

Big 12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 11, 2022

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

Baylor Lady Bears

Coach Nicki Collen

NaLyssa Smith

Queen Egbo

Postgame Press Conference



knowing that there is not that much pressure for you to make a big-time shot but for you to go up and finish strong under the rim.

NALYSSA SMITH: I would probably say -- I say it goes back to our defense, you know, that was our main focus coming into this game. We executed on defense which made their night a living hell. The harder we played defense the better this game is going to go.

Baylor - 76, Oklahoma State - 36

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by the Baylor Bears and we are joined by Coach Collen, student athletes Queen Egbo and NaLyssa Smith. Coach did you want to make an opening statement?

COACH COLLEN: Gosh, you give me an opening statement and I don't know what to say. I can do that. Just really proud of our focus. I think obviously the fact that the men got upset in the quarter finals that's like one of those things where your ears peak and it helps you dial in a little bit more. I just thought the fact that we played Oklahoma State a couple weeks ago and turned the basketball over a lot and had one of our poorer performances down the stretch but found a way to win, I think that motivated us to play well. I thought obviously we came out focused at the defensive end and that set the tone. When you get a 23-not point lead in a quarter it allows you to somewhat coast, to focus on actions, it allowed us to play a 2-3 zone which was a first for this season for us.

Just proud of these guys with the focus they came into the game with.

Q. This questions is for Queen and then NaLyssa. They missed their first 13 shots I think. Do you start to see a little bit of desperation in their eyes and does that kind of motivate you on defense as well?

QUEEN EGBO: I feel like they started throwing things up, praying for it to go in so just watching from the outside in knowing that we can't let those shots fall. We've got to continue to play discipline on defense because anything could be a fall anything could go in so just knowing that you have to be disciplined on defense allowed us to refocus and gave us confidence on the offensive end

Q. Nicki, I think Queen had three blocks on Oklahoma State's first possession and 4 in the first five minutes. How much defensively did she set the tone?

COACH COLLEN: I think playing against smaller post players it's easy to play behind and try to block as they go to shoot rather than going up but a lot of those were on guard drives where they rotated and we were beat along the baseline. When they don't feel like their leading scorer and someone that can get hot and start cooking when she can't get the ball above the rim certainly that set the tone that we were going to rim protect all night. That was great. It was important for us to prove that we were going to protect the rim all night.

Q. NaLyssa, had you been thinking about a dunk throughout that game?

COACH COLLEN: Forgot about that.

Q. Yeah.

NALYSSA SMITH: I dunked in warm-ups so I was feeling it. I was like, all right, if I can do it in warm-ups, I can do it in a game but usually I take off from the left-hand side. I'm going to try again, why not?

Q. Nicki what was your reaction?

COACH COLLEN: Clearly I missed the dunk in warm-ups, because I wasn't sure. Look, I was just happy -- I thought it was such a good steal. That was the part to me. I turned around and kind of wasn't sure. I don't think she got her steps right to get that one, though. If she is going to try it, I think a 30-point cushion I'm okay with.

Q. NaLyssa, and maybe Coach if you can answer, too. You talked about making it a living hell for them and I don't know if you've pitched a shut-out in a quarter but you did that this time. Was that quarter as intense and good a defense as you have played all season and Nicki do you think that as well?

NALYSSA SMITH: I would probably say -- I would probably say yeah that was our best defensive quarter that we have played. Like I said coming into this game our main focus was playing defense. To pitch a shutout is just insane. I seen they said nobody has ever did that at Baylor so I'm glad to be part of that history.

COACH COLLEN: Yeah, I thought that honestly, I would say from a single game perspective or a match-up perspective, that's the best of defense I have seen Jordan Lewis play maybe in her career and I watched her a lot at Alabama, of course they played a lot of zone there. We just didn't get screened. She started a lot of stagger screens and finished with ball screens. We did a good job of getting around the staggers, and we had good support on our ball screens from these guys, I thought we were dialed in. I think teams are surprised we know every play they're going to call and we're telling them, especially when they're in front of us what's coming. So when we know we have to get through a stagger screen and we're not surprised, that helps. We're very, very scout heavy. Certainly we have great players and individual defenders but we are dialed into what teams do and really trying to give these guys, like, the ultimate cheat code, the secret sauce. Like take this away and then it comes down to, are they going to make a play when the shot clock is running down, when their action hasn't worked, when their play hasn't worked? Are they going to make a play?

Q. I was just wondering how special was it to put some of your other players into the game and give NaLyssa and Queen minutes off?

COACH COLLEN: I don't think NaLyssa wants to come out of the game no matter the score but I know Queen was under the weather tonight, too. I think that it is important in these scenarios are in these three games, the goal is to play three games in three days. Anywhere we can steal minutes. Kendra gave us good, early minutes in two-minute spurts and things like that and played confidently. Certainly when you're playing with a lead that makes it easier to go to your bench a little bit earlier. Then work on some different combinations. We have played Caitlin plenty of minutes now at the three but our package changes a little bit when we go to certain line-ups, and Jaden hasn't played a ton of point so we tried to keep things simple in that fourth quarter.

Q. Coach was saying your enthusiasm peaked when the men lost, was that more of a weight?

NALYSSA SMITH: It was more like, anything could happen. You know you have to go into every game thinking like this opponent can beat us. You can't just come into a game knowing that you beat them two times and slack off that one night they're going to get you so it was more of keeping our focus and making sure we execute ask do everything right.

QUEEN EGBO: It was a wake-up call. Our men have done so well this season so to see them loose it was like all right, we know we need to play well, we can't slack off tomorrow.

Q. NaLyssa, Queen, you guys get another shot at Oklahoma. How does that feel?

NALYSSA SMITH: I feel like it's a time of redemption, an opportunity to redeem the two losses where they got us at home and at their place.

QUEEN EGBO: For sure, I'm ready. I bet this team is ready. Nobody likes losing so we're going to go into this game and we all watch a lot of film, for sure.

NALYSSA SMITH: A lot. (Laughter.)

QUEEN EGBO: Anytime you lose, you watch that film, you see it over and over, and going into this game we will have energy and momentum, hopefully get a win.

Q. NaLyssa, receiving your second Big XII Player of the Year award. What does it mean to repeat?

NALYSSA SMITH: It feels great. Just knowing that I have that consistency and playing well, that's my main focus. Smart accolades. I always cherish them, you know. I appreciate it.

THE MODERATOR: Okay, ladies, congratulations on the win. We will see you tomorrow.

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