

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Regional Semifinal: Michigan vs Baylor

Saturday, March 27, 2021

San Antonio, Texas, USA

Alamodome - River Walk

Baylor Lady Bears

Kim Mulkey

Sweet 16 Postgame Media Conference



Baylor 78, Michigan 75 OT

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by coach. We will take questions for coach.

Q. NaLyssa's game, I think she tied an NCAA regional record, 11-for-11. Talk about what she brought to you. You had other players, but obviously she had a huge game.

KIM MULKEY: Yeah, the record speaks for itself. Actually if she makes one more free throw, she's perfect from the foul line, as well.

Just a phenomenal player. I thought she was an All-American on the floor for us tonight. I thought that when we struggled, she was a leader somewhat. Lyss has just grown up a lot on that floor. Thank God she's on our team tonight because she made some big-time shots for us.

Q. Now you get into this next round against UConn, a game that wasn't able to be played this season. How much does it mean to get back to another regional final?

KIM MULKEY: Well, it just means a great deal to get to an Elite 8. We've got a ton of those in my 21 years at Baylor. It matters to us. I thought our crowd was outstanding. They helped us. Just a lot of Baylor people throughout the arena.

I don't know that it matters that it's UConn as much as it's more important to our program that we're in another Elite 8.

Now, you know we didn't get to play them because I came down with COVID. It's two programs that have I think won the most national championships with their coaches that

are currently coaching. Obviously Pat Summitt and what she has done will never be forgotten. But I think they have 11, we have three. Down the pike, Stanford has two, Maryland...

It's two programs that are very proud. I'm certainly not going to outcoach Geno, so our players, they better compete and try to out-play his players.

Q. NaLyssa mentioned this type of game shows that you guys can go all the way because it was a battle. First overtime you have had this year. Just to be in a battle and win it the way you did, what does that mean for your team?

KIM MULKEY: Well, winning, whether it was overtime, double overtime, regulation, is all that matters. I'm not one of these that thinks, Oh, man, we've been in a tight game, we won it, that's really going to boost us in the next game.

What we've got to be careful of now is make sure that they rest, get the proper rest. When you get to a Sweet 16, an Elite 8, everybody's good. Guys, Kim, their coach, is one of my favorite people in coaching. I want to compliment her and her team. It's heartbreaking. It's heartbreaking to play so tough. I thought they were just tough. I thought they were physical. They kept us from going to the offensive boards. They do the fundamental things right like blocking out.

They're very familiar with everything we want to run because they have one of my former assistants over there. Both teams had a lot of turnovers.

I just thought, I'm complimenting Michigan because I haven't seen them on film shoot the three ball like that all year. But it's tournament time, it's playoffs, it's do or die. People step up. Hillmon we know is great player; I thought we contained her pretty much. They had kids who barely averaged scoring and they were hitting threes. Almost doubled the number of threes they averaged all year. So I want to compliment them. I know how it feels in a locker room when your season's over.

Was it a good game for ABC? You bet it was. Was it a



good game for women's basketball? You bet it was. We made just enough plays to win it. I thought Queen struggled, got that very first foul 10 seconds into the game. I don't know if that affected her. I don't know if it was Hillmon that affected her. But what Queen did do is she got the big offensive rebound there when it was a two-point game, and she made one of two free throws.

You go in that locker room and you acknowledge the other team, but you also give yourself some credit.

Q. You mentioned you and UConn having the most championships of coaches that are still coaching. Can you talk about the fact that you two have done this for so long, to have that target on your back the way you have and UConn has? What does it take to be able to do that year after year?

KIM MULKEY: 21 years ago I became the head coach at Baylor University. Actually it was April 4th of 2000. It seems like an eternity ago. Baylor was bottom of the Big 12. Last place. They had won seven games the previous year.

You work. You roll your sleeves up and you work. In five years we won our first national championship. The hard part then really began. While doors opened and it allows you to go into these great players' homes, our program wasn't built with the McDonald's All-Americans. Our programs had to be built with people who took a chance on me and Baylor University. I won't ever forget that.

The answer to your question is, it is very difficult to sustain something that is an elite level. You see programs who are Cinderellas, they do this up and down, then you see those that stay kind of in the middle, have good programs. We want to stay up here and we want to play for championships not only in the NCAA playoffs, in the tournament, but the Big 12. It's not easy. It is not easy at all.

Q. I know you just talked about, it's just about winning, it doesn't matter if you're up 50 or 2, you just have to win at this point in the season. I don't know how many close games you've had lately, how does it help you to have a close game like this? Potentially the next three, if you get that far, will be tighter than the first two rounds you had.

