

Big 12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 10, 2023

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

Municipal Auditorium

Oklahoma Sooners

Coach Jennie Baranczyk

Skylar Vann

Taylor Robertson

Postgame Press Conference



Oklahoma 77, TCU 76

THE MODERATOR: We have the Oklahoma Sooners head Coach Jennie Baranczyk, Taylor Robertson, and Skylar Vann. Statement from Coach?

COACH BARANCZYK: I thought TCU was phenomenal. I thought they played so hard. They have played so hard all season. I think it's a lesson for all of us that even when things don't go the way you want them to go, you keep going with a smile on your face and you work your tail off.

It took us a little bit of time. They punched us a few times. And I'm proud -- at the end of the game I'm proud of the way our players stepped up and have been able to overcome some things and be able to make some big plays.

Hats off to Big XII Basketball.

Q. Taylor and Skylar that last play Taylor you were throwing in the ball; Skylar, you get the layup. What was your mindset? How did you feel about the way it turned out?

TAYLOR ROBERTSON: I was just trying to get the ball inbounds because it was close to a 5-second call, but as soon as I got it to Skylar I knew she was going to make go a play.

SKYLAR VANN: Yeah, once she got it to me I kind of knew what I had to do with the ball, and I just started playing basketball truly, and I know my team has faith in me and that's what gives me the confidence to take those big shots.

Q. What was the first option on that play? What were you guys trying to get accomplished on the inbounds play with 4 seconds left?

SKYLAR VANN: That was me getting the ball. That was the goal.

TAYLOR ROBERTSON: Yeah, it just took a couple of second for me to be able to throw the ball into her.

Q. For you guys, this is a TCU team that hasn't done a lot of winning the last couple of months; they're in a state of transition, but they were there until the very end. What made them so difficult to put away?

TAYLOR ROBERTSON: They played so hard. They were playing really hard for each other and for their coach and they were hitting shots from the beginning, so that always helps. Makes you feel good.

And they never quit playing. Even when we got our 10-point lead, whatever we had, they kept playing and fighting, and that's why they were hard to put away.

Q. That second quarter the only scoring came from the bench, Aubrey and Beatrice. How important was that bridge after the first quarter to get to halftime and have that lead?

SKYLAR VANN: That's super important, but we know when they come on the court that's what they're going to do. That's no surprise. That's what them two do. They step on the court and they're ready to go.

Q. Taylor, obviously a good shooting night for you. I caught -- even after the deep three in the fourth quarter the little shrug. Seemed like you were feeling it today. What was working today? Was it a different type of shots you were getting or was the shot on today?

TAYLOR ROBERTSON: I just wasn't thinking about it. I was just playing. I think that it was just -- they were playing a zone, so the inside/out game was working and being able to relocate and find the open shot.

We had everybody being able to shoot wide-open threes because we were able to move the ball.

Q. Skylar, when you have your perimeter shooting on, how does that change the game and space the floor so you can go to work down low?

SKYLAR VANN: It helps a lot, the inside/out game. When your teammates are hitting outside, that gives you more space, so I had more space to do things where people aren't crashing in on me and I'm struggling to pass it out or score.

Q. Skylar, you were in a similar position nine days ago against K-State, end of regulation and that play went to you. You scored. Talk about your confidence in those moments to be the one that takes those big shot?

SKYLAR VANN: I will be honest, I don't think about it. I just go. Because when I think about it, I might struggle a little bit. I know when Jennie writes something up for me she has the confidence in me, and so I have the confidence and I just go.

Q. (Not on mic.)

COACH BARANCZYK: I think the thing is they're confident in each other, and if you don't get the first read you get the second read. We have had plenty of times where you don't get the first and maybe you don't get the second, and so we have a lot of people to take those big shots.

It's hard to take the big shot, so for us to have so many options to be able to do that, is special.

Q. Taylor, does a game like this, is it a good reminder for you guys this time of year it can be done like that?

TAYLOR ROBERTSON: Yeah, for sure. That's what they call it March Madness. Anything can happen. Anybody can beat anybody, so you've got to come with your A-game and be ready, because it doesn't matter who you're playing in March.

Q. For both of you guys, what did it mean to have Madi out there playing with you all after her injury?

SKYLAR VANN: I mean, it was amazing. We love playing with Madi. She is a difference-maker on the court and we knew she was going to play so we were good, but we were really excited to see her on the court.

COACH BARANCZYK: They were the only once that knew. We didn't.

TAYLOR ROBERTSON: She brings a calmness on the court. Everybody knows she can score and rebound and do all the things, but she has intangibles that not everybody has, and just her presence when she is on the floor, it's huge for us.

THE MODERATOR: Ladies, you are excused.

Questions for Coach.

Q. Jennie, this is now two times in a row that you've gone with a play with Skylar being that option and wanted to go through her. As you've seen her develop in your time here at OU, why is it that Skylar has been the player that has come up in these moments do you feel like?

COACH BARANCZYK: Well, I think we've had a lot of different people have the ball in their hands that have to make those decisions. I mean, I think she's -- I trust so many people on this team. She is just somebody that can really simplify the game. She's really confident, and you saw the play before where she hesitated, she kind of threw one out, but the play before that she went at the basket and it was -- she's got that in her.

I'm hoping as time goes that that continues to build her confidence. She is also able to recover. You've got to be willing to take that shot, you've got to be willing to make it, you've got to be willing to miss it, and you've got to be willing to pay the consequence, and Skylar is.

You can see in her eyes that she wants that, and that's going to continue to propel her and her leadership for this program.

Q. The second quarter your bench contributed, Aubrey, Bea. What did they bring to this game? Seems like both of them, especially late in the season, have grown into their respective roles on this team.

COACH BARANCZYK: I thought defensively we did some things in the second quarter that were much better than any of the other quarters, to be honest.

But I love the way that -- you know, for this to be Bea's first conference tournament game and Ana Llanusa's first conference tournament game, we forget that as well, and I thought Ana was phenomenal.

She pressed a little bit but she'll be fine. This is her first win in the postseason play.

I think Bea is getting better and better. You can tell. And defensively I think she's a nice, calming presence. I think

she is smart and she knows what she is doing.

And it's not even that she's smart. She is a student of the game. Offensively I would like her to get in there more.

Aubrey continues to do those little things. Obviously she shot the ball well, but she's just kind of always there, and you need players that are like that, that just kind of clean up some things.

Q. Jennie, TCU shot the ball really well in the first quarter. What was your message to the team heading into the second quarter, and how pleased were you with how they settled in defensively?

COACH BARANCZYK: A lot of it we certainly -- a lot of it, give them credit. They threw ahead. They were making shots. It's not always that it's something we aren't doing well. I thought we could have adjusted. We didn't.

I felt like we settled in and we started to guard a little bit better, but then they went on the inside and we needed to adjust. Then they go back outside.

So it was a game I thought they were in control most of the game. I don't think we were. I think we had moments that we were. That's something that, you know, we have had plenty of experience not being in control of the game and being able to pull it out at the end.

We need a little more experience and get in control of the game and keep it.

Q. Were you guys cold? I don't mean shooting, I mean temperature-wise. I've been freezing since I got in this building.

COACH BARANCZYK: I was pretty hot, Barry, figuratively and physically.

Q. Okay.

COACH BARANCZYK: Honestly, I feel like -- yeah, Madi wasn't Madi. She had to warm up, and it's cold here. People aren't used to that. I'm still a little bit of a midwesterner, but I've gotten used to the south a little fast. But I think it was probably chilly.

Q. Ibeh I think scored their last 11 in the last four minutes. What was going on where she wasn't killing you early, and then she was like...

COACH BARANCZYK: I think we started to guard the outside. We started to take away their outside options a little bit more. Ana and Kennady did a great job and they

got to the foul line or they got to the rim and we needed to adjust our defense more and hold our ground.

We do a great job of getting to the foul line because they use counter-movements and spin dribbles, things like that, and we just bodied right up to them and allowed them to do what they wanted to do. We needed to adjust. I did not like our response in a lot of our areas.

That's something that in games we're really good. We respond really well. It doesn't mean we are up by a lot. It could be a close game, but our response is really good. This game we needed to respond a lot better.

Q. Jennie, you touched on Madi. You mentioned on Tuesday that it was kind of up in the air in terms of when she would return, how much she would play. What did the last couple of days look like in terms of getting her ready to play or evaluating that she was ready? What did you see from her today?

COACH BARANCZYK: We put her into practice yesterday, and -- she is not 100%. You can kinda tell. And she'll get there. She is wearing a knee brace, and hopefully she has a different one tomorrow. So we're going to try some different things. The first time she had any contact was literally against me in practice yesterday. Then we threw her into the game today.

I know that sounds funny, but people that were there actually saw that. That's what it's been like. She was off, and then she kinda got in the gym, kinda got to do a couple things, kinda felt a little bit better.

And, yeah, obviously she has had a lot of doctor appointments and there have been conversations over and over and she had to work her tail off to feel as good as she could to get out there, but it's really hard to tell Madi Williams no when she wants this really bad, just to keep playing with this team.

We do have her future in mind, and that has all been obviously evaluated as well.

Q. You mentioned her not being at 100%, but at the end of the third quarter she hit a couple of big shots.

COACH BARANCZYK: Yeah, but she could have caught that one, you know what I mean, and she knew it. Those are something -- she needed to play at least a little bit today to know that she could do it.

Yesterday she was hesitant. Heck, I crossed her up. If she were here she would really appreciate me saying that, but, you know, you did -- so she had to get less hesitant,

and today she is less hesitant.

So as time goes on, she is really tough, so you know if she's out there and she is wearing all that stuff and doing all that stuff, she is one of the toughest people I've ever been around, and she's someone you need to have on your team. And she came out today.

Q. Jennie, before you guys came up here you talked about we'll see how hungry the team is. What did you make of the team's appetite today?

COACH BARANCZYK: TCU's appetite was very hungry. You know, I think we're hungry. We've got to be able to settle in and be hungry. You still have to play your game and be hungry, and that's where I hope tomorrow when we find out who we play that we come out and we're more settled and a little bit more hungry, right?

So I feel like we kind of came a little shell-shocked. There were moments where they were looking at the bench and I'm like, what am I going to do? We have to play the game. So that first moment is always tough. The first game is always tough.

We're going from last year, the first year to win a game. And it's a 4, 5 seed, so it's not really an underdog. Today you're full-on facing -- you're hunted today, and we had to face that.

Kansas is good. Kansas is an NCAA Tournament team, and TCU took it to them yesterday. That fearlessness, the underdog, that's why we love March Madness. That's why people that don't watch basketball everything they can possibly watch, because they fall in love with the underdog.

There was a nice little cheering section, but I can guarantee you everybody else in that gym was pulling for TCU, so when you have those moments it's not easy. So from a hunger standpoint, I don't think today was about hunger, it was about settling in and executing and still being able to play.

I think sometimes we want it too bad that it paralyzes us so we've got to be able to steady in that. But, again, when it comes down to the end of the game isn't it phenomenal that we can stay at that point and I don't know what that is but we've got it.

Q. Coach, in those moments you just said your team is -- what is going through your head? You look calm out there. What's going through your head in those moments?

COACH BARANCZYK: Basically what do we have to do?

And you have about 20 seconds that you can articulate what you want them to do. Our jobs as coaches is to make them as steady and confident in what we're doing as you possibly can.

So you have about 20 seconds to articulate the message and draw it up, what you're doing, and then you have to draw it up again. Then when they step out on the floor you have to say, okay, I'll tell you one more time.

So if I'm not like that, then they're not going to be like that. So I'm steady. I know. I'm also willing -- I've fallen down plenty of times. We have to be able to fall down and have bad play calls. There are plenty of things that I've got to get better at, too, and I'm literally in it with them. It's that simple.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you for your time.

COACH BARANCZYK: Thank you for being here. I appreciate it; especially our Oklahoma people.

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