

Big 12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Saturday, March 13, 2021

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

Baylor Lady Bears

Kim Mulkey

Moon Ursin

Postgame Press Conference



Baylor - 66, Texas - 55

Q. Kim, 28 -- you were dominant on the offensive boards, 28 second-chance points. How big was that for you guys?

KIM MULKEY: How about Queen Egbo with 18 rebounds? Good golly Molly. Not even to mention the double double that she and NaLyssa both had. Rebound and defend, rebound and defend will win you a lot of basketball games. Then when you can add into the mix give us another shot at it by getting offensive boards, you've got a chance to win a lot of basketball games.

I thought that it was -- you know, what you expect. That's what you expect when you play a Vic Schaefer coached team is physical in passing lanes, you know, make it hard to execute on the offensive end, and there were some spurts there where we did not execute very good. I give credit to their defense.

But I thought we were much better down the stretch than we were the last time we played them. I thought that they cut the lead, but yet we did enough things to execute to just hang in there and keep it far enough away from them to think they had a shot to win.

Q. Yeah, Kim, you mentioned that they went on a 9-0 run, got within five, and you all answered. How big was that just to kind of get separation again?

KIM MULKEY: Well, it is big. They're well coached. They're not ever going to quit playing, and we know that. I just thought that we executed some stuff -- even on inbounds plays, we executed some stuff.

Good teams are not going to let you score on your first and second options. You're going to have to handle ball pressure. You're going to have to reverse the ball, and

you're going to have to do those things. Then when we miss shots, when you're not very good on the offensive end and you have people like Queen and NaLyssa just going in there and getting offensive rebounds, it gives you a little bit of spark. Hey, we've got another shot at it.

Q. Moon was very active today, a lot of rebounds and a lot of points. Can you just talk about her game?

KIM MULKEY: Well, Moon's done that all year, John. What a tremendous senior year she has had. The way I like to describe Moon, you all know that she's just worked her way up, worked her way up, worked her way up, but prior to the season starting, you hear talk about a lot of kids who you expect to be the better players in the league, and some of those kids, they just don't have good years. I could name a few, but I choose not to.

Then you have those players who nobody talks about because they don't really know much about them yet. That's Moon Ursin. Moon Ursin has had an unbelievable year. She's been rewarded for it. She was All Conference. Not only that, she was on the All-Defensive Team. What more can I say about her? She's a joy to coach.

Good things happen to kids who do things the right way, and sometimes the outside noises and people don't encourage them. They tell them to transfer. They tell them, you know, what are you waiting for? You're better than that one on the floor. Moon never buys into that. She's at practice every day. She's smart enough to evaluate things.

Is it tough? Oh, yeah, it's tough, but look at what she's doing now and look at what she's done for our basketball team.

Q. Moon, can I ask you about your game? What were you seeing out there? Were you getting a lot of open looks?

MOON URSIN: I was. And today I was just knocking down shots, but credit the post. On plays we were drawing up, they were setting phenomenal screens, and our guards just making a pass in a timely manner. I was just confident tonight. After I saw two or three fall, I just kept shooting it.

It makes it okay to shoot when you've got offensive rebounders in there. So that's what I just did tonight. I was just confident in my shot. I've been off a couple games, but I hope to get back on the right road.

Q. Coach, in the three games you guys have played Texas, Charli Collier has only had 17 total points. What does that say about the pressure your defense has put on her?

KIM MULKEY: Well, you compliment our post players first. You look at NaLyssa, and you look at Queen, who played the majority of the minutes today, and you compliment them and the job that they did. Foul trouble certainly dictates some of it, as far as Charli's production is concerned, but she wasn't in foul trouble after the first half.

So I compliment our post players. I compliment them on rebounding, which I just told you, but I also compliment them on listening to scouting reports and accepting a challenge to play a good post player like Charli Collier.

Q. And just one more question. Yesterday you said you guys need to work on not turning over the ball. Today the first half you had 10 turnovers, you finished with 16. How important is that to stop going into the NCAA Tournament?

KIM MULKEY: Well, I need to go look how many of those turnovers were offensive fouls or flops or whatever you want to call them. They count those as turnovers. So when you play a team like a Texas, I bet you there are four or five of those that contributed to the 16. So I need to be really careful.

But I didn't think we turned the ball over just terribly, especially in the second half we didn't. So a lot of those were flops. We did have some turnovers on walking. We had some turnovers on passing and them getting out in passing lanes, but for the most part, I thought we took care of the ball decent today.

Q. Kim, over this game, I was just looking, NaLyssa played all 40 minutes, DiDi played 39, Queen played 38. In a tournament like this where you're playing so many games in so many days, I know that you've talked a lot about the bench and trying to get them action. What was the thought process today to let those girls play as much as they did?

KIM MULKEY: Trying to win. Did you think we had a big enough lead to play all 12 players?

Q. No, I was just wondering how you --

KIM MULKEY: I'm asking you. You watched the game. Did we ever have a big enough lead where I could play all 12 players?

Q. I wouldn't say so.

KIM MULKEY: I didn't think we did either. We played, what, seven or eight kids, and if you look at the history of tight games with me, if I go eight, that's about it for me. You bet, when there's an opportunity and we feel like everybody can play, it certainly helps to rest kids.

