

Big 12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Saturday, March 12, 2022

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

Iowa State Cyclones

Coach Bill Fennelly

Lexi Donarski

Ashley Joens

Postgame Press Conference



Texas 82, Iowa State 73 (OT)

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by Iowa State. Coach Bill Fennelly is up here, along with student-athletes, Lexi Donarski and Ashley Joens. Coach?

COACH FENNELLY: First of all, I want to congratulate Texas. That was a great college basketball game. I think both teams represented themselves very well.

On behalf of our university, especially the Iowa State women's basketball team, I want to thank the Big XII and the people of Kansas City. Amazing event. Best college tournament in the country.

And probably the last thing for me is I really could not be more proud of our team. I love this team. I love what they're about. I love what they represent. I think anyone who appreciates young people and appreciates young people's effort and appreciates young people who do it right saw a team today that they should become huge fans of.

Because they did it right. They always have, they. Have done it all year. Looking forward to going home and seeing what they say tomorrow.

Q. Ashley, Lexi, and Bill, just were you guys expecting, I guess, based off of how the previous two games with Texas, that type of physicality and that type of intense match-up today?

ASHLEY JOENS: Yeah. I think anytime you play Texas it's going to be a physical game. You just have to prepare for it and you have to be aggressive as well and just really battle.

LEXI DONARSKI: I think the big thing was we had to try to match their physicality when we were on defense. We have to do that because they're really, really physical and strong on defense, so it's a big focus of ours.

Q. For Ashley and Lexi, you guys made so many winning-type plays in that game, whether it be Jordao's big block or she matches the three that Harmon puts up. You take a lot of heart in that you're going to host, hopefully, a couple games, and that really every time they punched you punched back?

ASHLEY JOENS: Yeah. That's what you have to do. It's a fight. You've got to stick your nose in there and stay in there. So if they hit a big shot, you've got to come down and make a play and get some defensive stops.

I think we did a really good job of that today, and we have to learn how to finish some games.

LEXI DONARSKI: It's great to be on an unselfish team where we share the ball and we are happy for one another when a person steps up and makes a big shot like what you talked about.

Q. All year it's kind of been Iowa State is going to beat this team or there is a physical match-up, and Baylor and Texas have gotten the brunt of you. Do you think today you proved that you can compete with teams that match-up like that with you?

ASHLEY JOENS: Yeah. We just have to, like I said, stick our nose in there and hang in there. If they make a big play or anything, we've got to get a defensive stop, come on the other end, make a big play.

And we have been doing a pretty good job of that and we've just got to keep going.

LEXI DONARSKI: We have struggled with physical teams in the past, but I think Emily still played great today and came off ball screens well, and that controlled a lot of our offense.

Q. Bill, I was kind of wondering, it seemed like over

time kind of a different switch for Texas. What do you think changed there?

COACH FENNELLY: Well, I think a couple things. We made a couple of defensive mistakes. They got the ball going downhill on us a couple times and we didn't rotate a couple times.

Rori Harmon hit some big shots. We missed a couple shot around the basket. In an overtime game it swings quickly, and to their credit, they hit a couple of really tough ones and we didn't maybe make the shot you needed to make.

But that's an overtime game. Usually it takes one or two shots that swings it. Unfortunately for us tonight they hit the shots.

Q. For Ashley and Lexi, Texas is a team in the previous two match-ups that got the best of you all. Today, much closer game. What in y'all's mind was the difference to allow it to be closer rather than what we saw in the first two games of the regular season?

ASHLEY JOENS: I think we just had to believe in ourselves and that we could compete with them, and we went out there and gave it everything we had. So I think that definitely made a big difference.

LEXI DONARSKI: I think we had to change our mentality, and I think we did a good job of that. Came out more ready to play today, more ready to play with the fight.

Q. Bill, seemed like you got on track offensively in the game by driving the basketball, getting a lot of points in the paint, and then it opened things up from three where you hit really well all night. How do you feel like offensively you played?

COACH FENNELLY: I thought offensively we were really good. I do. Against a good defensive team. We had our share of turnovers. The third quarter started poorly.

But other than that, we got the ball in the lane for the most part. Our decision-making was good. We made the shots that we needed to make.

We tried hard to get to the free throw line.

We couldn't do that, but we shot it really well, and I think that's something we haven't done against Texas in the past.

We opened up the court. Ash and Lex hit some big three's when we needed them. So I think offensively we were fine. I have no problem with our execution considering who we

were playing and what we were getting into.

Q. I was wondering, Bill, now that you do turn the page to the NCAA Tournament, after the last couple of days how do you feel about where you guys are heading into that stage in the end of the season?

COACH FENNELLY: I guess I would say I couldn't be more excited to hear what happens on Sunday. This team has been -- this team has been beyond a joy for me.

At this point in my career you don't get that very often. And the good news is I'm heart broken we don't get to play tomorrow, but we're going to play again.

I would not want to be around any other people than these guys. The way they conduct themselves. I can't tell you how many people in Kansas City walked up to me and said, Hey, Coach, we love your team, the way they act, the way they play, the way they conduct themselves, and the way they represent.

They weren't all Iowa State fans. I had four other kids in other teams in our league complimented these guys not on how they play, but how they act and how they represent their school.

I'm beyond excited to find out what happens on Sunday.

Q. What is it about this group that makes you so happy to be around them? What brings out the emotion that we're seeing right now as opposed to -- that sets them apart?

COACH FENNELLY: No, I -- it's just the way that they've believed and bought into what Iowa State is about. The way they show up every day. How much they care about the jersey that they're wearing. We don't have names on the back of our jerseys, and we're not going to. That's not what we're about. We're about being connected. We're about representing our fans, representing our school, and as a coach, you go in every take and you're like, this is what we need to get done, not just on the court but off the court. This team has done it as well if not better than any team I've been around. I wouldn't trade them for anybody, anyone, anytime.

It's an absolute honor to say I coach this team.

Q. Bill, I swear I'm not asking this as an officiating -- to get you in trouble question. That's not where I'm coming from, but Jeff Mittie said last night freedom of movement is something that frustrates him in terms of how inconsistently it seems to be called. In your experience does that get better or worse?

COACH FENNELLY: There is no such thing as freedom of movement.

Q. So worse in the NCAA Tournament?

COACH FENNELLY: It's gonna get worse. There just isn't any. Anyone who says there is doesn't understand the game. That's not my decision. There is no freedom of movement in the game of basketball on the women's side. Zero. It is what it is. I'm not complaining, that's the answer to the question.

THE MODERATOR: Okay, Coach.

COACH FENNELLY: Thank you all. Appreciate your time.

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