

Big 12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 12, 2021

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

Texas Longhorns

Vic Schaefer

Postgame Press Conference

Texas - 84, Iowa State - 82

VIC SCHAEFER: I've been doing this a long time, and I don't remember seeing a more gutsy effort from a group of kids than this group today. I am beyond proud of our toughness, our resilience, our competitive spirit. I really thought we grew today. We showed tremendous growth and toughness.

We talked about, in the pregame, about just being a dog in a dogfight and being the big dog, not being a doggone poodle, not being the rug rat, but, man, just being the tough, big, big bulldog, you know? I just thought we showed the toughness today -- winning the 50/50 balls, just competitive. I mean, I just -- that team -- we're down Audrey, no Karisma available. We've got more people over there cheering than we do subs today, really. We've got four cheering and three subs, and we used two of them.

Jo goes 45 minutes. Kyra goes 45 minutes. I think Ashley went 43. You talk about a little bulldog now, Ashley, that's a little bulldog right there. She just really played well and really rose to the occasion, which you have to do, you know, when things like this happen. Look, you don't get ready yesterday when Audrey's sick and can't be at practice. It's too late. But you prepare so, when your number's called, you are ready, and Ashley's done that pretty much all year, and when her number was called today, she responded.

I just couldn't be more proud of a team. We had a lot of adversity, and we made big shots, big play after big play. We outshot them 29. We had 80 shots to their 51. We had 24 assists on 30 baskets. That's a great indication, y'all, of a team playing together, playing for each other, and, again, just we turn them over 18 times.

Here's the biggest stat of all. We only had six. You want to look for the big stat. We had six turnovers, that's it. Kyra and Ashley, they had 7 of our 18 offensive rebounds. It's the two smallest kids on the floor, y'all. And 12 of them, 12



total rebounds.

Again, the ability of Celeste and Jo to play through foul trouble and not get that fifth one, guarding their best player -- and, again, they were 1-for-7 from three at halftime and ended up 8-for-17. So they went 7-for-10 in the second half. But we held them to 27 points the first half, and I said at halftime, if we hold them to 54, we'll win the game. Well, we couldn't hold them to 54.

Just telling y'all. You all saw what I just saw. You just saw, if there's ever been a bigger display of Texas fight by a group of kids that just had a lot of adversity going into the game. I couldn't be more proud of them. You got to tip your hat to them, y'all. Those kids battled their butt off today. I've been doing it a long time. I don't know that I've been down numbers-wise like this since the '90s at Sam Houston State. That's a hell of a long time ago. That's like a lifetime for me. So toe our kids do this on this stage against that team. That's a heck of a team over there. They're just super hard to defend, and I'm just really proud of them.

Q. Vic, you only had eight available players today?

VIC SCHAEFER: Yeah, eight available.

Q. Well, do you expect Audrey and Karisma back tomorrow, or is that going to be the way it is the rest of this tournament?

VIC SCHAEFER: That's the way it is.

Q. You had said yesterday, when you talked to us, that -- I believe the quote was that you're a little miffed that your guards were not getting the all conference recognition that you thought they deserved. Are you going to ask for a recount after this game?

VIC SCHAEFER: I was just talking about the All-Defensive Team. We lead the league in turnovers forced and turnover margin, and I'm so proud of Charli because I think she's just become a really great help defender. She deserves to be on the team, and Celeste Taylor is second in the conference in steals. She's had games of pretty big

numbers.

I mean, I'm not throwing shade on anybody that's on the team, but we do have a pretty good defensive team. You look at our last six, seven ball games, we're holding people to 50 -- in the 50s. We're not leading the league in turnovers forced and turnover margin to stand around in a two-three zone. It's easy to be a let me lay low here and let me anticipate this pass there. I mean, that's easy. Go out and guard somebody like we do for 40 minutes, and then at that to me is worthy of being on the defense.

There's some great players on that team, but it's just beyond me that you know how we play, and it just felt like -- you know, Jo and Celeste, those are some dogs right now defensively. I don't think anybody just goes, "oh, goody, goody, she's guarding me tonight."

Q. It's one thing to get the shooting effort from your guards, but it just seemed they were making, whether it was Joanne taking the huge charge late, getting the big loose ball at the end of regulation. How much did the intangibles just warm your heart as you watched it play out?

VIC SCHAEFER: I'm going to tell you. We went to overtime against Oklahoma. I didn't see a lot in their eyes in that huddle leading into overtime. Today we had the last shot. It was a great look. I knew who we had. We'd gone a long, long way with a lot of those kids.

But when we got in the huddle, Jo was like this is our time, and she had that look in her eyes, and the rest of them kind of chimed in. You feel like -- I feel like we're growing. We believed it. It's one thing to say it. It's one thing to talk the talk, it's another to walk the walk, and I thought we walked it today.

You want to know what warms my heart? I couldn't be more proud of this group. I really am. Just a gutsy, gutsy effort by these kids today. Again, we had some real adverse situations in the ball game.

Q. I know you wouldn't have written this script because it's too painful to have to play the way you did, but since you did, there's that whole how diamonds are made thing. How far will this go to push this young team forward?

VIC SCHAEFER: Again, I think it's going to be something we'll grow on, not just the rest of this year, but in the years to come, you know, next year. And here's the thing, Dennis. I don't think there's a bunch of people lining up in the NCAA Tournament and going, oh, goody, goody, let me get Texas. Hey, look, it's a new tournament and you

just never know what's going to happen, but I just don't think there's a bunch of people lining up going, oh, great.

So I think this is the time of year -- again, you've got to get hot. You've got to get lucky, and you've got to be playing well. I think we showed today we really -- we played really well today again and fought through some real adversity.

