



2019 NCAA DIVISION I WOMEN'S BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

TEXAS A&M AGGIES

Post-Game Press Conference - March 22, 2019
College Station, Texas

QUESTIONS FOR COACH GARY BLAIR, CHENNEDY CARTER, KAYLA WELLS, AND N'DEA JONES

COACH BLAIR: I don't think we could have started the game any better. We've been a fast-starting team all year. And to be honest, we were going from great to good early. And that means we were going to shoot elbow jumpers, try to shoot layups, and try to get the ball into the post.

Well, they threw that out the window. These two kids were lighting it up from outside. And we just go with whatever's working.

I guess the saga of "pinkie gate" is over with. I think we figured out "pinkie gate" is -- we have got to have something else.

I know [Chennedy] Carter played extremely well. She let the game come to her. When she's hot, she knows it, I know it, and you just got to let her go.

I thought we did a great job sharing the basketball, finding the hot person. And in the second half, after a little revival with my post players, where we were getting killed on the boards, I thought both N'dea [Jones] and Ciera [Johnson] came to play in the second half.

We got it inside. We shot, what, 37 free throws or something like that? To seven. And I thought that was the difference in the game, was the second half wearing them out inside and getting them into foul trouble.

Survive and advance, one of the things that really helped was seeing how Marquette struggled against a very good Rice team, how they let Rice control the tempo. We wanted to control the tempo of this game and we did. And I'm sure Marquette learned their lesson, and they'll be back to the old Marquette come Sunday afternoon.

Q. Kayla, following off what Coach said, Why the threes? Why did you guys come out and start hitting the threes? And why shoot the threes? And then they went in.

KAYLA WELLS: My first three, I was wide open so I was going to shoot it. After I started making them, I just kept shooting the ball and they were going in. I think the same goes for Chennedy [Carter].

Q. Chennedy, I know you told us yesterday that you were just fine. But when you've had surgery and you haven't played in a couple of weeks, is it a weight off your shoulders when you come in and you're shooting the way you are early?



2019 NCAA DIVISION I WOMEN'S BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

TEXAS A&M AGGIES

Post-Game Press Conference - March 22, 2019
College Station, Texas

CHENNEDY CARTER: I put in a lot of work. Even though I wasn't able to play, I was doing a lot of things off the court that really helped my ability. Once the doctors finally released me, I've been in the gym putting up shots and just working on my game. That was the biggest thing, staying in the gym. It paid off.

Q. Chennedy, you made a couple of pretty hard falls there at the beginning. Was it good to kind of get banged around a little bit and know that everything would hold up?

CHENNEDY CARTER: Yeah, it was pretty good. It was kind of in the moment, though, so I really didn't notice when I got that elbow how hard I fell. The doctor said it would be extremely hard for me to reinjure it. So my biggest thing was just to go out there and play fearless, just play hard, and just play how I always play.

Q. Chennedy, you guys have had a couple of good starts this season. Do you feel that was the best ten minutes of basketball you've ever played all season? I don't think you've put up 31 points in a quarter.

CHENNEDY CARTER: It was a great quarter for us shooting-wise. I everyone just did their part from the post players to the guards to the forwards, just finding us and getting us open shots, open threes.

And me and Kayla [Wells] have just been putting in work and we were lucky enough to knock it down. That was probably the best start. I enjoyed playing the first quarter.

Q. Kayla, did you all have any worries about Chennedy's [Carter] finger, especially when you saw her go down a couple of times like that? Did it make you jump at all?

KAYLA WELLS: Honestly, it was like in the middle of the game so it is not really like, oh, my God. I didn't really realize it until after. I was like, dang, she did fall pretty hard. I don't think we were too much worried at that moment. But after the moment, we were a little bit worried.

Q. N'dea, follow up what Coach said, he said Marquette playing close, you guys paid attention. Did you guys really pay attention? Did that play anything into the game, do you feel, today?

N'DEA JONES: I think we did pay attention, but we know that's not Marquette. That's not normally how they usually play. So it was kind of hard seeing them play that way, knowing they can come and play any day, any time, and do really well.

So we did pay attention to some things, but we know that's probably not the best that they can probably play.



2019 NCAA DIVISION I WOMEN'S BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

TEXAS A&M AGGIES

Post-Game Press Conference - March 22, 2019
College Station, Texas

Q. Chennedy, how did the wrap feel that you talked about you were going to wear yesterday? And do you think you'll keep it the same moving forward or now that you're advancing, maybe change it?

CHENNEDY CARTER: I think I'll just keep it. It feels fine. It is not too much. Just one layer plus a little thick padding, so it really doesn't bother me or affect my shot. I guess I would say if it gets hit, I really can't feel it as much. So it protects me pretty well. I think I'm going to keep it on just to stay safe.

