

Big 12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Saturday, March 11, 2023

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

Municipal Auditorium

Texas Longhorns

Coach Vic Schaefer

DeYona Gaston

Shaylee Gonzales

Rori Harmon

Postgame Press Conference

Texas 64, Oklahoma State 57

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Texas, Coach Vic Schaefer, and student athletes Rori Harmon and Shaylee Gonzales and DeYona Gaston.

Coach if you would like to offer an opening statement?

COACH SCHAEFER: Thank you. Okay. Well, we're going to give God the glory for No. 25 and just, you know, really want to first of all congratulate Oklahoma State on an incredible season, an incredible season.

Coach has done a great job with that group. They have given us three very, very tough games. That's true going to be -- there won't be anybody lining up excited about playing them in the NCAA Tournament, I can tell you. They got great players. They play extremely hard. Her and her staff do a great job and we have tremendous respect and admiration for them and wish them the very, very best.

I was very concerned about them in this game because we have had two knock-down drag-outs with them already this season. They're well coached, disciplined, great point guard play as I said yesterday. Her point guard came with her from UMKC and that kid has had a great year. She is an All-Conference player. Thought they just got better as the year went on and that's what good teams do.

That being said, I'm so proud of my kids. I thought they played their guts out today. I thought they played with tremendous passion, tremendous heart. We call it Texas fight. I just thought they were just really, really special in



regards to how hard they played.

We could easily have Shay Holle up here who was 5 out of 9 and had 13 points. She played really, really well. Had 4 assists, defended well.

Thought our kids were really tough today, and you have to be. In this tournament it's about toughness. It's about resilience and being competitive. We talked about the three Cs, and competitive is one of them. You have to have that.

Like you have to have that mindset of being competitive and being humble, humbling yourselves. One game is over, moving on to the next, realizing that everybody is coming for us, everybody is coming for Texas. We get everybody's best shot. They have 18 rival games in this league every year.

So we've kinda built up a little bit of a -- I guess an understanding of that, maybe. I don't ever like letting my guard down thinking they have figured it out because I usually get slapped when that happens. But they really played much different today from the jump and I'm, again, really, really proud of 'em.

Now it becomes another 24 hour-turnaround and tomorrow will be about the same thing, about how tough are we? How focused can we be? I thought we were special today.

Q. For Shaylee, Vic was talking about the sleepy team loses these early games. Y'all came out super sharp today. Talk about the mindset and what the difference was today?

COACH SCHAEFER: And I don't want to hear about letting you sleep in and no shootaround.

SHAYLEE GONZALES: Yeah, I mean, he definitely harped on that yesterday. We knew -- we had dinner and after we had film and we watched a lot of film on Oklahoma State. We were locked in, we were getting focused. I feel like that helped us prepare for this morning.

Q. Shaylee, have you had a chance to talk to your

family yet or seen the video of your dad at halftime?

SHAYLEE GONZALES: They told me he won a lot of money. That's all I know, though.

Q. Coming up yesterday how did you go over your performance mentally, and were you thinking at all about that today, or was it just one of those shooter shoot and you move on to the next?

SHAYLEE GONZALES: Yeah, yesterday definitely was not my day and I knew I needed to pick it up and focus and have a better game, a better day. I definitely did that. It was just a chip on my shoulder and it's all mental. I was focused and ready for the game.

Q. Stay with Shaylee. This is obviously, moments like this, assuming why you decided to come to Texas. What is your reaction to gathering up for the postseason and what you guys have been able to accomplish so far?

SHAYLEE GONZALES: I mean, right now what we're doing as a team is something super special, and I feel like it proves how much hard work we put in every single day, every single practice, every single lift.

I feel like this team, we're close on and off the court so that definitely helps. We're super excited for tomorrow's game and hopefully we come out with a win.

Q. Rori, you know what it takes to win a championship tomorrow. What will you do?

RORI HARMON: Coming in ready for the game plan, and taking care of the ball and be understanding that we made it this far, so we just need to lock in and understand that we didn't go through a lot of stuff that we went through this past season and during the conference and preseason and just this summer to let this go.

We will be ready.

DeYONA GASTON: Yeah, coach talked to us about toughness at the end of the game, so he told us we're going to need that tomorrow. So I think toughness is what it's going to take to win a Big XII championship.

Q. Rori, the three-pointer you hit near the end of the shot clock, you guys seemed to have an answer for everything today. I guess for DeYona, how tough you guys were inside with the answers. Can you just talk about no matter what they were throwing at you, I think they hit eight threes, you guys kept answering.

