

Big 12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Saturday, March 12, 2022

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

Baylor Lady Bears

Coach Nicki Colleen

NaLyssa Smith

Caitlin Bickle

Postgame Press Conference



Oklahoma 76, Baylor 91

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by the Baylor Bears, Coach Nicki Colleen, NaLyssa Smith and Caitlin Bickle.

If you have any questions for the two girls, again, if you want both of them to answer, say their names in order.

Coach?

NICKI COLLEEN: This obviously was a little personal for us. To lose to them twice in close games that we had leads, you know, I just -- there didn't have to be a lot of rah-rah before the game.

This was about lining up and doing what we do best against what they do best. I told them we may be boring at times tonight, but we're going to play, touch the paint, simplify it, run horns, and until they stop it, we're not going to stop running it.

We may have looked a little boring, but when you score 91 points, boring is good. Proud of our defensive effort as much as kind of Madi and Taylor went off, two first-team All-Conference players.

What Caitlin did tonight of the bench was huge, setting career highs. It's no surprise that our posts were -- all three of our leading scorers, double digit scorers, and I was trying to get NaLyssa to 40, I promise.

I feel like we played to our strength. We have size and strength in the paint and we played to that. To shoot the ball as well as we did to balance that from three kept them from being able to put extra bodies in the paint to really help on these guys.

Q. NaLyssa, career high in scoring. How does that feel? And Caitlin, you can follow up.

NALYSSA SMITH: It feels great. You know, like I always say, like, personal goals help team goals at the same time, so me playing my hardest, me and Cait playing our hardest every single game and getting career highs, at the end of the day helps our team win, so it's always great.

CAITLIN BICKLE: I think going into the game obviously one of our staff had said just to me that in paint, scoring is the difference between when Oklahoma loses and wins.

I think for me just going into it I wanted to be as aggressive as possible, and I think obviously I didn't know I had 21 until I looked at the end, but I think anything I can do for this team, whether it's scoring, rebounding, doing extra plays, I'm about it.

Q. Coach, after all the pressure you were under starting conference play 0-2, you are the first Big XII head coach in the first season to make it to the championship game. What does this mean win for you?

NICKI COLLEEN: I'm just happy we beat Oklahoma today. That meant a lot to me, because it means we have now beaten every team in the league. So that was a big deal for us.

Once again, I think it's about playing good basketball. Right now we know what we're playing for. I think at times you can say like the NCAA Tournament is maybe more important than the conference tournament, but I think everybody up here has a lot of pride, not just on the name on the front of their jersey, but the name on the back of their jersey.

So you want to play well. If someone comes in and outplays you it's one thing, but I want to go into every game and play our best. It's about playing good basketball right now. It's about these guys understanding what they're capable of, and regardless of what defense teams play and regardless of what kind of offenses we're going to face, it's

about lining up and being the better team night in and night out.

Q. I was wondering what happened at the end there where their player goes down and there is a party at half-court.

NICKI COLLEEN: Yeah, I'll answer that. I'm not going to put that on these guys. Honestly, kid goes down, kid gets hurt, coach is emotional, says some things that she probably maybe even regrets, but certainly was emotional and protective of her own kid, and that's all it was.

Q. Caitlin, when things got competitive when they were back and forth a lot, you guys seemed to look to NaLyssa. What was it like to see her deliver over and over today?

CAITLIN BICKLE: No surprise there that she delivers for us. She is the best player in the entire country. She showed up this entire season. Every single time when it comes down to it, we're going to count on her; 9 times out of 10 she is going to make that winning basket or make that winning play for us, and we put a lot of trust in her.

We knew -- like Coach said, we had several posts scoring, but I looked at Lyss and I said, Get in the key, man. I'm going to give you the ball every single time. Every single time I had a timeout I said, Kist keep doing it. They can't guard that.

I mean, unless you're going to bring two or three people to trap this girl, you're not going to be able to guard her one-on-one the way she plays. So tremendously proud of her. No shocker that she played a great game today. Yeah, looking forward to tomorrow.

NICKI COLLEEN: Is it any kind of record that we only had two turnovers?

NALYSSA SMITH: We had two turnovers? The whole game?

NICKI COLLEEN: Yep. (Laughter.)

CAITLIN BICKLE: Did I have any?

NICKI COLLEEN: Nope.

Q. Coach, NaLyssa's career high today, how much of that speaks to the player that you kind of knew when you came to this job and how much speaks to the improvement over the course of the season?

NICKI COLLEEN: I think she was good when I got here.

So today you saw some things from Lyss that she has done her whole career here. We asked her to go down to the block and play, because they didn't have the size to guard her.