Q. Coach, you mentioned you guys have started hot before. But is that the best first quarter or best ten minutes of basketball the team has played all season?

COACH BLAIR: Kentucky on the road was pretty doggone good, too. Knowing that they were No. 15 in the country and sometimes the competition was a little bit different.

But we shared the ball, I think, as well as we played in the first quarter. We could have hurt a lot of SEC teams, as well, by how we opened up and shared the ball, moved the ball.

But normally with SEC defense, you do not get that many wide-open threes. And it's not that we have a whole lot of three-point shooters but we sure the heck know who our two are and we try to find them by reversing the ball.

Q. I know you said "pinkie gate" is over. But when you have a player, one of your best players, if not the best, out for two weeks with an injury and having surgery, does it give you a sigh of relief whenever you see her playing the way she did early for you?

COACH BLAIR: This team's done it all year, Christie. We just handle adversity as well as any team whether it was the transfers or the graduations last summer or the injuries or losing [Aaliyah] Wilson, moving a junior college point guard in. We just find a way.

And while I'm thinking about it, look what Sham (Shambria) Washington did today. She's not up here. Look at her stat line. 2-5, 2-2, nine rebounds, only one foul, seven assists, two turnovers and 34 minutes. Where would we be without Sham, okay?

That's sometimes when a kid -- that means that was pretty good recruiting by us to find somebody to come in. Because here's the problem: There's a lot of kids across the country and in the state that do not want to come in and play behind Chennedy Carter. They want to play with her but not behind her.

So I thought we hit a home run on signing Sham Washington and she proved it today. She dissected their zone. We got what we wanted.



2019 NCAA DIVISION I WOMEN'S BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

TEXAS A&M AGGIES

Post-Game Press Conference - March 22, 2019
College Station, Texas

Q. Gary, the second quarter, were you relying too much on the jump shots after they did so well in the first quarter? Or did they settle into their game a little bit more? What do you think about the second quarter?

COACH BLAIR: I think basically it was all them. We settled in to forcing some shots. We got our tail whipped on the boards in the first half.

How many times is your one and your two going to outrebound my four and the five? That's what happened today. I think between my one and my two, they had 16 rebounds to only -- we were getting beat by the [Symone] Simmons kid in there. She was doing a great job. Their big kid in there was walling up, doing a good job.

I just think a lot of it was just Wright State playing like they are capable and got over. It's hard walking in with a majority of the fans pulling for the home team. But I thought after the first quarter, Katrina Merriweather did a great job of rallying her team. Instead of it being a 25-point game at half, it was a 13-point game. Give them a lot of credit. That's just good coaching on their part.

Q. Coach, Chennedy [Carter] of course, had the pinkie. We found out one of their players played the whole game with a broken wrist. Is this game a good example of the toughness of the women's game especially on this stage?

COACH BLAIR: Which player played with a broken wrist?

MODERATOR: Emily Vogelpohl.

COACH BLAIR: Did she break it in the game?

MODERATOR: No, it was practice. We didn't know about it.

COACH BLAIR: Wow. Well, obviously that affected her 1-7 shooting because on the scout report, she was one of the ones we needed to stop. Gosh. That is tough, Miss Travis.

The women's game is one of the most underrated sports ever. And a lot of it -- television has been very good to us, but it has hurt us as far as attendance. We're on TV everywhere. We're being streamed and everything like that. And too many people across the nation -- not just here in Bryan/College Station.

But the people that were here today, they enjoyed that game. Now the question is: How can we double that crowd for Sunday? Rice brought more students than we had in there for our students. I would say it was pretty close.

I want our students to get there on Sunday, okay? I'm sure like most of you guys out here, we all studied on Sunday afternoon when we were in college, right? I would love



2019 NCAA DIVISION I WOMEN'S BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

TEXAS A&M AGGIES

Post-Game Press Conference - March 22, 2019
College Station, Texas

for our students to come take over the place. And if the students can take over the place, I guarantee you my no hairs, my gray hairs, and blue hairs will stand with you.

COACH BLAIR: 20 offensive boards we gave up and 14 turnovers. That's the only negative I got. Other than that, I'm a happy camper. I'm fixing to go eat me some good Italian food.

MODERATOR: Whereabouts?

COACH BLAIR: Napa Flats. That's a paid political announcement. Thank you. I gotta get the real thing. I get the white fish. The white fish is outstanding or the pepperoni pizza with a side salad and one of those other things.

COACH BLAIR: Appreciate all of y'all. Give credit to those three teams that were here. They brought a lot of fans, particularly Rice brought a lot of people. I would like to get them to stay over, if I could. But Marquette's going to have a lot of people staying, so hopefully we can get some more Aggie fans out. Appreciate the coverage that you all have done. Thank you.