DeYONA GASTON: Every time they scored we stayed composed. We didn't worry about it if we were going to lose or not. We just stayed composed and we knew we had to be tougher than them, because they're a tough team to play against.

I think that's what we did today, is we were just the tougher team.

RORI HARMON: What she said. Just staying composed. Games like this and playing against teams like OSU, it's going to be ups and downs and highs and lows. One team is going to take the lead one second, and the other second we'll have the lead.

I guess to answer your question about the 3-pointer, it was like I don't know how many seconds left, like, 2, so I just let it go. No point in thinking about it.

Q. Rori, you were able to turn over OSU's guards 14 times today and you scored 21 points off those turnovers. What helped you be so effective?

RORI HARMON: That's one of the things we do focus on here. We like to run the floor a lot, so if we get a turnover we need to run. There is no point in waiting in the paint and the guards waiting in the paint realizing that we already got the rebound.

It happened a few times where Shaylee, she is already out there, and after we turn them over, those are the points we need. I guess it was 21-7, so those are the points that make the difference in the game sometimes.

Q. Shaylee, going back to your dad, I know him and your mom played ball. How much did they teach you about the sport and how would you grade your dad as a shooter?

SHAYLEE GONZALES: My parents both played at Grand Canyon University; that's where they met. My mom was my high school coach and my dad was my club coach since I was 10. I learned a lot from them, coaches' kid.

I think they have definitely put the love of the game in me and I owe them a lot and they have taught me a lot. Very grateful for them.

Q. (Question off mic.)

SHAYLEE GONZALES: No.

THE MODERATOR: Ladies, thank you. Questions for Coach?

Q. Vic, you had to get creative there in the end of the second quarter and the second half with Shaylee's foul trouble. How did you rework your lineup and survive that?

COACH SCHAEFER: Yeah, we played jock and then we went to a little bit bigger lineup, because that's really our better defensive lineup.

Amina is really special. She is going to be somebody that down the line can really help us. It's kind of that three, four defender, and yet she can guard a one. When you're guarding them, they have four guards in the lineup a lot, so it allows us to switch and it do some things with her. She can guard a point guard as easily as a four player.

So I think we isolated D a couple times and got away with it until they could figure that out. You just try to ham and egg it, really. Trying to buy some time. I told her when she had her three and I was reluctant to start her in the second half, but I did, you know, she's gotta play smart. I thought she did.

I think we got by with five minutes there in the fourth quarter before I could get her back in with four something to go. I was glad to see her be able to finish it out. Kid plays really hard, Danny. We talk about her offense and what she averaged before she got here and all that. The kid has learned to embrace defending like we defend, and you've got to admire somebody like that who has never been through practices like we go through and the intensity and the focus that we try to defend with.

So that kid, you gotta give her credit. Man, she has bought into how we do things at Texas.

Q. I guess it's a good day when one of your kid's parents hits a big shot for a lot of cash. Sounds like you did let them sleep in and no shootaround this morning.

COACH SCHAEFER: It was kind of a late-nigh decision and I don't do it often, but just felt like the extra 45 minutes to an hour of extra sleep might have been more important than getting in the gym for 30 minutes of shootaround.

It sends a message. Well, we didn't shoot it well, but it's going to be okay. We came over early. We came over early and got up shots for about 25 minutes. So we were only going to get 30 minutes in the arena this morning early, so we got that 25 minutes in prior to our actual warm-up.

I think they got comfortable at that moment, plus helps you get rid of that breakfast that you eat and everything else. I

always -- I talk to our kids all the time about I always played hungry. You see what we feed these kids, I don't know how they move, you know?

So I thought it would be best to let them sleep an extra hour. We came down, went through the scout, we went over -- our men's area has a court on the floor in the ballroom, so Rori got a couple of dunks in and we walked through defensive stuff.

Really appreciate Coach Terry letting us get in there and borrowing that this morning. That's what a great teammate does, right? Wishing them the best tonight. I'm excited to see them play and appreciate them letting us in there.

Q. Vic, you've played OSU three times and the first time they scored 86, second time, 69, and today they scored 57. What have you been able to figure out through the three match-ups about their offense and how to stop them?

COACH SCHAEFER: Well, they're just really hard to guard. I think -- you know, that first game we played them I don't think either coach was happy about our defense. I think it was 86-82 and it was a nightmare for a defensive guy, I can tell you.

