

Big 12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 11, 2022

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

Texas Longhorns

Vic Schaefer

Lauren Ebo

Aliyah Matharu

Postgame Press Conference



second half off the same set that Audrey and Lauren were working. Just did a nice job of executing some good stuff.

Again, not our best night, but, again, not my kids' fault. I felt like I could have done better helping them get home with some execution down the stretch. Proud of them, proud of their fight.

Again, this is all about winning and advancing. Now we have to get ready to play the home team, Iowa State, tomorrow night, or tomorrow afternoon.

And one thing about my team this year that's been really consistent is that when we have been on the road, they've been locked in. They have really had good focus.

There is no reason to think we won't be otherwise tomorrow. We're playing an outstanding team, obviously, well coached. Again, another team with another All-American and three First Team All Big XII players.

So we're excited about the opportunity, and I'm really proud of my team.

Q. One question for Lauren and then one for Vic. Talk about your match-up tonight with Ayoka Lee, winning that match-up, and how determined you were. And for Vic, just how well Lauren has played here down the stretch this season.

LAUREN EBO: I think obviously she's a really good post player. Anytime I have that match-up I want to do the best I can to help my team win. I think the guards' pressure really helped a lot.

Then just attacking her on offense, and obviously like Audrey getting me the ball, putting me in positions where I was able to attack and finish.

On the defensive end I want to do whatever I can to help the team win, and I think that's what happened.

VIC SCHAEFER: Obviously we won nine in a row, and probably one of the biggest, if not the biggest, impacts to -- in that stretch has been Lauren.

Kansas State 65, Texas 72

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by the Texas Longhorns who were victorious this evening. Coach Vic Schaefer and his two student-athletes, Aliyah Matharu and Lauren Ebo.

Would you like to make a comment?

VIC SCHAEFER: I appreciate everybody being here. Heck of a game. Just want to congratulate Jeff and his team. He's such a tremendous coach and a good friend. He does a great job with those kids.

We have had three knock-down, drag-outs with them this year. We have a lot of respect for them. We knew it was going to be hard, you know, and it was all that and then some.

I'm proud of my kids. It been a while. We had a little rusty I thought. I'm proud of how hard we fought.

It got a little tough in the third quarter and we showed a little toughness, showed some resilience. I think we finished on a 10-0 run to get it back from 4 to 14.

Again, just really did some good things offensively. We found a little spot that we wanted to attack, and Audrey and Lauren were doing a good job of playing a two game in real tight quarters.

I'm proud of our kids. Obviously Aliyah came in and gave us a big jolt in the first half, made some big shots, and it always makes things better when we can get her a couple of nice looks.

She buried one down there in front of our bench in the

She is probably the most improved player on my team. Especially in the last month and a half. She has really, I think, come into her own and developed. She has been accountable. She is somebody I can rely on and we can count on. She handles her business. We don't have to bring double teams for her.

Look, she has had to guard some really good inside players this year and we don't have to help her very much. I think offensively when you look at her percentages, I've told you, you have conference stats -- you have season stats, conference stats, and I'm always looking at the last five.

But even if you look in these last nine, Lauren has a big difference in field goal percentage. It's just been -- I think she has impacted our team in such a positive way, in more than just the stats.

She has been great in practice. She has brought it every day. Her attitude has been great. Work ethic is off the chart, and I think you're seeing the fruits of her labor come to fruition. Again, she has really impacted our team and had a big role in this, what is it, nine in a row.

Q. Congrats on the win. For both players. We can start with Lauren and then Aliyah. Coach talked about the stretch in the third quarter. At one point I could see he screamed at you guys, "you've got to play harder." Was that a moment that clicked and allowed you guys to go on the 10-0 run and separate yourselves from Kansas State?

LAUREN EBO: I think ultimately obviously the coaches on the sideline kind of push us, but from within we just have to stay together. I think that's what we did. We put our heads down, we got this, let's stay together and stay positive.

I think that's what really pulled us together and got us to get that lead back.

ALIYAH MATHARU: For the first time I can actually say that I didn't hear him scream that! (Laughter.) We understand as a team the amount of effort that you have to give day in and day out.

Sometimes you have bad days. You don't always give 1000% or always give 100. It's imperative that you keep trying. I feel like that's what we did.

Even though I got backdoored, we kept trying as a team and found ways to get around it. That was the most important thing. We stayed together per usual.

Q. Vic, thoughts on her maybe not hearing you that one time?

VIC SCHAEFER: It would be the one time -- the first time!

No, you know, again, I've told these kids, just give me what your best is that day. It's not always going to be 100%, but whatever your best is, give me your best.

That's all I ever want. When the game is over, if we've done all we can do, I'm good with that. At that moment I think we were giving up some easy stuff, and we just had to kinda stop that a little bit.

They were all responsible. We were all involved. It wasn't just the guards getting backdoored. Lauren was letting 50 catch it a little bit and they were spreading us out. We all had to kind of make adjustments, and they did. I'm really proud of them for doing that.

It's a 10-0 run, so obviously they're not scoring and we're coming down and getting some really good stuff offensively.

Again, proud of our execution during that stretch, and, again, just finding a way to get stops and making an adjustment.

Again, these two are veterans. They gotta be -- they know they gotta be better. I've had that conversation with Audrey, Jo, Lauren. They have to be consistent. Like they can't play bad and us win.

So they wear that a little bit. I want them to.