Q. Coach, congratulations on the win. Two things, first defense creates easy offense. I believe you scored 16 points off of eight turnovers. Could you talk about that? And then also, could you talk about Taylor's clutch free throws the last three seconds of the game.

VIC SCHAEFER: We had 16 points off of 18 turnovers, which isn't a lot, but we had to be careful because of our numbers and our depth. But you want to talk about a kid that's worked really hard -- and I've talked to her -- shooting free throws and just told her, hey, stop touching the rim. When you shoot a free throw, you should be really focused on nothing but net. Get off the rim.

I've stood behind her now this last week or two just talking to her because she should be a much better free-throw shooter. She's under 50 percent, and she steps up today in a big game and nails 6 out of 6. That's what you do. That's what a player does. You work on your craft. You work on your game, and then you go put it into action.

She struggled a little bit offensively today, but, man, she made some huge free throws for us, and, again, that's because she's worked on it. So really happy for her, proud of her. Again, all of our kids made some big free throws. Kyra is 3-of-4, and if you're going to miss one, she missed the right one at the end, when there's not enough time to get full court to make that shot.

So you're proud of that. You're proud of all of them stepping up. Lauren made 2-of-4, but those two she made were really, really big for us. Again, it's what happens when you work on your game.

I've been seeing our guards shoot it better, and I knew we would shoot it -- at some point, we're going to start shooting the ball a little better. We went 13-for-34 from three today for 37 percent, 38 percent, which I'll take. That's a good number. You want to be in that 30 range. We shot 38 percent from three. So that's good. That's about equal to 56, 58, getting close to 60 from two. So we'll take that.

Q. Coach, I want to say, as recently as maybe two, three weeks ago, you told us about how heart wasn't where you wanted it to be and you can't coach heart. It was there tonight. How did that change, and is it here

to stay?

VIC SCHAEFER: I sure hope it is. Me having to coach your heart, I want to coach your mind. When I have to coach your heart in the huddle, that's an issue. Sometimes changing a culture and changing -- you know, you've got to get kids with a competitive spirit. At some point, enough is enough. I'll tell you this, you all heard me say this a million times. When you've got Texas on your chest, you're getting everybody's best shot. It don't matter if you don't deserve it or have earned it. It's the people who have gone before you, and it's just the way it is.

So that's what we signed up for. If you didn't realize it, I'm telling you now. If you're going to play for me at Texas, that's what you're signing up for. You're going to get everybody's best shot, and that's what my staff and I know. That's what we embrace. So hopefully, these kids see that.

It was a tough. Again, a big challenge today because of our numbers, our limitations, because of the way the game was. I mean, we had a lot of adversity, but to see our kids fight, that's what I want to see. I'm glad the outcome is the way it was, but I would be just as proud of them, y'all, if it hadn't have been because I saw them fight. I saw them have a competitive spirit, and that's what -- in my mind, that's what our program should hang our hat on every day, every game. When the TV comes on and people across the country see Texas Women's Basketball, when the game's over, they can go, dang, those kids played hard. That's all I care about because, if you play hard, you've got a chance every night.

Q. Vic, I know you love testing your kids. When Charli fouled out, that was a test. With 2:54 to go, and it gave you a little glimpse of life without Charli. That's going to be the situation next year. How proud are you that they stepped up without their best player on the court?

VIC SCHAEFER: Again, I'm really proud. It really proves the team aspect. Lauren came in. She did a good job. She really commands the other team's respect. Our guards stepped up and made some big shots. Again, Charli is such a tremendous player and a difference player, and she commands everybody's double. She gets no single looks.

That's been my biggest complaint, Cedric, all year is that that kid's doing it with double and triple teams. Her numbers are better than everybody's, just about. She's got more double-doubles than everybody except the guard at Troy. She's doing it night in and night out. You want to penalize a kid for one or two games in a 26-game schedule right now? I mean, give me a break. I just don't get it.

But I'm proud of our kids for stepping up. Lauren played

13-plus minutes and did a great job for us, but I thought her teammates really stepped up too. Again, Lauren's going to be great. She's going to be that 30-plus minute five player next year, along with Femme coming in, the number one player in the country that's in junior college, and then you're going to have Deyona Gaston helping. So we're going to have some options there.

Certainly, the way we responded tonight, I'm happy to play another day and give Charli another opportunity in this tournament. I know she wants it, along with my entire team. We're excited about the opportunity to play another great team tomorrow.

Q. Vic, there's obviously a quick turnaround before tomorrow. Is there something you do with your players when you guys get back to the hotel to give them some rest and kind of instruct them to go to their rooms and not leave until tomorrow, but how do you get them rested before tomorrow?

VIC SCHAEFER: I told our trainer Adam and I told the girls, I don't care what you do the rest of the day other than, when you go pack, those kids that played that many minutes -- 37 for Charli, two 45s, a 43. They're going to get in an ice bath for the coach for eight minutes. If we have to bring the ice to their room and put it in the bathtub, they're going to get in an ice bath up to their waist and do it for eight minutes.

The rest of the time, they're not going anywhere. Go take care of yourself. Get some good food, get you a good nap, and be ready to go tomorrow. Again, it's don't let your guard down, wear your mask. You guys already know. I mean, you can't relax right now. This is the most important time of the year. Our kids have worked hard all year to get to this point.

We don't need to relax and let our guard down. Wear your mask. Wash your hands. Keep good hygiene and just go get off your feet right now. Go watch the game, enjoy the rest of the day, get some rest. We've got to play in less than 23 hours.

Hey, fire up. It don't get no better. You get to play basketball tomorrow. Come on, you don't have to practice. No shootaround, are you kidding me? You just get to shoot 'em up, lace 'em up, and let's go play again. Life is good.

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