

Big 12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Sunday, March 14, 2021

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

Baylor Lady Bears

Kim Mulkey

Queen Egbo

Postgame Press Conference



Baylor - 76, West Virginia - 50

Q. Kim, I guess, just first off, when NaLyssa got in foul trouble, you brought her to the bench. You all actually went on a run and outscored them, took a 10-point lead to the half. How big was it for the other players to pick up the slack, I guess?

KIM MULKEY: Honestly, you want all your players out there, and especially a starter and Player of the Year, but we have depth, Jerry, and I wasn't surprised we spread the lead.

Bickle's got enough experience and minutes. That's not a surprise. That just tells you that we're pretty good.

Q. Kim, you all finished again on a really good note. I know you pay attention to those last minutes. I think you all finished on a 12-0 run.

KIM MULKEY: Well, I was absolutely proud of Sarah and Hannah and J.O. It's hard coming in there late. No matter if you have a lead or not, you want to do good. They just had fresh legs and came in there and attacked in transition and finished shots.

Yes, that's how you want to finish a game.

Q. Queen, did this one mean a little bit more since you all are playing for last year's seniors too?

QUEEN EGBO: Yeah, last year we didn't even have a chance to get on a plane and fly out here. So this year I was definitely kind of more appreciative and knowing that I can't take these little moments for granted, and every time and every minute that I get on the floor, I have to make the most out of it.

So I feel like that's kind of what I did today.

Q. Kim, I wanted to ask you about, they only shot 27 percent. How good do you think your defense was today?

KIM MULKEY: John, I was just telling Queen, as we were sitting here looking at the stat sheet prior to talking to you guys, I looked at the number of field goals we scored and the number of field goals that they scored.

Listen, fatigue set in with both teams, and I'm not surprised because of the type of defense that both teams played the last two days and then today. It happens.

We just were able to weather the fatigue. Where it really showed up for us was in turnovers. You know, we got lazy with the ball. I thought for West Virginia, where the fatigue showed up was missed shots. They had some open looks and missed it.

We were trying to guard them, but they had some open looks that they normally make because they've got four scorers on that team that can score the basketball.

Q. Kim, you said that this feeling never gets old. What this year makes it so special compared to the other times that you've been able to do it?

KIM MULKEY: I can think of a couple of reasons. One, what makes it so special is what Queen just said. This is her time to shine. This is NaLyssa's time to shine. This is Moon's time to shine. Those who remain loyal to a program will reap the rewards. They've learned and battled to come and be the one in the spotlight.

And then secondly, I feel for those four seniors. Those four seniors didn't get to do this, and they would have had an opportunity to cut down another net, maybe a National Championship, because we felt like we had a team last year that could get to a Final Four in New Orleans. I just can't get those four seniors out of my mind when we're out there celebrating today.

Q. Queen, do you feel like you're kind of starting to peak and play your best ball just at the right time?

QUEEN EGBO: Yeah, definitely. I feel like this is when you want to start seeing results and seeing your hard work pay off, and I feel like this is what my team needs. They need this on a consistent basis. I feel like this is only going to make us better and make me better and make my teammates better when I'm playing well.

I feel like we're all starting to peak at the same time. NaLyssa's playing outstanding. Moon, DiJonai are playing outstanding. We have DiDi who can do it all. I just feel like we're all starting to come together as a team, and it's going well for us.

Q. Queen, yesterday Moon talked about, when she shoots the ball, she has a lot of confidence just because she knows, if it doesn't go in, she has you and NaLyssa right there. Just kind of reflect on that, how the presence of you two on the court just pick up the confidence of your teammates because they know you all will be there.

QUEEN EGBO: That's really nice of Moon to say. I work hard on being a really good rebounder, especially offensive rebounder. I feel like, when Moon shoots the ball, I kind of know it's going in, but the few times she does miss, it's like I have to position myself well to get an offensive rebound and possibly put it back in or kick it out and get another shot.

But having NaLyssa there also helps, because if I don't get it out, most likely she'll be there on the back side to get it too. I feel like it's a good duo. We're athletic. We can both jump really high. It's a mismatch, I feel like, when you have post players that can't really jump and then you have post players who can.

Q. A quick follow-up for you, Coach, just kind of that same factor with Queen and NaLyssa. What's that like knowing that you have those two physical, very aggressive rebounders on your team and they also have a leadership role as well?

KIM MULKEY: Well, they're not just rebounders. Their role on this team is score the basketball. They have to defend. Rebounding is probably what a lot of people think of tall girls, or tall women. We don't look at them for just rebounding. We depend on them to do a lot of things. They've got to help teammates defensively. They've got to go out some games and guard on the perimeter, and then they've got to turn around and go get the rebound, block shots.

This kid right here, she's unbelievable here. She's broken records since she's been here, not just rebounding, but just

in blocking shots. I don't know what game, Queen. What game was it? Was it the West Virginia back home? I don't know. She blocks a shot on this side of the rim and turns around and rebounds the ball on the other side of the rim.

That's just athleticism. That's just a want to, a will to go do that. In one possession, she did two great things.

Q. Coach, you've won a lot of these, but obviously every team has a little bit different kind of feel to it, so what do you see as some of the defining characteristics of this year's team?

KIM MULKEY: Finding their own identity, change of position, change in roles. You can't just go out there because you've been in the program a year or two and expect, Bam, we just pick up where we left off. Their roles have changed. Some have even changed positions, and that takes time to master, and not only to master, but to play together, to be on the same page.