But I just think, just like them, we all watch film and we all figure out ways to try to minimize certain things and strengths that people do. They certainly do some things very, very well, and it starts with their point guard. She is so special and such a tough, competitive kid. Plays with a presence.

There are lots of really good players, but the great ones have a presence. I just think her, I think Keys. I just think those kids have a presence on the floor. Keys doesn't get a lot of credit. Man, you can't take your eye off that kid. You talk about a competitor.

Is she finally going to graduate? She seems like she has been there forever. You're shaking your head. It sounds like she's going to be there and ever.

She is a tremendous competitor. In my mind she's the glue with that group. She doesn't hurt 'em, you don't guard her, she buries you, she kills you, plays hard defensively.

So if I'm doing my job, I can't give up 86 a night. There will be somebody else up here, I promise you.

Q. (Audio cutting out.)

COACH SCHAEFER: It's an interesting question. I just think -- I don't know how much you know about my team,

but we have had a lot of things thrown at us this year.

Again, we talk to kids all the time about, you know, it's be not about the event, it's about how you respond when you have things come up that are not good.

So we constantly talk about our response. Those are life lessons, too, right? Things happen in life, and it's not about the event, it's how you respond to that event. I've learned that as a dad and as a father with my own son. When he was hurt, it's how you respond.

With our kids, with the injuries we've had and the setbacks and going through this gauntlet of a year that we have had with our season, I just think they've -- you know, they've grown. It's growth. It's maturity. It's developing a little bit of toughness and a callous to it and control what you can control. I'm constantly preaching that.

Look, I can't sit around and worry about the things I can't control. You have to learn that as a coach, both inside and outside of your team sometimes. I think with this group I'm big on accountability. Good, bad, or indifferent, I'm going to speak my mind to them, and they know that and I think they appreciate that. I had a conversation with them this morning just letting them know I think there is an accountability piece, and there is not enough time to get into worldly things, but it's who I am and how we try to do things.

We try to be accountable. I'm not a big excuse guy. Nobody cares. Nobody cares what the excuses are. Who care? People 90 miles down the highway are my opponents. That's who cares. That's the only people that care about my excuses.

They just don't matter! At the end of the day they just don't matter! Our job is to do the best we can and get the job done, that's it!

I think with this team they've heard that from me enough. So I'm just not interested in excuses, and I know that they know that I try to be accountable as our coach as well. I don't know if that answers your question completely, but that's kinda how we try to approach things at Texas and women's basketball.

Q. Do you make them hunker down in the hotel rooms tonight? Are they going to be allowed to watch the men? How do they handle tonight?

COACH SCHAEFER: Yeah, I think we'll have some that want to stay and watch the next game here. Not sure what time that game is, 2:30, maybe?

Frankly, we will probably go back and we will all be together and we will have dinner together, we will watch film, and I'm sure we will watch our guys play.

I mean, you always like it when my team watches basketball. Sometimes it's hard to get 'em all together to watch basketball. There is no question our group will be together and we will try to support those guys the best we can, but we've obviously gotta get ready for a big game of our own tomorrow.

I really want 'em to try to do as best they can to get some rest and then my job is to get 'em refocused and, again, y'all, it another opportunity. We don't take 'em for granted.

When you have been in it as long as I have you learn that early. You never know when these opportunities are going to happen. I think they're going to happen every year but there is no promise. There is no guarantee. So you want them to really embrace being a pro right now. From today until we finish tomorrow, it's about us being a pro, taking care of ourselves, getting focused, doing our homework, our scouting reports, eating right, rehydrating, all that.

Q. Vic, can you give us a bit of a scouting report on either OU or Iowa State?

COACH SCHAEFER: Yeah, they can all shoot it. Doesn't matter who you're looking at, they can all shoot it. We have had a double dose of both of 'em. As I told 'em after the game, I think we've been down this road with both those teams, we know how super competitive they are. We know how well coached they are.

Part of the toughness piece tomorrow is going to be the mental piece, understanding what number you're looking at, what they can do and what they can't do, and being able to handle that.

It's a real easy scouting report in my mind. They can all shoot it. You better get out there and try to take that away, because that's what they do. That crowd today for both teams, it's going to be real loud when somebody makes a three.

Our team, our crowd, we get loud for different things, right? Those two teams, they get really loud when somebody makes a three. We're going to try to maybe not let 'em make too many threes. I'm sure they're going to make a few. We let them make some today, and we were really focused on trying not to do that as well.

We are excited about the opportunity. We have tremendous respect and admiration for both those teams and those staffs, and we're excited about the opportunity to

do it again.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you. Congratulations.

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