

Big 12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 12, 2021

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

West Virginia Mountaineers

Mike Carey

Postgame Press Conference



West Virginia - 58, Kansas State - 56

MIKE CAREY: I can't remember a game we shot as bad as we did today, but I can't remember a team I've had in a long time that had as much heart as this team. They don't quit.

We've got to come out and play better tomorrow, but we need to enjoy this one tonight. KK -- I thought Blessing did a good job. She was on the ball, which made them lob it a little more. She was able to get her hand on it, and it fell into KK's hand, and I kept yelling you've got time, you've got time, go, go, go. I was afraid she'd just pull up at half-court, but she had time to get to the rim, and she did.

There at the end, great job executing, but we didn't execute during the game. So we've got to do a better job tomorrow.

Q. Mike, I'm sure you would have liked to put pressure on them the whole game, but you've got to manage your roster. How difficult is that, and when do you make the decisions to go to it and when you've got to rest a little bit?

MIKE CAREY: Yeah, it's a shame because we wanted to press a lot, we really did, and we couldn't do it. We just don't have the numbers right now to do it. So we had to pick and choose. Naturally at the end there, we just had to sell out and go.

But the girls showed a lot of heart, played hard. We got that tip from behind. We got that steal and all that. We didn't rotate well in it, but we'll walk through that tomorrow. Yeah, a lot of heart, a lot of heart. Happy to get the win, but we've got to play better tomorrow.

Q. Coach, when your plays were selling out in the fourth quarter, and Kysre had that tip, like you said. Blessing had the integral tip in the last play, looking kind of like football players out there. Is that stuff you guys practice when you guys are selling out that full

court press, tipping those passes and everything like that?

MIKE CAREY: I'd like to say we do, but we definitely, when we're trapping that, we want to rotate to the ball, take the girl out of bounds, take her away, and everybody get to the ball. We didn't do a good job of that.

We put Blessing in on that last -- they had like five seconds. We put Blessing because just to get height on the person taking it out of bounds, and it did affect her. Blessing did a good job, got her hand on it and wrist, and we went down and scored.

Q. Leading up to the last minute of the game really, KK's got four points, and obviously not having one of her better games, but in that last minute -- I guess this is kind of how funny the game can be sometimes. She got a reverse lay-up, She created a turnover on the press, on the tie-up, and then gets an offensive rebound and hits a three out of that, and then obviously the last play. What was it about -- have you ever seen a player kind of just step up like that in the last minute before?

MIKE CAREY: Yeah, I'll tell you, I thought, man, when she hit that three, I felt good, and we stayed in that press, and we felt -- and we got the ball tied up a couple times, or once, and it was their ball, and they took a time-out and took it to the half. Then I stayed in that trap right there, even at the half-court there and just tried to get pressure on them.

Yeah, KK, she plays hard. She plays hard. I thought Kysre, all of them did. Kari played a lot of minutes. I thought Kari did a great job on their post. We just didn't hit shots, man. I'd say we had 10, 12 shots inside the foul line with nobody on us, and we just didn't hit them. The other thing we didn't do is we didn't move the ball. We didn't reverse the ball, move the ball. We got a little bit selfish. We come out and got that big lead, then we started leaking out, and then we quit rebounding, and that type of stuff.

Give Kansas State a lot of credit. They played hard. They played hard and had the game right there, and we were

able to make some plays at the end where they weren't.

Q. Mike, look up at halftime, and you guys are being outrebounded by 15. I know that was a big talking point for you after the Baylor game, but you were actually plus seven in that second half. What was said that? How did you kind of clean that up, and how important was that to kind of get them off the offensive glass in the second half?

MIKE CAREY: I can't tell you what I said, but you're right, I addressed that rebounding at halftime. I addressed a lot of stuff at halftime. We're a lot better than what we played. It's just a matter of stepping back and rebounding.

Some of us was trying to leak out. We can't win that way if you keep leaking out. We can't put all the pressure on Kari and Esmerly and Blessing to do every rebound. We did address that a lot at halftime, and we tried to get Esmerly going because she didn't even score -- she didn't have a point at halftime. So we tried to get her -- our first step was for Esmerly, she hit a two, and I thought we could get her going a little bit. She still played hard. Even though she wasn't scoring, she continued to play hard.

Q. It seems this game was a pace game. When they could slow it down, pound the ball inside, they were better. When you could speed it up, get it in transition, you were better. When they're controlling the pace like that a little bit with your limit of numbers, what can you do to try to bring it up other than pressing? Is there anything else?

MIKE CAREY: Yeah, I tried to get our players to get up to the line. The big girl only had 11 points and got some of them at the end because we weren't letting them receive the ball on the wing to make that pass to her. Then we kind of got tired, and we started letting them make that pass. When we got up the lanes and made them back door, we were able to get some turnovers.

I'll just say we've got to play a lot better tomorrow, man. We've got to play a lot better tomorrow, and I know we will. We're going to execute better. We're looking right now as a team go over there and eat and watch the game, and we'll find out who we play.

Q. Coach, Kysre was saying that KK said in the time-out before, when we get the ball back, as if she already knew you guys were going to get the ball back, and had this game-winning situation played out in her head. What gives them that belief that you can climb back from massive deficits and have results like this?

MIKE CAREY: Because they don't quit. They just don't

quit. I don't even have to pump them up when they come over like that and the game's close. They're talking and focused and all that. I had to pump them up during the game and at halftime, but, man, when that game's close, they have a lot of heart, and they know what they're doing. We practice it before, what we got to do on the presses, get up the lane.

You know, we knew they were going to lob. With five seconds, what are they going to run? They're going to lob. So we played the lob and was able to get the tip and get the layup.

Q. Coach, kind of took what I was going for there. As that play is starting to line up, and Ebert's -- the players are positioning themselves, do you see anything there that, hey, we might be able to get something out of this?

MIKE CAREY: Well, we told the guards to switch, but we didn't want Kari to switch. We wanted Kari to get through. We wanted Blessing on the ball and make it a lob, where it wasn't comfortable. Then Blessing stepped back -- was on the ball, stepped back, got it tipped with her hand.

Yeah, there was no doubt in my mind what they were going to run. Now, they could have ran something else, but we played the lob is what we played that last play.

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