But she hit some -- got in transition, got some easy layups in transition, and that's all effort. It's all effort-based. And today because of so much zone she didn't get a ton of jump shots today, but it's just this idea of understanding where the openings are, where you can score.

And once again, I know, it was a little boring to do what we did over and over and over again, but it was super effective.

As much as I like to be pretty and cute and have fun on offenses and move chess pieces around, when you can play against the zone and you can play in the tunnel, and your guys are better than their guys in the tunnel, that's where you play.

We knew that paint points were going to be the key. That's the difference for me in wins versus losses, and so we knew we had to win the battle of the paint points, and we did that.

I was probably a little more aggressive with our guards in today telling them they had to turn down shots today. Wait for it to come back to them rather than taking a quick shot. And we still ended up taking 18 three's and shooting just under 40%, so we balanced it really, really well.

But we knew we had to do the simple things and take care of the basketball.

Q. NaLyssa, you talk about being overlooked a little bit. Do you feel like your head coach is overlooked a little bit? How does she get the best out of you game in and game out?

NALYSSA SMITH: Absolutely going into such a big role in Baylor a lot of people can be overlooked in that position. I feel like she does a great job and I feel like the world should know that, too.

Like you said, she just broke a record. Not a lot of coaches their first year win a Big 12 championship, and if the Lord blesses, hopefully we win another championship tomorrow.

I'm going to get her some merch. She deserve that.

NICKI COLLEEN: I need some merch. I really don't have any.

Q. NaLyssa, you were probably the star of the game,

but you probably heard your brother and dad were the stars at halftime. They were both talking afterwards about how proud of you they are, but did you hear about it, and has your dad taught you everything you know about three point shooting, because he is the one that hit the half-court shot.

NICKI COLLEEN: Wow.

NALYSSA SMITH: You didn't know that?

NICKI COLLEEN: No.

NALYSSA SMITH: Yeah. They came and showed me the video of them hitting the shot at half-court, and I think my brother hit a shot, too. They won like \$600, right?

THE MODERATOR: \$6100.

NALYSSA SMITH: In gas or money?

NICKI COLLEEN: Give me a \$6,000 gas card.

NALYSSA SMITH: Hopefully I get a cut.

No, my dad did teach me a lot. I wouldn't say the three, but he was in the post and I'm missing a lot this year. I'll say he was teaching me the three because I am missing.

Q. NaLyssa, had you ever seen your dad hit a half-court shot before?

NALYSSA SMITH: Yeah. I mean, we used to go to the park, you know, go to the gym, so, you know, you playin' HORSE, you seen them make crazy shots. I know this is the moment of his life. I just know. (Laughter.)

NICKI COLLEEN: It's a big day for the Smith family.

CAITLIN BICKLE: He's going to be talking about that for weeks.

THE MODERATOR: When he made the shot that was the biggest cheer for the entire day after that.

NALYSSA SMITH: I bet.

THE MODERATOR: Unbelievable.

Q. Nicki, the situation kind of reverses tomorrow. They beat you twice in the regular season and now whoever you play tomorrow you're going to have beat them twice. Does that change mindset? Change motivation?

NICKI COLLEEN: I don't know. It all depends on what motivates you. Today there was a little extra chip on our shoulder because they had beaten us twice, but I also think it was about playing winning basketball.

Tomorrow is about cutting down another net. So maybe the motivation changes, but the desire to win doesn't change, to compete. I don't know if I believe any of it, but, you know, we could potentially be playing for a No. 1 seed in the NCAA Tournament, too.

It doesn't matter maybe if you're the 4th seed or the No. 1 seed because you end up in the NCAA Tournament bracket, and the NCAA is all about match-ups anyway.

So maybe it doesn't matter other than the fact that why would we want to lose? I don't think anyone up here wants to lose a basketball game.

We just want to win a basketball game and stay healthy.

Q. Caitlin and then Lyss. We heard Coach talk about how much extra this meant for her, but for you personally how big was it?

CAITLIN BICKLE: I think this year it's been a lot of obstacles and a lot of people with the change in coaching and so many players leaving, a lot of people doubted us. We lost to Oklahoma twice, both tough losses, and those came down to the last minute or two where we led the whole game, and we couldn't get over that hump.

Coming into today and watching them play Kansas yesterday, we knew we had to be ready. I think we loved the challenge. I think we really, really enjoyed it. Who doesn't want to play for a Big XII Championship? I think we're excited tomorrow, I don't doubt that we're going to come out with the same energy and intensity

NALYSSA SMITH: Yep, like she say, being down 0-2 it gives you a lot of motivation to come out here and win another game. Another win is one step closer to a championship.

THE MODERATOR: Ladies, congratulations on today's win.

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