

# Big 12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 11, 2021

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

## Kansas State Wildcats

### Jeff Mittie

#### Postgame Press Conference

Kansas State - 75, Texas Tech - 65

JEFF MITTIE: Well, I thought probably the key down the stretch for us was toughness at the defensive end and execution at the offensive end was pretty good in that stretch. We really played tougher and executed things better than we have, and that was good to see.

**Q. Jeff, first two games against Texas Tech were kind of high scoring. How did you guys slow them down on an offense -- your defense, their offense tonight?**

JEFF MITTIE: You know, it was a very physical game. I don't know how it looked on TV, but I could tell you sitting courtside, it seemed like it was a lot of bodies on the floor. Both teams playing hard, tournament basketball. I just think the physicality probably slowed the tempo down some. I think at times you had some fatigue out there, not necessarily from the pace of the game, but just you're in a wrestling match at times.

I just think the pace got a little bit slower, and I think our defense was good. We had better awareness than we've had. I thought our focus was much, much better. I talked about that last time. I felt like we had some slippage in that area of responsibility, whether it be transition D, whether it be rebounding, offensive rebounding, just in what your duties were. I thought tonight we were pretty assignment correct in those areas.

**Q. What's the key to getting Yokie going in the second half after she had that lengthy sit on the bench at the end of the first?**

JEFF MITTIE: Just get her touches. You know, it's just about getting her touches. Sometimes, because she's got to play through a lot of physicality, we end up not being patient enough waiting for her to get position established. It gets a little bit harder with bodies and the physicality. So we were just more patient. We had a better purpose. Certainly, in the fourth quarter, I thought our purpose and



execution was really good.

**Q. When she was on the bench, Christi kind of picked up the offensive slack for you guys in the first half. She's talked this season about how her game has expanded beyond her just being sort of more of a spot-up shooter. She's getting to where she wants to go on the court, creating her own shot. The idea that she can make up for a long, extended Yokie absence like that, what does that say about where she is in her maturation process as an offensive player?**

JEFF MITTIE: She's made good improvements. I thought tonight her patience in the post was really good. She hit some good turnaround jump shots down there. We had size advantage, and we were able to utilize her specifically when Yokie wasn't in there.

Yeah, I think you're right. She's scoring it -- as opposed to being a shooter, she's turning into a better scorer. She's getting to the free-throw line more. She's getting into other areas of the floor, and I like her maturation as a player. I think she's still got a lot of upside to her, but I think she's making the right adjustments.

**Q. Coach, in the first quarter, Tech went on that 12-0 run, and typically a coach would call time-outs and try to slow things down, but you didn't. And it worked, and you went on a 6-0 run. Why did you decide not to take a time-out there?**

JEFF MITTIE: The way we've handled late games, Mitch, I'd like to have a few in my pocket at the end. You're right. With this team, I feel the need to have maybe three, and I didn't have three going into the fourth like I'd like. But it worked out.

We've been a team, particularly against Tech -- I would tell you, against Tech, it has been runs. They're really -- the second half was very unique because in most of our games somebody runs out 10, and somebody runs it back, then somebody runs out 10 again, somebody runs another.

So I don't know. I just felt in that stretch, I didn't feel like there was anything that we needed to talk about and change, so I just stayed the course.

**Q. Twenty-three assists on 28 made field goals. We've done a lot of these where you've said to us that the team isn't moving the ball well enough to win games and not finding the right people on the floor. That's starting to change now. Your players are making the right plays and finding the right people?**

JEFF MITTIE: Well, I would tell you in the fourth quarter that that was probably as good a stretch as we've had. They went zone for a period of about three or four minutes, and we got the ball to Ebert right in the middle of the zone. That's what we talked about in one of the time-outs. We said Ebert has to touch the basketball. We showed good patience to do that. When they went man, we said Lee has to touch the basketball. Rachel hits a big three on a kick out from Yokie. There were just better plays we were making together.

So, yeah, I think it got definitely better in the fourth. I thought it was decent in this game, for the most part, but the fourth quarter is probably the best we've been in a while.

**Q. I can assume the answer to this because she played in the second half, but Sydney had to be helped off the floor. She got a piggy-back ride from Ranke, looked like she collided with somebody. But was that something she just needed to walk off?**

JEFF MITTIE: How should I say this? Syd recovers quick on those things. I think she gets a little scared because she's had some ankle issues. I almost look like I don't care because I've seen her go down so much. It's like I just kind of know she's going to get up, and she's a tough kid. So she just needs to re-tape it and go.

You're right. She has nine lives that way in some regards, and she just recovers quickly. And I say recover quickly, I think she gets scared right away, and then I think she realizes, okay, it's not as bad as I thought, because she has had some tough ankle injuries. We were hopeful she'd come back and felt like, when we were in the locker room, that she'd be okay.

She may have just been tired, Mitch. I don't know. We were worried about Rachel carrying her off. Rachel didn't look that strong in the first half, so I was more worried about Rachel carrying her off than Syd.

**Q. Coach, you faded late a few times this season. Do you think that your team showed some growth to go toe for toe and hit big shots tonight?**

JEFF MITTIE: Yeah, definitely. I think not only growth in

hitting big shots, but I think growth in ball movement, growth in execution. Like I said earlier, I think the two things that were most impressive to me was our toughness defensively down the stretch, and then our execution at the offensive end was pretty solid.

**Q. You guys have played West Virginia pretty close twice, including eight days ago or whatever it was at home. What's the key to turning those close losses into a win tomorrow?**

JEFF MITTIE: Well, West Virginia's got an outstanding team. They're battle tested. They've played extremely well. But I mean, I just think we've got to bring that same toughness. The one thing about playing West Virginia is they are physical and they are going to challenge every pass. We've got to bring that same toughness that we brought in the fourth quarter today in the second half today.

We've had some good games against them, but they've got as good a balance offensively. You can't put too much focus on Gondrezick, who's a heck of a player, because Niblack can hurt you, Martinez can hurt you. They've just got a lot of weapons. We've got to be tough, and at the offensive end, we've got to make sure we can execute.

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