



2016 NCAA DIVISION I WOMEN'S BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

First Round Game: Texas A&M - 74, Missouri State - 65

Reed Arena · College Station, Texas

Saturday, March 19

PRESS CONFERENCE QUOTES – MISSOURI STATE

Head Coach Kellie Harper
Senior Guard Kenzie Williams
Sophomore Forward Audrey Holt

KELLIE HARPER: Well, proud of our players. Proud of our team. Last game is always really hard. I didn't have a big speech planned for our team had we lost, so you know, it's been a fun ride with this group, and we hate to see it end.

Obviously, we were able to play with Texas A&M for a large portion of the game, just not for 40 minutes. They were able to score quite a bit there in that third quarter. That just put us behind the 8-ball.

Again, just proud of our team. Proud of our effort and our fight and our confidence going into this game.

Q. Talk about your offensive struggles in the first half.

KENZIE WILLIAMS: Yeah, we talked about, before the game, that they were going to come out and have great pressure defense, be really physical, and that their bigs were going to be big on the inside. We knew that was coming, and we got good looks. They just weren't falling. We talked about it at halftime, just settle down, get in there, finish at the rim, finish on those shots, and keep getting good looks.

Q. Kenzie, talk about just being able to get that lead in the first half a couple times up on A&M, and what that was like to be up in the NAAs.

KENZIE WILLIAMS: Yeah, I think we brought great energy. We had a great warm-up. We came in focused. We knew we were here to play a good basketball game against a good basketball team. I think we had a ton of energy on the floor and on the bench, so I think that carried us at times. Our defense got some big steals and we were able to convert on those, so and lot of -- just rebounds in general. I think that was a big key for us coming into that first half.

Q. Audrey, the first half, you guys were able to frustrate Walker and A&M, but the third quarter which Coach mentioned, they go on a roll. What were they doing that you guys didn't have much as much success defensively?

AUDREY HOLT: Yeah, they went on a little run there in the third quarter, and I think defensively we just

had some small breakdowns. And when you're playing against good teams and good players, they're going to be able to take advantage of those. They did, and they really capitalized on them in the third quarter.

Q. Kenzie, during this game, you moved into seventh place all time in Missouri State scoring. Can you put into words your career?

KENZIE WILLIAMS: Not really. That's an awesome accomplishment that I've been able to achieve, and I'm just lucky to be one of those players that reached that top 10 in scoring. As far as my career, I'm just so blessed to play for this University, with this team, for these coaches. Every moment, I've loved the whole entire ride.

Q. Audrey, this might be a tough one to put into words, but can you talk about the impact these three seniors have had on the team and for you moving forward?

AUDREY HOLT: Yeah. I said it in the press conference before the game, and I'll say it again. We've got three really incredible seniors. Yeah, I mean, you can see it in their stats. And if you know them as people, they're really great to be around. I think that they definitely deserve the accomplishments that they have. You can see how emotional we get just thinking about -- we all really wanted this for them because they completely deserve it.

Q. Kenzie, talk about what this meant for you to get this program back into the NAAs and finishing out the year.

KENZIE WILLIAMS: Yeah, it's been an amazing season. From the first day of practice this year, we knew this year was going to be something special. I'm so grateful looking back at my career. If things wouldn't have happened the way they did, I might not have been here and been on this team. I'm just so grateful.

KELLIE HARPER: We've been very blessed to have three seniors that have been fun to coach. They've been fun teammates. They have accomplished a lot. I mean, they're stat-stuffers on the court. They've been really good leaders off the court, and we've been able to see them grow as young women. Just again, really proud of them, and I think they've really helped establish what we want Lady Bears' basketball to look like.

Q. Speaking of seniors, kind of a tough moment to watch there with Tyonna not really being able to end her career like she wanted to. Can you talk about what happened?

KELLIE HARPER: Yeah, Tyonna got hit in the head there towards the end of the game. I think a shoulder hit her in the head. To not be able to come out to applause or to stay in there, that's not how you want to end it under the circumstances. But the good thing is she's okay. She's going to be okay, and that's the priority.

Q. Coming out of halftime, did you see anything different from Coach Blair that he had his players do, as well as Walker or those bigs? What did the Lady Bears get matched up against at the beginning of that third quarter?

KELLIE HARPER: Well, I thought in the first half, we did a good job in our half-court defense, and we were causing a lot of trouble, causing a lot of turnovers, getting some stops, played really well defensively. In the third quarter, we couldn't get the ball to the half-court situation. They were really pushing tempo. They were really trying to drive the ball to the basket.

We had some mental breakdowns. That was on us, as well as them coming out and just being super-aggressive to the basket, probably a little bit more so than they were doing in the first half.

So I think the combination wasn't good to start in the third quarter. And then once we settled in, they started making shots, and obviously shooting 72 percent in the third quarter, that's tough to defend.

Q. (Question regarding halftime.)

KELLIE HARPER: We felt pretty good at halftime. We had gotten really good shots in the first half and just didn't make them. And I think we were a little shocked at how open we were after some of our first-half possessions. So we talked at halftime about doing the same thing, moving the ball around the same way, and maybe settling in a little bit better because those are shots that we typically make. Obviously, playing a little bit quicker, a little bit bigger, they were able to get there and contest a little bit more. But we had really good looks, just didn't knock them down in the first half.

Q. You're bringing back now an NCAA team for next season. Despite the loss of your seniors, what kind of kids do you have coming back next year?

KELLIE HARPER: Well, I'm excited about our young kids. I think everybody always is. They've got to get better. I think that's -- I think that's exciting. We want them to build from this. They understand what it needs to look like now, and that's a good thing. Hopefully, they'll be motivated to improve their game individually, and hopefully we'll have some leaders step up when these seniors are gone.

Q. Talk about No. 5, Howard, having a tough time getting her off the boards?

KELLIE HARPER: Yeah, we're typically a pretty good rebounding team, but couldn't do much with her. Obviously missed a lot of shots, gave her a lot of opportunities to get some defensive boards, but she was really crashing hard in the second half, I thought. Got most of her offensive boards in the second half. We just couldn't do a whole lot with her. Her athleticism -- not her size, but her athleticism and her length really made it a difficult match-up for our post players. She did a fantastic job.

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