KIM MULKEY: The deeper you go, the tougher the opponent and the tighter the games. I guess you could say that we did enough on the offensive and defensive end to win the game in overtime. We made some big shots. We had, again, some critical turnovers and didn't execute. But before I criticize our team, I want to compliment Michigan.

Maybe Michigan had something to do with that.

I know that our kids didn't give up. We got a 12-point lead, wasn't it, at one time? We would come down and have a turnover. It just seemed like every time we would extend the lead, we would do something to allow them back in it. But maybe Michigan needs to be complimented and maybe we didn't do so bad.

I don't know if it helps or hurts. Each game is different.

Q. Obviously you were talking about this was a phenomenal game for ABC for women's college basketball. Taking a step back, how proud does this make you just to see all of the pieces come together in this incredible battle-tested type of game?

KIM MULKEY: Well, I'm proud any time we win. I'm proud for the program, first of all, then for each player collectively and individually. There's a lot of players on that floor that were big-time role players and didn't get the minute when we won the national championship, which is the last time any of us played in an NCAA tournament. There's a lot of kids on that floor in critical moments tonight that weren't on that floor. Great experience for them.

So, yeah, I'm proud. I don't take it for granted. Do you know how many teams would love to play in an Elite 8? I don't know if we can get past Connecticut. It's going to be hopefully a good ballgame. What I do know, win or lose, we're right there again fighting for a national championship.

Q. You talked about making plays to win this game. I thought Dijonai close to the end of regulation, then she had one again in the overtime, the steal and the layup. Those were big plays. How big was she in a game like this?

KIM MULKEY: Well, I think each of them. If I broke each of them down, they would tell you first, Gosh, yeah, but I did this bad on the other end earlier in the game and I did this bad. You have to have short-term memory and keep playing. Yes, she got in the passing lane, she picked it off. That's experience. She shot some threes and wasn't making it, then, boom, she hits a big three for us. That's the nature of sports. That's particularly the nature of basketball. You got to flush it and move on to the next play.

I think her experience and having been in college as long as she has, played against big-time opponents before we got her when she was in the Pac-12, and she's healthy, it's just allowed her not to get too flustered or too high or too low.

Q. Even from a virtual setting it's clear how much joy this team has playing with one another. I'm curious how much of a factor does that culture become when you have these stressful moments down the stretch, really looking to make a big run in the tournament?

KIM MULKEY: Well, it plays a factor. I'll tell you, I put those shoes on many years ago. I was coached by some of the best. What I have learned as a coach is their joy and their happiness and their picking each other up lifts me.

When I'm really wanting to be upset in a timeout, they won't allow me getting on a teammate to affect that teammate. They will pick that teammate up. If I take a teammate out of the game for a mistake or something, those other players are picking that teammate up, no matter how frustrated I am at them.

They teach me a lot, as well.

Q. You are number one rebound margin team in the country. Michigan was number seven, UConn is number six. Is it just going to be that type of game again on Monday night?

KIM MULKEY: Well, it could be. You're looking at two programs that value defense. I'm going to start with field goal percentage defense. I think Baylor and UConn are in the top three in the country in field goal percentage defense. Then you look at rebounding. That might explain to you why both programs are respected across the country.

So, yeah, it could be an ugly game. When I say 'ugly,' it could be low scoring, it could be some turnovers. Some people want to say boring. It may not be 80 and 90. I don't know.

What I do know is Michigan did everything possible to keep us off the offensive boards. They just blocked out, fundamentals. Everybody is on the defensive boards for them. That's what well-coached teams do. That's what teams that are excited about getting to a Sweet 16 for the first time. Compliments and everything I can say good about Michigan and the coaching staff.

Q. Moon started out 0-for-4; she finished 8-for-16. What did you see from her over the course of the game that she was improving and staying in the game mentally, that you dialed up that last play of regulation to give her the shot?

KIM MULKEY: Well, actually I heard you guys, somebody ask, I think it was Jerry, Jerry wants to ask a question that

gets everybody riled up. But you would think I was going to go to NaLyssa, right? I guess if I was a smart coach and she hadn't missed a shot, I better go to her.

NaLyssa actually wanted Moon to take that shot because she felt like she could get her open better than she could get herself open. So we dialed it up for her. She had a great look. She had a great look. She missed it. That's the way it played out.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you for your time today. Good luck in the next round.

KIM MULKEY: Thanks, guys.

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