



2017 NCAA DIVISION I WOMEN'S BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

Second Practice Day · UCLA
Pauley Pavilion · Los Angeles, Calif.
Sunday, March 19

SECOND PRACTICE DAY QUOTES – UCLA

Cori Close, UCLA Head Coach:

On the Texas A&M comeback last night:

"It shows that they've come behind a lot. You saw that they referenced that in their own minds, that they were never down and out. They might have been down but thought they were not out. I've coached against Gary Blair and Bob Starkey for years and years and I just kept saying to myself there's a run coming. They're good athletes, they're a good team. Talk about coaches who have been through the wars. They know how to get things done and put their kids in great position to be successful. It's an overused phrase, but they showed incredible perseverance, they showed incredible toughness, really mentally more than anything else. Penn played really well, and my heart broke for them and their coach, but I thought it did say a lot about the mental toughness of Texas A&M."

On the teaching moments:

"I was thinking about Jordin today as I was walking. This is not even just preparing her for March, this is preparing her for a long, professional career. It's going to be so important for her to be able to run a team for every minute of every day. The reason she has a chance to be elite is that she wants that and she wants a challenge like that and few do. I have to be relentless about that, even when it makes her really mad, even when she doesn't like me that much. My job is not to be liked by her, my job is to prepare her. If I really love her, then I've got to be really willing to really hold her to a standard. Last night in the game it happened on two different occasions. One was on defense and one was just being really crisp with her passes. Who gets on a player about being really crisp with her passes who has 16 assists and who sets a school record, but it's not about the performance and the numbers, it's about preparing her to reach her potential and to be her best when her best is needed. I just think if you love your players then you're willing to hold them to a standard they can rise to. I remember specifically when they happen and it's just that we didn't even get burned on them, but it's about right then you were choosing the easy way. Right then you weren't saying how can I affect every play on offense and defense? Monique Billings can affect every play on offense and defense whether she touches the ball or not, and that has to be our mindset. How do I make a play for somebody else? How do I make a play without a ball? How do I make a play when I touch the ball? That has to be her mindset. If you want to play to the level her talent warrants, that has to be your standard for yourself, to absolutely, I've got to make a play for my team on offense and defense every minute of every game."

On the keys for tomorrow:

"Pace, rebounding, defense. We've got to use our depth, we've got to play fast, that's when we play at our best. We've got to use our depth, every single person on our team has to be contributing according to their role, but we must control rebounds. You noticed last night how many more shots on the game that Texas A&M got than Penn. Penn played really well, was really efficient for a long time, but you can't allow Texas A&M to get that many more shots, so we have got to control the possession game. That can happen either rebounding-wise or in the turnover margin. But we must win the possession game. And then we've got to defend the paint. Hillsman, she's a load. If she gets deep and gets possession and gets touches where she wants to, there's nothing we can do about it. We're going to have to defend the paint early. We're going to have great team defense guarding the paint, and then we've got to guard the shooters. They're shooting at a really high percentage. They're shooting 3-pointers that they want to shoot. It's not like Boise, that the volume of their shots is going to be so high. The key is going to be how we rebound, how we defend in the paint and how we can play at an up-tempo pace."

On the potential individual matchup of Jordin Canada and Curtyce Knox:

"We're going to really try to mix it up. I think we've learned some valuable lessons on that. Jordin is our best perimeter defender, there's no doubt about it and she's in really good physical shape. The reality is we're going to play fast. On offense, the ball's in her hands. We did a really good on Sydney Wiese in the Pac-12 Tournament. I think in the fourth quarter, Jordin was a little worn down, so we're going to try to mix it up a little bit more, but Jordin is going to be a primary defender on Knox and that will be great match-up."

On how she plans to defend Texas A&M center Khaalia Hillsman:

"We're going to play a lot of different ways. If she catches it deep, a double's not going to matter, because she's just going to turn and shoot it. You can bring as many people as you want, she's just strong and she's going to get herself to the free throw line and make the shot. If you can do your defense early, then you have a chance to double. Then you have a chance to do some other things. She's not just a power player. Her wheel move in the post is real nice, where she can wheel and go to the other side of the key. She finishes with both hands. Not only is it going to be a key for how we defend her early, but also, we have to make her defend us up and down. That's where the pace comes in. We're going to send a lot of people in and they're going to run their butts off."

On how she can prepare the team to get off to another fast start:

"I think you want to. Every game, you want to have a fast start, but I think it's really staying focused on what you can control. We made shots early. That's a bonus. That's got to be the icing on the cake—it can't be the cake. For us, we have to defend and rebound. We've got to get stops—that's what I was most pleased about in our start, was how many consecutive stops we started the game with. Yes, they converted into points this time. It'll be harder, obviously. We're not going to win as many one-on-one matchups with such ease in this matchup. I think it's really important that we win the backboards early and that we get consecutive stops. That's got to be our focus. I think when you start thinking about starting fast and scoring, sometimes you shoot great and sometimes you don't. We don't want to live and die by how we make perimeter shots, for instance. We've got to make shots in the warzone. We've got to do a better job of making free throws. We have to be able to do that. If we get high-percentage shots and we get fouled, we've got to deliver on that. We've been a really good free throw shooting team all year, so I think that was a little bit of an anomaly and we'll take care of that. That's the only shot I want our players thinking, 'I've got to make this'—they've got to make lay-ups, they've got

to make free throws, but they've got to play free everywhere else. They need to feel a lot of urgency on rebounds and stops."

