

# Big 12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 11, 2021

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

**Kansas State Wildcats**

**Ayoka Lee**

**Christianna Carr**

Postgame Press Conference



Kansas State - 75, Texas Tech - 65

THE MODERATOR: We're joined at this time by K-State players Ayoka Lee and Christianna Carr.

Before we start, Ayoka Lee set the school record for blocks in a Big 12 Championship game with seven.

**Q. Yokie, how did you get it rolling in the second half after that long break you had at the end of the first half, sitting for, I think, seven minutes there. How did you get your rhythm back?**

AYOKA LEE: Well, that's kind of been a story this year. Yeah, it's something I've, unfortunately, kind of gotten used to. I think, just coming into the second half knowing we had to win the first five minutes and we knew it wasn't going to be easy. So, yeah, I just kind of had to.

**Q. Christi, when Yokie's not in the game, that's kind of when you got rolling there in the first half. How does your role change on offense when she's not out there?**

CHRISTIANNA CARR: Whenever Yokie's in the game, our main focus is to get the ball outside. Whenever Yokie's out of the game, that's kind of my opportunity to be a little bit more aggressive and make up for the points that she isn't getting.

I think Yokie does a good job of finding players, so it's not really that big of a deal we get the ball inside to her all the time because she's always going to find the open player whether she's open or not. I just think the main objective is to score it in every possession. Whether that's in Yokie's hands or mine or anybody else that's on our team, that's our main goal.

**Q. I think it was Syd (Goodson) who you guys gave the Sharpie to to fill in your name on the bracket.**

Obviously, she transferred in from Texas Tech. How cool is that for her and for you guys to see her be able to find success against her old team in a tournament like that?

AYOKA LEE: It's just so exciting, you know. Not only did we come in this game knowing we had to advance, but, you know, part of it is just like we had to win for Syd just because, yeah, she's our teammate, and like we're just so happy to have her. Yeah, we couldn't lose to her previous school, so yeah, just a little extra motivation there.

**Q. Twenty-three assists on 28 field goals, and Coach has said many times that you guys just aren't moving the ball well enough to win ball games, not moving the ball well. He's said that a lot this year. Do you think you've proven him wrong now by moving the ball and hitting shots? You guys were 50 percent in the second half.**

CHRISTIANNA CARR: I wouldn't say it's proving him wrong. I would just say it's more of a focus. I think that he has kind of shown us in practice a different -- he's broken down our offense for us and kind of letting us know, hey, if we don't have this, then we have this, and those are our options there.

So I think that, now that we have that kind of broken down, we have a better awareness what's going to be open and what our options are through the offense. So I think we've matured a lot. And those aspects, growing up and listening to coach and what he has to say and just trusting it -- that's one thing we've been told a lot in practice is just to trust the offense. So I think that's maturity as the season's gone on, and as the season is coming to an end, I think that's what you're seeing now.

**Q. Yokie, have you ever been involved or been called for a foul where somebody basically jumps up and runs into your arm? Even though you did move your elbow a little bit, she still initiated the contact kind of?**

AYOKA LEE: Yeah, I don't know, yeah.

CHRISTIANNA CARR: Tonight. First time for everything.

**Q. The seven blocks, Yokie, obviously, you're a good rim protector all the time, but tonight it seemed like you kind of had a presence to be around the ball all the time. How did you develop those defensive instincts to shut people down at the rim like that?**

AYOKA LEE: Honestly, I didn't even know I had seven. It did not feel like seven, but I think it just comes with being smart. Like I really wasn't looking to get that many blocks, but I think they just came from playing good defense and being smart.

**Q. Christianna, what impact on the rest of the defense does it have on you guys to play with -- to know that you have Yokie behind you to clean up those mistakes if you need to?**

CHRISTIANNA CARR: There's nothing like getting beat off the dribble and turning around and seeing Yokie swat it into the stands. That is really nice. It makes Coach Mittie's yell down the court a lot less quieter whenever they don't score out of it. So it's nice to have, yeah.

**Q. You mentioned getting a little extra motivation because you're playing Texas Tech and because of Sydney, but did you also get any extra motivation from the fact that it's an elimination game and it could be Sydney and Ashley's last game?**

CHRISTIANNA CARR: Yeah, that definitely was the talk before the game. I think one thing that we kind of talked about in practice was that it's a new season. At this point, our record doesn't matter. Everyone starts at the beginning of the bracket and moves forward. The winning team moves forward. So I think that we -- yeah, obviously, we didn't want to lose Tech for Syd, but on top of that, we didn't want to lose first round for a lot of reasons.

We're a talented team, and we need an opportunity to be able to show that. I feel like this is our time to be able to show that now and just show that we've been working towards it and show that we've grown up a lot. Our record doesn't reflect who we are as a people and who we are as a team. I think tonight we really showed that, and hopefully we'll keep that motivation going on and that energy moving forward to tomorrow night's game.

**Q. In the second quarter, you're up by 10, and then No. 34 kind of goes off, and all of a sudden, talented team only a two-point lead. What was the locker room like after that?**

CHRISTIANNA CARR: I mean, I think it's just more we need to play hard, play harder, get loose balls. I mean, that

was our talk whenever Coach Mittie came in, that we needed to get some more rebounds, get on the floor a lot more, trust the offense, get better shots, and things like that.

People are going to have people go on runs for scores, and I think that's our job to be able to sit down and have enough pride to stop them, but as a team, we needed to focus on all five of us getting in there and stopping us. I mean, Lexi Gordon is a good player, I'll give credit to her, and Vivian Gray is too, but all five of us can't go run to Lexi Gordon because we can't leave Vivian Gray.

So it's not really a five-person job. It's just you have a task in front of you. Whoever's stepping up to guard her has to step up and do her job, and the rest of us just have to fall behind and do our job too. Once we all do our job collectively, then we all need to come together and get a rebound and get a good shot on the other end. I think that's really what it all boils down to is good possessions on defense and great possessions on offense.

**Q. I think Rachel was 1-for-5 on threes before she hit the last really big one to put you guys away for good at the end there. What does that say about her that she can, after a kind of rough night from deep, to step up and hit one of the biggest shots of the game?**

AYOKA LEE: I think it just comes down to trusting each other as players and knowing that we can hit big shots when we need to. And just finding the open person, I think was really big. So, yeah, I mean, I don't think we really -- it's just always onto the next play. I don't think we were ever really like don't pass to them because they haven't made anything. Yeah, it's exciting.

**Q. Two close games against West Virginia for you guys earlier this year. How do you swing those outcomes tomorrow?**

CHRISTIANNA CARR: I think it just boils down to playing hard. The hardest team that's playing is going to end up on top. I think that's going to be our main goal going into it is playing hard. We owe them one, and why not now? Why not us? That's been our question now going on for these past couple weeks, and I think that we can prove that. We have all the talent in the world to be able to beat them. We've just got to do the stuff that we can control, and we'll come out on top.

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