Where does Queen need the ball? Where does NaLyssa need the ball? How are we going to defend this? It just takes playing together and experience.

Q. Coach, you have a week now before you play in the big tournament. What are some -- what's the focus this week? What are some things you're going to have to fine tune and work on if you're going to make that run to the Final Four?

KIM MULKEY: Well, we're tired right now. First thing we need to do is rest. We'll go back tomorrow, and they'll have the selection show on TV at six minutes, and we'll have our little gathering in the Stone Room. Of course the fans won't be there, but we'll have media obligations tomorrow. We'll have COVID testing tomorrow.

Then I'm sure we have to leave Tuesday sometime and go be in a bubble for a week before we even play. Do you understand how hard that's going to be? We're going to try to do everything we can to stay safe and healthy and give ourselves an opportunity to make a run here in the NCAA Tournament.

This will be like nothing I've ever experienced. We were here four days in a bubble, and I'm about to pull my hair out. So being in a bubble for a week, it's going to be tough. Then if you keep winning, you're going to just extend that bubble. It's -- I don't know, but we'll do the best we can. Guess I'd better go buy some books to read.

Q. Kim, is the way Queen's playing a Final Four type level now for you guys as a team? Not that you might not have made it without that, but the way she's raised

her game, is it now at that level?

KIM MULKEY: Yes, and I told her that as well. Queen Egbo now has her own identity. She is not living in somebody's shadow. She's not trying to do what previous players have done, and when you find what that is, your niche, then do it to the best of your abilities, and she really is.

We knew it was in her. We just kept trying to get it out of her quicker than she could get it out, and now we're at the point where, when she doesn't do those things, we're frustrated at her because we now expect it every game.

Q. Queen, what's it like to know that everyone recognizes what you've done in recent weeks?

QUEEN EGBO: It's really good to know that I'm starting to get a little bit of recognition, but at the end of the day, I know my job isn't done. I know my team still has a long way to go. We still have a lot more to do. It's nice, but this is not what I came here for. I came here to win, to be a part of something bigger and better.

I feel like my team is very capable of getting to the Final Four and eventually cutting down those nets in San Antonio, but we're just taking things day by day.

I try not to look too far into the future. I try to just take things, like I said, day-by-day and focus on the present and what I have to do today and tomorrow to help my team.

Q. Coach, it was a really tough, physical game to win the title. DiJonai got hit, lost some contacts; NaLyssa got hit and she had to change her jersey because of the blood. I was wondering if you could shed some light on what exactly happened in those plays and just the will to win that your team exhibited throughout the course of this season and this game to win the title.

KIM MULKEY: I thought all three games here in Kansas City were physical. I mean, they were. We play physical, and all three games were physical. I'm not sure -- Queen was on the floor. What happened to NaLyssa? She could probably tell you better than I could.

I didn't know anything about DiJonai until after we got to the locker room, and my understanding on DiJonai is the girl's -- the opponent's hair hit her across the contacts, and it literally cut her contacts into pieces, the hair flopping across the eye. So that's what happened to DiJonai.

QUEEN EGBO: NaLyssa, they kind of hit her in her mouth and she bit her lip.

Q. Got it. Queen, I'll follow up with you, but it looks like there's a ton of charges on both sides, people giving up their bodies. Just being in that game, what -- can you describe the toughness that it took to just continue to persevere, the whole tournament but today specifically, to ultimately win the game and stick with it?

QUEEN EGBO: It took a lot of toughness, but I feel like that's the least of my team's concerns. I feel like we're very physical and we handle aggressive plays and aggressive players really well. I feel like we have good leaders and people who can keep us calm and cool. I feel like, at the end of the day, that's what you need when things get tough and hard is to know we're all on the same page and not to get rattled and to not let that get to us.

Because, at the end of the day, the opponents see it, the fans see it, we see it, and we just need to stay under control, and I feel like we did a good job of that in the second half.

Q. Queen, Kim mentioned your blocking. You had -- like I think it was the third best Big 12 Tournament series ever with 14 blocks. Is that a timing thing? And maybe was that something that Lauren might have helped you with in terms of working with her the last couple years on the timing of those blocks?

QUEEN EGBO: Yeah, I definitely -- preseason and the start of Big 12 play, I was getting in a lot of foul trouble, so I would just be real cautious of why am I getting in foul trouble? What am I doing to give myself those nicknack calls?

I realized because I'm swiping down, and I realized L.C. never did that. She kept her hands up and moved her feet. She was able to block and alter a lot of shots, and even though I may not block everything that enters the lane, I know I'm altering shots, and that's what L.C. was really good at.

So I just keep little stuff like that in my head. But when I do have the opportunity to block a shot, that is something I try to do without fouling, of course, getting my body involved.

Looking up to the people I've played with, they definitely set the tone and expectations of what we do here.

Q. Kim, what is the difference between -- I mean, she was fouling out. She was getting a lot of fouls early in the year, and now she's blocking without fouls.

KIM MULKEY: Just experience. You know, she went through the frustration of, Coach, help me fix it, and there's

nothing I can just magically tell her, Hey, this is what you're doing wrong. It's just a flow. It's a feel. She even went through a phase where she just wasn't going to guard anybody. Now, I did tell her that wasn't going to fly. I let her know real quick, Oh, no, you're not going to come out here and not guard anybody for fear of fouling.

I think it just comes from experience, being on the floor, figuring it out.

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