

Big 12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Sunday, March 13, 2022

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

Texas Longhorns

Coach Vic Schaefer

Rori Harmon

Aaliyah Moore

Joanne Allen-Taylor

Postgame Press Conference



Texas - 67, Baylor - 58

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by the Texas Longhorns, Coach Vic Schaefer, Rori Harmon, Aaliyah Moore and Joanne Allen-Taylor, congratulations. Coach?

COACH SCHAEFER: First of all, just couldn't be more proud of my team. We came here to win a championship, and I think you saw today some really determined kids. I think these young ladies were absolutely not going to be denied. They're not intimidated. They're not afraid. They had a warrior mentality. We talked about it in the locker room. Having that mentality, going into competition there are so many things you have to do, and being tough isn't just about being stronger or more physical. There are so many things that go into toughness. Playing your third game in three days, coming off an overtime game, knowing the way we play, that game today y'all was won in August or September on the track.

I believe it. I've always believed it. My teams have typically played well this time of year because of it. And this team today, I wasn't fired up at breakfast this morning at film, but that first five minutes showed me they were ready to go and I told them the first five minutes will be really critical to the ball game, because I think that it establishes the tempo and we were here to play. I thought Rori controlled the tempo of the game. First of all we ran our offense as good as we have all year long and we made shots.

We got our shots and we got 'em when we wanted to. I thought defensively you hold that team to 58 points, that is a special, special effort. We really wanted to control the tempo. We wanted to try to do some things, get deep in

the shot clock defensively for them. I thought our kids were really, really special on that end, especially that first half. I think we were up 39-28 and so, again, I think a lot of things have to happen -- when you're going to play No. 4 in the country, you've got to be able to do those things. Having this young team obviously with our kids, I just thought we did a really good job today. Again, we're playing way beyond our years right now. She may be a freshman but she is not playing like a freshman, right? A-Mo' comes off the bench today, 12 points, and again had a significant injury earlier in the year and it's taken her a while to get back, getting some rebounds, her and Shay Holly had 5, 6 rebounds between them and Jo is the ultimate warrior, the ultimate competitor. She believes and she just wants to win. She is my kinda kid. That's all she cares about. She doesn't care who gets the glory. She is the glue. She is just consistent every day.

I appreciate her for her trust and confidence. Again, she and I would both say we both serve an incredible God. To watch how those kids played today, to see the flame in them, there is no question we're going to give God the glory for No. 26 today and we're going to go home tonight, have tomorrow off and we're going to get ready for whoever they pick for us to play this next weekend.

That was a special effort today. Some really special young ladies that played their absolute guts out. You don't win on paper, just so you know. You don't win on whose supposed to win or however many they have won in a row. Like we haven't even been here that long. So that doesn't matter. What matters is today. What matters is what's inside these kids breast plate. That's what matters. It's the competitive spirit. It's the will to win. That it is what matters in athletics. It's also what matters in life. These kids, they were not going to be denied.

I am so proud to be a part of them and to be their coach because they showed some incredible toughness today.

Q. Rori, your coach has bristled in past days that you weren't on the First-Team All Big XII Team. Was today a statement for you?

RORI HARMON: I was really just playing for my

teammates, I wasn't worried about awards, I just wanted to help get the championship win and we did.

Q. Coach, you guys kept pounding NaLyssa Smith. Was that the plan, to make things uncomfortable for her?

COACH SCHAEFER: I mean, we've got some special players down there. I think our bigs have continued to develop this season. We weren't like this two months ago. But, again, you don't stop on late January or early February and say what we got is what we got and pick up a check. You keep working. It's what we have always done, it's what I've always done in my career and that's what these kids did, they just kept working. I think our inside players continued to develop and continued to work hard and you're seeing the fruits of their labor.

I think you've got to give kids credit for continuing to listen, continuing to be coachable and wanting to get better. A lot of kids won't do that but they do. These kids have been really coachable.

Q. Jo, this is an emotional moment for you. What does this mean for you after these last four years?

JOANNE ALLEN-TAYLOR: I just feel everything right now. I can't even describe it. I'm so blessed to be up here. I give God all the glory because there were so many times I could have gave up. I'm so blessed to play with these girls, to be coached by this man. For him to have so much trust in me. It's really hard. This win means everything to me. Thank you, Coach.

COACH SCHAEFER: You're welcome! Thank you.

Q. Aaliyah, how did you feel about your game today? You have to stay ready and you get thrown in there and it's not like NaLyssa is a nobody, that's a two-time All Big XII Player of the Year. And Jo what do you think of Aaliyah today.

AALIYAH MOORE: Just staying ready, Coach always says when I call your number, be ready. So I kept telling myself be ready. I kept telling myself, be fearless out there, at the end of the day just be fearless. I have a tattoo of it right here and that's what I try to be, be fearless.

JOANNE ALLEN-TAYLOR: She is an amazing player but she doesn't want to foul so if you're not going to be that aggressive underneath I knew that my team could compete with her and that's what they did, we got the win because of it. Aaliyah stepped up big-time, we needed her and she showed up.

Q. For any of the players, you guys hadn't lost a game since the start of February and those were back-to-back losses against Baylor. Was that on your mind today?