Now, we wanted to play for a championship. You're looking on the men's side. You're looking on the women's side. There's a lot of people who won their conferences who aren't playing for the tourney championship. I've told you, I'm not a big proponent or a person who thinks you should even be playing tourney championships if you're the conference champion.

But we are made to do it, and like I said earlier, we're coming to play. If we're going to play, we're going to play to win. Tomorrow we play for the championship. If the opportunity presents itself where I can play everybody, I will do that because a lot of those sitting over there by me are the future of this program. A lot of them were Moon Ursin the last two or three years, and they need those minutes.

But I have to also do my job and have the people on the floor that can help us win, and you knew Texas -- well, they only played six or seven players. So they weren't going to substitute, so I've got to be very careful on doing that.

Now, if tomorrow they all have to play that much, they have to play it, but we've got a week's time after tomorrow to rest. Appreciate the question. I'm just playing to win, buddy.

Q. Moon, I know ESPN asked you about this in the post-game, but can you expand on playing for last year's seniors, like L.C., Juicy, Te'a, who didn't get to finish their season going to the Big 12 Tournament? Just expand on that.

MOON URSIN: Well, I can't imagine how they feel. It's hard to say, but playing for them, just us having this opportunity this year with everything that has happened, we're just grateful for that. So we're just trying to leave it all out on the court and do what they didn't even have a chance to do. They deserved to continue to go on and get us another championship. They worked hard.

It was definitely a heart breaker for them more than

anybody, just because it was unfair. Now here we are sitting again with another opportunity again to get another year. That's something they also didn't get. So just things like that, you hurt for those kids. I'm just glad we're here in this conference, in this tournament to do what they couldn't do.

Q. And a quick follow-up for you, Coach. Obviously, the same thing, you all didn't -- you didn't get to see your seniors last year ride out, obviously, how they wanted to, with COVID. So everything that this year has obviously presented, the challenges, what's it like for you to see your team this year get to that level for the championship?

KIM MULKEY: I'll be honest with you. I was depressed for six months about what was taken away, not just for those seniors, but for those seniors mostly, but for our team. In your coaching career, there's a short window on how much money you can make financially, and there's a short window on how many opportunities you're going to have to win a National Championship.

Those four -- four of them. DeGrate's the fourth one. Four kids crying their eyes out, and you can't do one thing to help them stop crying. They wanted their year back. You've got kids leaving early that don't want to go back to their teams. Those were first round draft pick and second and third round. They wanted to stay in college, and we couldn't get it done to where they could stay.

Just as Moon said, now before the season even starts, we're giving kids a year back. So I can't for six months wrap my head around that because we pushed them away, and yet those are the kind that do want to stay in college. You want them to do that.

So it took me a long time to get over it, and I think another reason I didn't get over it is I didn't have my team all summer. I communicated with them through Zoom, like I'm doing with you all, through text messaging, and then you had the race issues come up. It's been a down time for me, and to get them back and to go out here every day and just to be around them, they brought me out of that funk I was in because this is what they do, this is what we do. This is all we know are to compete and play ball every day.

There's not a win from this time forward, starting with yesterday's game, that we don't talk about those four seniors and what they mean, and these games are for those four seniors, and I even texted all four of them and told them that.

Q. My question was for Moon. Texas made good runs in the second quarter to cut the lead to one, and then

again in the fourth quarter down the stretch to cut it to five. Each time you guys responded well. What did you guys do specifically to try to thwart that comeback attempt by the Longhorns? Because they did make runs at you guys.

MOON URSIN: First, we trusted each other. We just kept our cool, went out there, patted each other on the back. Look, I'm here to help you. You're here to help me. Let's just keep going. We stayed with our principles. We kept defending. We got in there and boxed out and rebounded the ball. We started hitting shots late in the fourth.

I just think, again, knowing who's on the floor with you makes a difference. Like I said, taking shots, you've got Queen and NaLyssa in there who's going to give you another chance eight times out of 10. So just things like that and just understanding the type of team that we have. We're not going to go down easy. So just proud of them, just proud of them.

Q. Moon, if you could, could you expand upon what it's like to play with Queen and NaLyssa down low and kind of the opportunities that they help open up for you.

MOON URSIN: They make it easy for sure. It's just so fun playing with them, the energy that they give off, the hype that they give off. Yeah, they create open shots for me because, obviously, people got to worry about them. Nobody can guard them one-on-one, in my opinion, even though it seems sometimes.

When other players are so focused on the post players, it just gives us guards an opportunity to step in mid-range and open up the three-point for us, and we just got to hit shots. But playing with them, they make it real easy and make it real fun. I'm ready for this championship game.

Q. Moon, talk about your mentality on the boards because, as you mentioned in the post-game interview, you're usually one of the, if not the smallest player out there. You wound up with eight boards today, four on the offensive end. I thought the one there late, where NaLyssa wound up scoring off of it, that was a big one. Just talk about your mentality going to the boards.

