

Big 12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 9, 2023

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

Municipal Auditorium

Kansas State Wildcats

Coach Jeff Mittie

Serena Sundell

Gabby Gregory

Postgame Press Conference



Kansas State 79, Texas Tech 69

JEFF MITTIE: Well, hard-fought game. Tournament time I think you would expect that kind of effort by both teams. Both of us obviously doing everything you can to advance. We had some players, Bre'Amber Scott for them was fantastic. Really terrific player.

Proud of our group for really defending well in the first half when shots weren't falling. We were 0 for 8 from three, really struggling to get any offensive flow going, but yet our defense was really, really good to keep us in it.

Then in the second half when we got a little better offensive flow, I think we ended up knocking down five threes. We had a little better attack in the second half. I think we attacked their press better.

But proud of our group for fighting. We had some players step up, Eliza Maupin big game. Gabby, Serena sitting here both had really good games. But I thought Maupin gave us a big lift off the bench. She really played well in her first tournament experience.

Q. Serena, this is now back to back games against Texas Tech where (indiscernible) especially attacking the rim. What is it about Texas Tech's defense?

SERENA SUNDELL: We just knew that we wanted to get this game in transition. That's where we've found a lot of success recently in the previous games, and the last game against Texas Tech that's where I found success.

That was kind of my mindset going into the game, just to attack the rim and make them stop me.

Q. Gabby, kind of a tale of two halves. Talk about your offensive production and what you were seeing out there in the two halves.

GABBY GREGORY: Like Coach Mittie mentioned, we were 0 for 8 from three in the first half, but I still -- like we were getting good shots, they just weren't falling. I knew going into the second half, we just kept doing what we were doing, pushing the ball, keep the game in transition, that we were going to continue to get those good shots.

Myself, I just allowed myself to just flow into the offense and get open shots. My teammates were creating shots for me and just going ahead and finishing.

Yeah, so I wanted to be more aggressive in the second half. I knew it was going to be a hard-fought game, and that's just what I thought I needed to do.

Q. Gabby, I know you and Bryn have known each other for a while. What can you say about the performance you had today, especially with the injury she had coming in?

GABBY GREGORY: Yeah, I could tell she was favoring that knee a little bit. But I've been playing against Bryn since we were in fourth grade, growing up with her, her family. Great people.

I know Bryn is going to play hard every game. She's going to give it her all. She's done that her whole career, so I know she's happy with the career she's had.

Q. Serena, how important was it to see that first three go in?

SERENA SUNDELL: Yeah, I think like Coach said, the first half, we did a good job of just kind of keeping our head down and keep pushing, and our halftime talk was shots are going to fall, so just keep getting the ball in the paint, finding open shooters.

Yeah, I think we came out with the same attack and knew shots were going to fall and trusted that and knew throughout the season that's what's been working for us.

So I think our confidence never wavered.

Q. For either of you, this is your first time beating Texas Tech this year. Was the game plan different? Was your execution different? What was different this time around?

SERENA SUNDELL: Like I mentioned earlier, we wanted to get the ball out in transition. We wanted to be very active on defense. We had a bunch of deflections, steals, and rebound and go. Coach Mittie said, don't look at me to call plays. That's what he told me. So I'm like, okay, just get out and go, and that's what was working for us.

Q. For either one of you, what will you take forward from this game to go against Texas tomorrow?

GABBY GREGORY: I think just to stay aggressive. Against Texas we didn't get very many shots up even in the game, so just taking this aggressiveness that we had from this game, keeping the game in transition, getting the ball up the floor, not looking at Coach Mittie to call plays, just allow us to go play basketball and flow, I think that's going to be really important to take into the game tomorrow.

Q. Gabby, in terms of (indiscernible) what was the message?

GABBY GREGORY: Yeah, I mean, he mentioned our press break was a problem for them, so just -- I think in that stretch, we just were kind of careless with the ball, loose with the ball, allowing them to get their hands on passes and things like that. Just to be strong with the ball and just continue to do what we were doing.

We did have like the little time period that we didn't do so great, but for the most part our press break was great and transition game was great, so just continue to do what we're doing.

Q. In a game like this, does this kind of signify how in the Big 12, especially in this conference, that anyone can beat anyone?

JEFF MITTIE: Yeah, I think the depth of the league has been one of the strengths of the league all year. It doesn't always play out that way, but certainly this year in the league, you look at us, we've got a win over Iowa, who's sitting here looking at a No. 1 seed, and many others in our league up and down have really quality wins.

I think the margin of error in these kind of games is pretty slim. We just did a few things better today that we wanted to do, but Tech did things better than we had done

previously, so that margin is pretty slim, particularly tournament time because yeah, you know, it is different when you're out here playing to advance.

I was proud of our group for staving off that big run. We had a couple unfortunate things, and I want to compliment Bryn Gerlich on that because in that stretch where you talk about that run, one of our turnovers, Serena didn't even realize Bryn was in the play because she was out of bounds knocked down to the ground, I think, and came back in. That's what a competitor she is.

So I think that run was a little bit of us, but it was a lot of Texas Tech doing some good things.

Q. In terms of just what you saw out there, what allowed you to say hey, just run plays?

JEFF MITTIE: Yeah, I think it was more about when we play well, this is what we do. It wasn't necessarily anything we saw that we could take advantage of Texas Tech. It was more about when we play well, this is what we do well. Let's see if we can get into that.

I do think over the course of maybe the last couple weeks, there have been times when our offense has gotten stagnant and we've held the ball too much. The ball has been sticking. It stuck early in this game a little bit, but as the game kept going, the ball moved better, and we found open players much, much better.

Q. The first game (indiscernible). What was different with your defensive effort this time? Did you change anything or was it the execution?

JEFF MITTIE: You guys are worse than coaches wanting to relive those games. You guys are worse than coaches.

I think today we played through stretches where we weren't -- so often this season, this team has tied their effort to offense, and today we seemed to dig deeper. It's taken too long to get there, but it was good to see today, and it was good to see us do that.

Differently, I'll be honest, there wasn't a whole lot different. We felt like in zone, we lost Gerlich way too much in Lubbock. We felt like Bre'Amber Scott had gotten to the free-throw line. She was averaging 14 free throws a game against us. Now, she's a tough one to keep off the line, but she only gets seven today.

Those were just two things that we felt like -- I think we just had a good focus, and everybody that came into the game had a pretty solid focus on that game plan.

Q. How difficult was it to slow down Scott? Seemed like she just got points no matter what.

JEFF MITTIE: Boy, she's really good. She's really good. Early in the game it was from the three. They moved her inside against the zone. She was able to get some offensive rebounds that were hard. She's just a tough -- they move her around, so when you're playing zone, everybody has to have a really good awareness of where she's at. She's just a really hard guard.

Then when you play her man to man, she can really take you off the bounce. She's strong enough, physical, so there's not an easy way to guard her. I think you've just got to be sound defensively, and if she's hot, what you can't do is just give her easy stuff.

I thought we were decent at not giving her easy stuff, but she's awfully good. There's a reason why she's all-Big 12, and you saw that tonight.

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