappointed in the game. I just didn't think we played at our best. I certainly want to make sure I give credit to Texas A&M. I thought they had a great game plan coming in. Really I thought didn't give Sophie lot of space, regardless if it was off ball screens or in the open court. I thought they really did a good job defensively on Sophie. She had to work for everything she got.

I thought we missed some early shots that could have maybe helped us out, build some momentum going into halftime. Way too many turnovers the first time we played them. I think we had 12. Just had some tough turnovers. We didn't bounce back very well from them.

They hit some big shots in that third and fourth quarter that we couldn't respond to. It felt like one of those games that you were down three or five, it felt more like 13 or 15. We could just never get our momentum back.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Sierra.

Q. Can you try to put in perspective how hard it is against a team like Texas A&M? It's almost they're like locusts because they're all over the place. Did that get in your heads a little bit tonight?
SIERRA MICHAELIS: I mean, we played them already in the season. I think it's really hard to beat a team twice in the same season, especially a team like Texas A&M. They're really aggressive on offense and defense. We just didn't respond the way we should have.

Q. Sierra, what happened in the third quarter offensively? You started out so well, then all of a sudden you can't make any shots, so atypical for you guys. Was it a matter of them getting you out of your comfort zone or an off night?
SIERRA MICHAELIS: I think it was us. I mean, give credit to their defense. They're a good defensive team. We had turnovers we shouldn't have had. We had a lot of missed shots we usually make. I think we let our offense dictate our defense.

Q. It seemed like Sophie got pretty frustrated, especially in the second half. Could you sense that at all? Did that impact you guys?
SIERRA MICHAELIS: I mean, I think Sophie is a big part of this team. When she has foul trouble, it definitely impacts us if she's got to go on the bench, so...

Q. Everybody kind of knew the history, that you haven't won a game in this tournament before. Between quarters, did it ever enter your mind?
SIERRA MICHAELIS: No, I don't think it entered anyone's mind. We have to focus on one game at a time, not the past.

THE MODERATOR: Sierra, thank you.

We'll continue with questions for coach.

Q. Loaded one for you.
COACH PINGETON: That's all right.

Q. You didn't shoot a free throw until there was 3 minutes, 4 seconds left. What would your explanation for that be?
COACH PINGETON: I didn't think we attacked as much as we needed to. I thought our turnovers that we had really deflated us. We missed some shots we typically make. Had some open looks that I liked. I just didn't think we were aggressive enough going to the rim.

You got to put some pressure on the defense. We talked about that before the game started. They don't have a lot of depth. We really wanted to attack with our inside presence as well as off the bounce.

I just thought they played really solid defense. They're a great position defense. We didn't attack as much as we needed to, to put ourselves in that position.

Q. Do you feel snake bit in this tournament, especially this game? For you, did it ever cross your mind, Oh, man, we can't catch a break when we play here?
COACH PINGETON: No, it didn't cross my mind during the game. Honestly, I haven't really put a lot of thought into that. I know when you look at it, you probably think, How do you not think about that?

Every team is so different and unique. Every year is a little bit different. You look back on it, you think, Yeah, that kind of stinks.

We just got to continue to stay the course. It's been a really good year. We've done a lot of things this year that we haven't done in a long time. We'll focus on those, break down this film. We still got games in front of us. I just didn't feel like we played with the poise we needed to.

Again, give Texas A&M credit. They're a very, very good team.

Q. Seemed like they were intent on doubling Sophie. What do you think of the job they did against her?
COACH PINGETON: I thought they did a really good job. I like what they did defensively against her. Gary did a great job scouting us, taking away some things we were able to do the first time we played them.

I just felt like there's always kind of like that triangle formation around Sophie. They weren't going to let her get anything off that ball screen action. She had a couple hard takes to the basket. Even in isolation in the paint, they were going to make our players step up and beat us tonight.

They made it really hard for us. Had a good game, but not the typical scoring we usually do.

Q. You won 10 of 12, surged as three seed. Does this take some of the shine off what you accomplished down the stretch?
COACH PINGETON: I think it definitely does in the moment, right now. I don't know how it couldn't because your focus is always where you're at. We don't look too far ahead. We don't go too far behind.

It will be another one of those times that we're going to have to learn from this and get better. I just didn't feel like we had the poise we needed to at different times throughout the course of this game.

So, yeah, it stings right now. It doesn't feel very good especially when you lose. You want to feel like you played your best game or you played pretty well. I didn't feel like that was the case tonight.

We'll go back. I tell you what, this is a resilient group. We will watch film, talk about it. I know records go out the window. When you start the NCAA tournament, everything starts over. But we have to be willing to continue to grow from the situations we were in tonight.

Q. You had two turnovers in the first minute of the third quarter.
COACH PINGETON: I mean, I felt like we got deflated. I was pretty fired up at those. I felt like we didn't come out with the sense of urgency we needed to. We had the ball in front of our bench. They were in a 2-3 zone. The way we cut to be open was half speed. We weren't dialed in the way we needed to be for 40 minutes. I thought we had possessions where we were, but you have to sustain that.

There's a certain level, certain mentality you have to play with, certain toughness you have to play with for 40 minutes against teams like this at this level. For one reason or another, we just didn't have that tonight.

Q. Is it hard sometimes when you're playing a team that is that pesky defensively to be yourself? Does that make it difficult because they're so aggressive?
COACH PINGETON: Again, I think Texas A&M is a very good team, a very good team. They're still in contention of hosting that first round of the NCAA tournament. You absolutely want to give them credit. I don't want to act like we just played awful and they didn't do anything. They played really well. They're a very good defensive team. Gary does a great job with that team.

I just didn't feel like we had the poise at times to get in our formations, and our spacing was a little off. Our ball reversals weren't as good as they had been. A couple times when the ball was swung on the perimeter, we talk a lot about being shot ready. I didn't feel like we were shot ready.

I thought our rotations on the drive, everything was a little off. Just didn't seem free-flowing tonight. We had some open looks that we typically make in that first quarter that I think could have maybe gotten into a better flow or rhythm. Had a couple bad turnovers. Didn't get back on defense. I just felt like that deflated us, took the wind out of our sails a little bit.

Q. You talked about any loss, you want to get something out of it. You haven't had very many losses recently. You said this group is resilient. What do you think they take out of this going forward?

COACH PINGETON: Well, I mean, they're really disappointed. They know. I think we talked about that same feeling that we had against Mississippi State about a month ago, what that felt like, just not having the poise we needed to.

I think we got frustrated, and it showed in our emotions, in our body language on the court. We've got to be better than that. We have to let that play go and move on to the next possession.

In those moments, the poise has got to be so much better. We've gotten a lot better. We've talked about that. We'll talk through body language, the way we respond to adversity. We've gotten a lot better the last month or so.

We weren't on point with that tonight. I think that really hurt us.

Really appreciate you guys coming. Thank you.