Q. Lauren, growing up do you and Aliyah know each other? Also, as two kids from D.C., you have teammates who grew up dreaming of being Longhorns. Was Texas on your radar? Did you ever think you would be in this position?

ALIYAH MATHARU: No.

LAUREN EBO: We knew of each other. We played in the same conference for two years and AAU. We knew the same people, but not directly each other. But I was never -- it was so far away from D.C., and I'm glad I'm in this position.

Obviously I love the team and I love my coaches, so I'm happy to be here and linked up with Aliyah.

ALIYAH MATHARU: Lauren went to the opposing high school. We were rivals. I just transferred into the conference and they literally beat us so bad it was

embarrassing.

We have always known of each other, but like she played on the EYBO circuit; I didn't play on the circuit.

And, no, I didn't think I was going to come to Texas, not because it's far. I guess I wasn't looking at the conference. I love it. I'm happy. We're winning. What's better than that?

Q. Aliyah, specifically end of the third quarter you guys get the two three's, and then just how about the importance of building good plays on after that? You get the five-second turnover, Rori gets the elbow jumper to close up the third quarter, and now you're off and running. What is the importance of stacking good plays?

ALIYAH MATHARU: I think it's really important. We always emphasize in practice and making sure that every possession we get a shot, because we don't want to have any empty possessions. I think we capitalized on that.

We made the right passes and made the right shots and found the open person. So it's really important, but it's something we hear every day. We understand the importance and we're not going to take that for granted.

Every possession we need it. Yeah, we only had four turnovers in the second half. Yay!

Q. Vic, you ever get concerned about Audrey's general disregard for her body? You look at the stat sheet, what she does goes beyond that. How critical is she in the impact she makes for y'all?

VIC SCHAEFER: Well, she is obviously very critical. She plays multiple positions, so she can play 3 and 4. She obviously is somebody that -- she's a toughness kid. She is a toughness player.

You can't take that out of her game or she is just not the same player. She is not a finesse player. I wish she wouldn't foul as much, but she puts herself in so many positions to have contact that it's sometimes just impossible not to.

The kid is tough. She is my kind of kid. I love her. I love how hard she plays. I love her intensity. She is smart. She is a heck of a team defensive player. She covers her teammates more than anybody probably we have on the team.

So, you know, obviously it's been really good having her all year. We haven't lost her -- last year we would lose her for

weeks on end. I think you're seeing her game -- she has developed. She's improved, too. She is a big reason why we've made this leap.

I think you're seeing -- again, when somebody can practice every day, play every day, doesn't miss practices, miss weeks, miss games, their game usually gets better. You get out of it what you put into it, right?

So I think she is experiencing the success she has had because she has been able to stay at it every day.

ALIYAH MATHARU: Can I say something about Aud? Y'all can quote me on this. Audrey has inspired me to want to do so good on defense. Like she takes such pride and joy in getting stops and making somebody turn the ball over.

It's the craziest thing I've ever seen, but if you want somebody to teach you how to play defense, like even though she gets crazy fouls, she might fall down, we're both always on the floor, I have never had anybody in my career that has encouraged me to want to play defense like every day.

If she is on my team I'm like, oh, yeah, I want to play defense today. She is a great player, so amazing.

Q. Vic, this is for you. If I could ask you to look ahead just a little bit. Thinking about guards in the NCAA Tournament, we have a lot of great centers, I think, and you've got one of them, Kansas State, Kansas, Baylor. Could you talk about how important the centers could be this year in the NCAA Tournament? How big do you think they can be this tournament?

VIC SCHAEFER: They're becoming obsolete, aren't they? There are not that many true 5's in the game anymore. Everybody wants to work on facing up and shooting the three, and there is a real value for having someone like Lauren, even DeYona Gaston down there. I mean, there is a real value and they bring so much to our team.

So for me I have a real appreciation, as you know, for those 5's that get it done down there and are physical, they're tough, they protect the paint. They've got so much going on.

Lauren, I'm telling you, Lauren has improved so much and is impacting our team in such a positive way. Again, you're right, there are several that will be playing next weekend.

But, again, I think the thing with Lauren, I've seen her do it now against some really good ones, and she is just -- she is playing at a real high level right now.

It's exciting for our game, because there are just not that many; and at the same time -- we're all thinking offense; Lauren is probably the best hedger I got on my team. On a ball screen she's got great feet and she's got quickness in her feet.

So it's just really -- it's hard to develop that. It's hard to find that. You know, for me, I've got to have it. It's just really been good and fun to see her development over the last two months.

Q. With your role of coming off the bench, how do you stay ready? How do you kind of play that role of coming off the bench and giving that spark when your number is called?

ALIYAH MATHARU: I just try to talk to myself as much as I can. It gets hard sometimes, but I just talk to myself and tell myself that when I get in the game, all I can do is my best.

And if that day is just not my day, somebody else will step up and have it. Just trying to be an all-around good teammate, like a voice on the court, even if I'm not making a shot, you know what I'm sayin'?

Trying to find my way with the girls outside of being on the floor.

VIC SCHAEFER: And she usually doesn't stay on there very long. She played 25 minutes tonight, and, again, I think it's -- I could probably start seven or eight kids, but obviously we've been on a run with the lineup we have been starting.

Aliyah wants to win, too, and she has adapted to that role. You've got to have kids that are selfless like that, and she is. I'm proud of her. She has really adjusted well, again, a big reason for our success.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations. We will see you tomorrow afternoon.

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