

Big 12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 12, 2021

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

Oklahoma State Cowgirls

Jim Littell

Ja'Mee Asberry

Postgame Press Conference



Oklahoma State - 89, Oklahoma - 80

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement from coach.

JIM LITTELL: Very proud of our kids. I didn't think we played -- we played really bad in the first half, to be honest. But I think that was attributed a little bit to 16 days off. But we have got a lot of high-character kids, including the young lady to my right, and that's why you keep playing and you never quit no matter how bad it looks, just tremendous effort. We had five people in double figures from, halfway through the fourth we made some adjustments defensively and did a better job of getting in gaps. The five kids in double figures, Taylen Collins, Lo, Mack had 20 and 16 and Ja'Mee had two at halftime and finished with 28. That was an unbelievable performance in the second half.

But believe in these kids. There was no quit to them. Everybody stayed positive. We know what we're capable of and that was one heck of a comeback and a big win for our program.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions.

Q. Going to OT and you haven't really played very many close games really all year. This one was just so competitive throughout and back and forth. First off, kind of big picture, did this game feel different, like what did it feel like, to just be knotted in such a close game for so long?

JIM LITTELL: Well, I was concerned about that because our margin in the wins is pretty high and I'm trying to think when we did have a close one. I think we had one at Iowa State and we had a close one the first game of the year against West Virginia and a relatively close one at West Virginia, but we hadn't had one in a while.

And credit OU. They got better from the time that they played us at their place. And they got a lot of continuity going with playing six kids, they learned each other, they make nice cuts, they make nice adjustments, and they're hard to guard for us because they play five guards. But our kids hung in there and didn't get down and this is a big lesson for not only us, but just the way you approach things in life, that you never give up and you keep grinding and staying after it. I think our shape really benefited us in the second half and especially in the overtime and we kept pushing the ball and making good decisions. And we went with the lineup that we had, we had three bigs in there at once. Kassidy was unbelievable tonight. Every phase of the game she was really, really good.

Q. What do you think was the turning point of today's game?

JA'MEE ASBERRY: Well, we had to get our second wind. We hadn't played in two weeks and I think that played a factor because everyone else has been playing.

Q. Ja'Mee, it's no secret that you've been shooting kind of the living daylights out of the ball this whole season. But in the first half that was certainly really not the case at all. Was it hard to see so many shots just keep lipping out and spinning out and keep fighting and not lose your focus or determination?

JA'MEE ASBERRY: Yeah, I just knew that I just had to get my legs up under me more and not to get down on myself. The old me would have and I have a different mindset this year.

Q. Curious, I saw one point in the game, it was over on my end of the court, it was in the first half and I don't think you had made a bucket yet and you went to the free-throw line and didn't make either free throw and you looked real frustrated, but I feel like after that point you started playing a lot better. Do you remember that moment? Do you remember what you were thinking kind of then?

JA'MEE ASBERRY: Yeah, once I hit that first shot in the

first half I went in the locker room and said, I just needed to see one go in and then they all went in from there.

Q. What was it like getting lifted up on the shoulders of all your teammates after the game? What was that moment like for you?

JAM'EE ASBERRY: I was scared because I'm afraid of heights, so I was scared. I thought they were going to drop me.

Q. Either one of you, what kind of effect did it have on the whole team for the Big-12's leading three-point shooter in you, Ja'Mee, to have such a rough first half?

JAM'EE ASBERRY: They just kept telling me to keep my head up and keep shooting it. That played a part. When other people are telling you to keep going and keep doing what you do that really lends a helping hand for sure.

JIM LITTELL: She knows that her coaches believe in her and her teammates believe in her and shooters keep shooting. You just keep shooting. We knew that she would come out of it eventually on it, but she just kept playing. All of our group kept playing.

Q. I know you said that first bucket was the big one that you just needed to see one go in. But there were also two times where one was midway through the third quarter and the second time was with around two minutes to play, where you hit kind of back-to-back threes. How big were those two moments in kind of resurrecting the whole belief of this team and like changing this game around?

JAM'EE ASBERRY: I would say after that my confidence shot up. It was really over with from there.

Q. So then the last play of regulation, I know that three looked in, it was back rim, I'm sure it kind of had to feel in, were you surprised that didn't go down?

JAM'EE ASBERRY: Yeah, I was. Actually.

Q. So to have, like you said your confidence was way up here, so there was no, like you were going to shoot that last shot, you were going to, that was not even, yeah, yeah?

JIM LITTELL: It was designed for her to shoot it and she had a good look and she made a good attempt at it, it didn't go in, and then you just come back and you play the overtime.

Q. It's not overly common to play the same opponent

like OU three times in a season, but to go 3-0 in that matchup, what does that mean for this program?

JIM LITTELL: Well, it means a lot because we have always stressed that Bedlam is a different game, it means more, embrace the rivalry and understand where you're from. We got a lot of Oklahoma kids. We start quite a few Oklahoma kids and it means a lot to us. I think they said this is the first time since 1990 that we won three games. It means a lot.

We have got a quick turnaround now and play a very good West Virginia team that came back from being down and out. They were the same type of game, I think they were down seven with about a minute to go and ended up winning the game at the buzzer. So it's going to be a challenge with two tough-minded teams tomorrow and we'll have to play well.

Q. I've heard the phrase it's hard to beat the same team three times. Is there something specific about the third time you play a team and you have to beat them a third time that kind of stands out to you?

JIM LITTELL: Well, I absolutely hate that statement because I think if you're good enough to beat them twice, you're good enough to beat them a third time. But the team that loses can make a lot of adjustments and do some different things. Last time we played them at home we didn't do much wrong. We were really, really good and shot it really good. So, I knew we were in for a battle today. The way they've played since they left our place, they have been on a roll and they have been playing really good. So I knew we had a battle on our hands.

Q. In the first half Taylor and Gabby both were able to make a lot of 3-point shots and then obviously you all were able to keep the ball away from them a lot more in the second half. What do you think was just the biggest adjustment and what did you tell the team as far as guarding them for the second half?

JIM LITTELL: Well, Robertson is such a good shooter. She's one of the best shooters in the conference and the country and she is really crafty about playing peekaboo behind some screens. So we lost her at times. And Madi Williams was a handful for us. We did a better job of getting off in gaps and bringing help in the last four minutes of regulation and in the overtime. I probably waited too long to do that, because we needed to make somebody else beat us.

But they're a handful to guard. They got five guards and they play a unique style and it takes Mack out away from the hole a little bit. And so give them credit on that, but our

kids hung in there and we really guarded well in the overtime.

Q. I heard you on the TV saying that part of your mindset for that second half was thinking how Cade Cunningham starts out a little slower in the first half and then comes back in the second half. But I want Cade to be able to take some inspiration from you too. So what was just -- what mentality do you think was the biggest thing that you think you learned that you can kind of take into the West Virginia game and the rest of the tournament?

JA'MEE ASBERRY: One thing I would say is make sure that I get enough rest tonight. I would say that's the only thing. I was just a little winded this game and everything else was fine, as long as I go get some rest it should be fine.

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