On playing at home:

"I think it's definitely an advantage. It's a little bit different rhythm, but for the most part, we try to keep it the same as we always do. Our players feel a great amount of confidence playing at home, for whatever reason. I try to downplay it all the time, because we've never been about streaks or anything else. We're about playing our best basketball every night. No matter where we are. The baskets are the same height, the courts the same length. We've got to be about doing things under our control. I am really thankful for what it does—we're trying to build a fan base—and in LA, that's not really an easy deal. For us, I'm just really thrilled that we've been able to share that many wins with people that are getting excited about our team and getting behind our team. We're not just building a basketball team, we're building a basketball program and that includes our community. I'm really thankful for the opportunity to share the journey of these young women with our great fans one more time—and just hope every time, maybe ten more people get excited about this team and this program. For me, that's what I'm most grateful for."

Jordin Canada, UCLA Guard:

On playing Texas A&M after they made a 21-point comeback:

"First thought is that they are tough. Penn was very good and executed very well, but I thought that Texas A&M battled and fought in the fourth quarter which made them take the lead. For us we need to know that they're not going to give up, we have to keep punching and fighting for 40 minutes."

On what can be improved:

"Defensive rebounding is something we could work on. Boise State got too many offensive rebounds especially in the second half, so that's something we need to really work on against, especially against Texas A&M because they have two great rebounders. We also need to improve on cleaning up our turnovers and execution especially in the second half. We also have to do a better job of moving the ball around and making sure it doesn't just stay stagnant. So, turnovers, offensive execution and defensive rebounding are what we need to work on."

On pace expecting a fast-paced game:

"Yeah, I think both teams are super athletic and both teams could run. It's probably going to be like that in the first half. And in the second half it's going to be about offensive execution and half court sets. I think it's going to be an up and down game throughout, but I think that's what's going to happen in the first half, trying to get after it, and depending on how the game is going, it's either going to slow down or keep up tempo."

On if she will matchup with Curtyce Knox:

"I have no idea, we're going to find out in a couple minutes what the game plan is but, I don't know. I would assume, but I just have to wait to see what coach says." I mean it's going to be about, who, what point guard can control the game better, and what point guard can get their teammates involved the most. I mean we love to pass the ball, both of us, we both take over when we need to. It's going to be a fun matchup, but I can't really say what's going to happen because the game hasn't started yet and we don't know the game plan, but I know it's going to be very exciting to me."

On the coach's relentlessness:

"You always want a coach like that, I mean she knows what it takes, and I haven't been to a Final Four before, I don't know what it's like. And she's been through it all so she knows what it takes and so I want that in a coach, someone to push me because you're not always going to get a game where you're up by 20 especially in the NCAA tournament. I don't think you're ever going to, in this situation from now on, you're not going to be up by 20, so she just doesn't want us to let up. She just wants to make sure we're staying consistent and I'm being consistent and what I need to do to help the team."

Kari Korver, UCLA Guard:

On what the biggest keys are to winning the game against Texas A&M:

"Trying to get to ball to Mo [Monique Billings] in the post is a big emphasis, running in transition as well and get easy layups for Kennedy [Burke], Jordin and Kelli [Hayes]. So just continuing to run in transition, get easy shots and get the ball inside to Mo, so she could kick it out to us so we can get easy shots."

On how to play with energy:

"We all want to win, we're at home we enjoy being and home and want to continue to play for another 40 minutes, so we're just fired up and I think it'll be the same tomorrow."

On the coach's relentlessness:

"I think that's what we want you know, we want to be the best team we can possibly be and that's what we're about, and growth mindset is the phrase in our program and we just want to keep growing every single minute we're playing basketball, every single practice and so we don't want to settle for being okay and beating them by 20. If we can beat them by 40 that's what we should do."

Nicole Kornet, UCLA Guard:

On coming off the bench:

"I think coach really emphasizes on to sit back and watch what's going on and help in any way you can, and when the shots are falling it is always beneficial. And when you have a point guard like Jordin Canada getting you the ball where you need and when you need it always helps and pay dividends."

On preparing for Texas A&M:

"People are going to play their best basketball, especially coming down the second round and A&M has always kind of been a pressure oriented team. They love to rebound, they can guard straight up, and I just think we have to be ready for anything and everything. And especially with us, if we're ready for pressure we can be ready for whichever team we get. We just have to focus on us and we have to be the same team consistently."