MOON URSIN: Somebody got to get it, why not me? Just go in there and just be in the right place at the right time, know where the ball is going to fall. Our posts do a good job of blocking out the big girls and occupying them, and I just slip in there and get the boards. It helps. Every rebound I grab helps.

Q. Coach, you mentioned, obviously, you're not a

huge fan of the conference tournament when you've won the regular season, but have you found some value in this experience that you can carry into San Antonio in a week?

KIM MULKEY: Well, every time you can play a game, there's value in it. Every time we practice, there's value in it. Sometimes our practices, I can't let our first group and our young group go head to head. It becomes really, really scary intense. So there's value every time you toss a ball up.

My concern -- and, again, there's a place for conference tournaments, probably more so on the men's side, where you see the Cinderellas, than you do on the women's side. There's a place for that. I just wish that those that win the conference regular season could have the opportunity to opt out of it and not be hurt with seedings in the NCAA Tournament.

Why is that? I think it -- I just think a regular season should be valued more than a three-day little tournament. We have to give out our own T-shirts and hats when we win the regular season. We come here, and I guess it's because of television, I don't really know, but the conference presents the trophy and the hats and we cut down the net. You know, it just seems backwards to me, and I've always felt that way, even when I was a player.

Q. On that same note of the extra, maybe it is because of TV, but all the attention on conference championship weekend, watching what NaLyssa Smith has done the last two days, do you feel like she is turning even more heads, opening more eyes to her being a serious candidate for Player of the Year?

KIM MULKEY: Everybody's got an opinion. It's like belly buttons. Everybody's got one. If I pick up this publication, they've got this team ranked number 1 in the country. They got this player. NaLyssa Smith, if you follow women's basketball, you don't have to see her in this kind of tournament to know how good she is.

It's just -- you know, she's good. Unfortunately, television is kind of doesn't get to see us every day because we've now gone, what is it, to ESPN Plus, and half our fans, they don't even know how to hook it up. So bless their hearts, they don't get to see us, you know?

We, as a coaching staff, have gone to fans' homes and had them buy the stuff and try to show them how to watch it. They were so used to being able just to watch us every time they played, and now, bless their hearts, they don't get to do that because it's hard for older people to do that. So they're missing out. I'm more hurt for the true Lady

Bear fans that haven't had an opportunity because they don't know how to do all this Plus stuff than I am for the national media to see her.

If you follow women's basketball, everyone knows who NaLyssa Smith is. This tournament didn't do any more or any less. She's one of the best players in the country.

Q. Kim, Queen Egbo obviously has had moments where she's been really good, but I think she's had her career high for points and career high today for rebounds in the last week. What's happened with her that she's taken the next step that has also helped you so much?

KIM MULKEY: It just takes time for some players to grasp things, and I think, once you grasp it, you go, wow, what took me so long? Queen came here. She had Kalani in front of her. She had Cox in front of her. Now it's her time to shine, and it's her time to shine even when she's not playing good. She's still going to get the minutes, kind of like Moon.

You're still going to get the minutes. We're going to figure this out. We're going to make you better defensively. You're going to quit fouling out of games. You're going to start making your free throws, and you're going to be an offensive rebounding machine before you leave here. And she gets another year, so she's got all kinds of great things happening for her right now.

Q. Have you ever had a big inside develop towards the end of the year the way she has? Does she remind you of anybody?

KIM MULKEY: Gosh, I've been doing this 35 years. I'm sure, if I answer that, I'm going to forget somebody. I think of Sophia Young, and she didn't have anybody in front of her. Sophia Young's development from a young lady who nobody knew about in high school -- now, Queen was different. Everybody knew about her, but Sophia Young was a foreign exchange student that really took up the game of basketball late in life, and to watch her go from her freshman year to junior year to an All-American to winning National Championship, their body makeup and what they look like are very similar. Just outstanding athletes, leap out of the gym, run the floor.

I don't know if any of you all -- have you all seen Queen in pregame warmups of late, or do you all just turn this TV thing on when the game starts? Have you all seeing what she's doing in pregame warmups? Be honest.

No, we haven't, Coach.

She's dunking it with ease. She now in our pregame warmups, two line layups, she goes up and two hand dunks it. That in itself, little things like that, you all are missing out on. Our fans are missing out. Not many girls can do that.

Q. Coach, I was just curious, tomorrow you guys turn your attention to Oklahoma State or West Virginia. Through the couple games you've played them this year, what do they do well? What will you guys have to do well tomorrow to win the tournament?

KIM MULKEY: Well, you know, West Virginia going to play you physical. They're going to get in passing lanes. They're going to deny the post, similar to what Texas does. Oklahoma State defensively mixes it up a little bit more. They'll play you some zone. They'll play you some man. You know the player that they have in Natasha Mack at Oklahoma State. She was up for Player of the Year in this league. She got Defensive Player of the Year, leads the country in blocked shots.

Then back to West Virginia, you've got Kysre. Kysre is a tremendous scorer for them. She's having to play out of position right now until they get Madisen Smith back from injury. Two well-coached teams. Two teams that finished, what, tied for second in our league, right? So basically, what you're going to have tomorrow is a true indicator of the champion of the league and a second place finish in the league one way or the other.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports