

Big 12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 10, 2023

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

Municipal Auditorium

Iowa State Cyclones

Coach Bill Fennelly

Ashley Joens

Emily Ryan

Postgame Press Conference



EMILY RYAN: Coaches were putting us in great positions to get good looks and put us into positions to succeed, so just doing what the coaches said and taking the opportunities we were given.

And it happened to be me a couple times, and I'm just glad I was able to do something to help the team.

Q. Ashley, can you talk about -- it was tough to score inside for a while there and you guys are obviously known for being 3-point shooters, but it was a really big part of your game tonight. Talk about that.

ASHLEY JOENS: They played tough defense, especially when you got in the lane, and we were able to knock down some big shots which allowed the defense to spread out a little more and allowed us to go on a bit of a run there.

Q. Coach, with about four minutes to go you're dead set, 63-63; how special is it knowing you can rely on a player to come through in these critical moments in this postseason?

COACH FENNELLY: I was really proud of our team the last four minutes. It's a tie game, we call timeout. The staff did a great job of just, hey, this is right where you want to be. Let's execute down the stretch.

And like I said, when you have these two, you just feel comfortable that we're going to -- I'm not saying we're going to win the game, but we're going to make the right plays.

Luckily we made them, and we probably defended the last four minutes better than we had the whole game. Wish we could bottle that last 3:59. Amazing finish to the game.

Q. In a physical match-up like this, how do you find the strength in those last couple of minutes to put everything aside and close out the game?

ASHLEY JOENS: When you get into March you just have to go out there and give it everything you have. If you lose you're done, so you can't take anything for granted. You have to leave it all out on the court.

Iowa State 74, Baylor 63

THE MODERATOR: We will welcome in the Iowa State Cyclones, Coach Bill Fennelly, student athletes Ashley Joens and Emily Ryan. We will start with an opening statement by Coach.

COACH FENNELLY: Really proud of our team. I told the team before the game, everyone talks about being special in March. Our team has been special since June, and they showed that tonight.

An amazing effort against a really, really good team. The kind of game this tournament is about. Really, really proud. And Ashley got her trophy before the game. They'll probably give her another one after the game. And I don't care what anyone says, we have the best leader, point guard, quarterback, in the country, in Emily Ryan. That's why we're here first in the press conference.

Q. Games like these, moments like these, is that what you envisioned when you decided to come back?

ASHLEY JOENS: Yeah, for sure. Anytime you get to come back and play for another year and get to play with this team and the coaches, it's exciting to play in the Big XII. The Big XII conference is a great conference and every game is going to be tough and Baylor gave us a good run and we were able to counter it, and it's fun to be in games like this.

Q. It seemed in the third quarter when you guys needed a point you either got a point or got to the free throw line. How were you able to do that so effectively and every time you went down the floor?

Q. Ashley and Emily, can you address this, it's a different match-up with Oklahoma. They're very offensive-minded team. Can you talk about that match-up? You guys had two really good games against them during the regular season.

ASHLEY JOENS: We split with them during the regular season but they're a really good offensive team. They want to run the ball, get a shot up quick. We will do some scout tomorrow and get ready to go.

Q. Ashley, what was it like getting that recognition before the game?

ASHLEY JOENS: Yeah, it was really special just to be able to receive this award, but to be able to receive it here with all of our fans and with my teammates, because I wouldn't be able to do what I do without them and without the coaches. They put me in a position to be successful and I wouldn't have won the award without them.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, ladies. Congratulations. Questions for Coach.

Q. Bill, can you kind of explain what that fourth quarter run was like where Ashley buried a couple of threes and carried this game home for you guys?

COACH FENNELLY: Yeah, you know, like we said in the timeout, tie game. They made two really good plays in a row on us. I think we just -- we stuck to what we were trying to do. We overdrilled a couple times, but we were trying to invite the double team and then kick.

The floor opened up a couple times, and we made a great decision. We got one in transition. Lexi hits one at the end of the clock. But, again, those are shots when they go in, you get to play tomorrow.

But the execution down the stretch was really, really good, and we talk about that a lot. Keep saying the same thing. Sorry I'm boring you to tears, but those two won the game. I mean, we have Emily Ryan who the ball goes to the right place at the right time 90% of the time. There's a couple of them that -- that's why I'm a little more gray than when she got to Iowa State.

And then you throw the ball to Ashley Joens. Kid's got no fear of the moment. She wants the ball. That's why she is the Player of the Year in this league. That's why she is an All-American. We have been blessed to see her for five years.

And when the biggest moments come the biggest players

show up, and she certainly showed up be tonight.

Q. She's been on your team for a really long time because of COVID. What's it like this season watching her go back to those vintage performances where she is putting 30 points up?

COACH FENNELLY: It's been fun because Ashley came back for the right reason. She loves Iowa State. She loves college basketball. She loves her teammates.

When you saw her breakdown at Senior Day, I think that was a moment that none of us expected because you don't see it from her. She just -- she loves to play here. When you love to do something and it's special to you you're going to be willing to invest.

If it doesn't work, it doesn't work, but a lot of people don't want to do that. They don't want to make that commitment. They don't want to make that investment. And there is a level of trust there, in your coaches and in your teammates.

Like I said, she plays at Iowa State. She loves Iowa State. She has embraced the Iowa State way forever. It's fun to see that moment. She had a lot of them, but tonight I'm sure will go down on the shortlist for her.

Q. I know Ashley and Emily played great games, but can you talk about Denae Fritz and Morgan Kane showing up?

COACH FENNELLY: Yeah, both of those guys were really good. Mo continues to -- and I said this to you guys yesterday -- I think it is a talent, a skill, to show up to work every day.

Everyone laughs when I say that. I think it's true, and Mo shows up to work every day. Whatever she is asked to do, she does it.

And Denae is becoming the kind of player that our fans are going to love watching because she is ultra competitive. She doesn't back down from anyone, anything.

I think the effort of our team, the biggest -- besides obviously the shots and winning -- you know, when you play Big XII game and you out-rebound someone by 25, especially our team, that has nothing to do with how high you jump or how tall you are.

That's how big your damn heart is. Our kids played with a big heart tonight, and luckily we get to be tired and stay up late tonight and prepare for tomorrow.

Q. Coach, when you have a crowd that's coming through like that, having basically turned this into a home game, even though it's a huge match-up, postseason environment, when you are in a battle like this and you have a crowd that size behind you, how does that fuel your team and keep them going in such a unique environment in the postseason?

COACH FENNELLY: It's huge. We talk about it at home all the time. Hilton is such a special place. When people talk about Hilton South, that's not a catch phrase that someone puts on a tee shirt, it's real. That's why our fans have loved coming to Kansas City.

For them to do what they did today -- and I feel bad for T.J. and the guys, but they will have a great seed in the NCAA tournament and be a really tough out.

But for a lot of people to scramble from the men's game to get to our game, you don't do that unless you care. The thing I talk about all the time is the emotional attachment that our fan base has to the student athletes, to what our university stands for is -- it's unique.

I'm not saying no one else has it, but you have a pep rally and our president is there every day at the pep rally. She doesn't want to talk. She just wants to thank the fans.

So it's a really, really cool thing. I'm glad that they made the effort, and hopefully we'll see a few of them hang around tomorrow afternoon.

Q. What about the match-up? I feel like the Iowa State-Oklahoma game were probably two of the most entertaining games in the conference. About that third match-up since you guys split, initial thoughts?

COACH FENNELLY: I think the biggest thing will be the pace of the game. Probably the 30 second clock operator can take the day off tomorrow. Probably. Rest will be a concern. Obviously you know we exhausted a lot of energy tonight, but that's fine. They're kids. We're not into load management. We're fine. They will get an ice bath or whatever, they get to play tomorrow.

They're so skilled offensively, and the thing I've said about a lot of teams we have faced this year, teams that are old and teams that are skilled are really good, and I think our league -- you know, I think Oklahoma is a team that deserves to be in the top 16. They've been there all year. Our league is so hard, and every game it's a different match-up.

I would be really disappointed we have we have is not in the NCAA Tournament. I mean, I don't know anyone who

wants to play them. I don't want to see Quinerly and Madisen Smith. That's the thing that our league has gotten us ready for a lot of stuff. But Oklahoma is so good, so skilled.

And you're right. We had two knock-down-drag-out games with them, and we're looking forward to getting another chance tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach for your time.

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