RORI HARMON: I would say we were focused on this game. We're not worried about the past. We're focused on the game that's ahead of us, the next game. It was Baylor. We're not really worried about the loss but we are trying to improve on our mistakes from those losses. Obviously we came focused and ready to go. We played the game 5 minutes at a time and we won every 5 minutes.

AALIYAH MOORE: The whole time I was thinking about our seniors. This is really huge for them. I have many more years to play this game but this is going to be big for them. I don't think you understand I want to do this for you and Audrey and Ebo so bad and to see y'all so happy, that's -- it makes me happy.

Q. Rori and Coach, I know taking charge is just what you do but the charge you took against NaLyssa was a huge play in this game. Can you talk about that fearlessness? Coach talk about that, too, that's not an easy thing to give up your body and she did that.

RORI HARMON: We worked on this in practice. We have drills, to be able to take it in the game you have to take it in practice. I'm not worried about -- I will sacrifice my body for my teammates, that's what Texas is about. Yes, she is pretty big and I'm pretty small but you have to know the stats at the moment, know that if I take this charge right now, they're probably going to have to take her out. So I took the charge, didn't feel nothing and got right back up.

COACH SCHAEFER: You know, you've seen my teams over the years, it's just what we do, right? It's how we do it and it's an important part of what we do. It's the saying in our locker room it's not what we do but how we do it that separates us from the rest of the country. I would say that Michelle you have seen her two straight days, I think this kid separates herself from the rest of the country in a lot of areas. I think our team does, too. Just how hard we play. We're fearless, like she said. We're pretty tough. Nothing really rattles us or shakes us. If it does, Jo grabs 'em and she's got that look in her eye that gets your attention. Again, it's what we do. I know you know that and you've seen my teams a lot.

It's just part of what we do and our kids get so excited about that. It's an energy boost when we make plays like that defensively. Jo took a charge late in the game last night and it kinda sealed the deal. It's what we do and it's part of our DNA, it's who we are.

Q. I'm not smart enough to know what the NCAA is thinking but do you think this might put you in a one conversation or a two?

COACH SCHAEFER: Hey, why not. I'm talking from a pride standpoint and who we just beat. Why not? If they were going to make them a 1, why not us? We just beat a 2 who is still a 2 supposedly and now we just beat a 1. Why not? I don't think anybody is going oh goody, we got Texas in the NCAA Tournament. So I think it's a great question and I think it bodes to be considered. Again, I don't ever lobby and I'm not lobbying, but I think it's a good question. Good job, buddy.

Q. Thank you.

COACH SCHAEFER: Yeah.

Q. Are you going to take time to celebrate or study later tonight?

COACH SCHAEFER: We're kind of screwed up. I want these kids to see -- who buys a watch that has to be charged and it's dead? (Laughter.)

What time is it? So we're kind of screwed up and it's going to be hard for us to see the Selection Show unless we can get it on the airplane via Wi-Fi. Time we get back, shower, change, it's going to be a messed up deal, and I want these kids to experience it. I'm interested to know what we're going to do because I want these kids to experience the full joy of what they just accomplished, experience the celebration here.

At the same time I want them to see their name called. You know what, if we're on the airplane, it might cause a problem on the airplane with all the screaming and hollering, because -- and rightfully so. It will be interesting. We will get back tonight, we will have media waiting on us there, and I'm hopeful that we will be able to get these kids in front of them. Tomorrow will be a day off, and we will start breaking down film tonight, Kristen will be ready, and we will get ready for whoever they send to Austin.

Q. Rori, what does this win and championship mean for you?

RORI HARMON: It means everything. I know we definitely did deserve it. Like we said earlier about the seniors, I really was thinking about the seniors. They pushed us every single day in practice to be who we are. We have Lauren in our ear focus, focus. We have Jo, like, get it together. And trying to make sure everybody is in the right spots. You play as hard as we do, you have to come out in the end with the win. That's all I have to say about it.

Q. Vic, the Big XII is having one of its best seasons in recent memory, top to bottom, and the tournament this year recorded some of its best attendance numbers. What's it like to be a part of that this year and coach here?

COACH SCHAEFER: It's been special. I think we had a lot of Longhorn fans here today, and I appreciate those folks traveling and making it the environment we did. Yesterday was a road game for us; we had a few fans, but I think, again, our league is really good. It's got great coaches, Hall of Fame coaches, it's got the next generation of WNBA players, and our league is tough. Again, I think I'm glad we were able to add to that this year. We have lived in the top -- probably top 10, top 12 most of the year. We're going to finish in the top 10, which I'm so proud of this team to be able to do.

Again, I don't think people realize what this team has accomplished. The youth, the inexperience, the immaturity that we have, basically with one starter back. It's really -- my hats off to these kids. They have been phenomenal. Again, I've been doing this a long time, been a part of special teams and this team is right there, and they're right there with some of the most special I have ever had. And to do it again, our future is extremely bright. I'm sure it was a great event for the Big XII, and our fan base in this league is really special. Again, we appreciate the opportunity to be a part of it.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations to call of you. Congratulations to all of you. Good luck.

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