

Big 12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Saturday, March 11, 2023

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

Municipal Auditorium

Iowa State Cyclones

Coach Bill Fennelly

Ashley Joens

Nyamer Diew

Postgame Press Conference

Iowa State 82, Oklahoma 72

THE MODERATOR: We welcome the Iowa State Cyclones, Ashley Joens and Nyamer Diew. Coach?

BILL FENNELLY: The first thing I want to say is how impressed I am with Ana Llanusa, Taylor Robertson, and Madi Williams. What they have done for Oklahoma basketball, what they have done for our league. I'm just glad we don't have to guard them again.

Another great game. Two teams played as hard as they could play. Great environment. Just excited to do the things we needed to do. I thought we defended as best we could. Made some big shots at big times and really.

What Nyamer gave us off the bench speaks to the character of our team, I think, and I think everyone needs to hear this. Obviously Nyamer was great in the first half and we were going to start her in the second half and she said Coach, Mo is a senior; she should start. Let me come off the bench.

When was the last time you heard that? That's the kind of team I get to coach every day. Excited it get to coach against a great Texas team tomorrow.

Q. Ashley and Nyamer, Bill said the timeliness of the shooting, the timely threes were important today not only in the second half late down the stretch, but also in the first half. Talk about the importance of those.

ASHLEY JOENS: I know Nyamer hit a lot of them. Emily did a great job of getting the ball into the paint, and Nyamer knocked down shots and Lexi knocked down shots and everyone did at the right time, and that's huge when you



are not getting defensive stops you need to keep scoring.

NYAMER DIEW: Consistency. You work on your shot every day and sometimes it doesn't go in, but at the right time the basketball gods will reward us, so I think that's what it was a little bit.

Q. Nyamer, can you take us through that conversation you had with Coach Fennelly? What did you tell him and why did you do that? Like he said, most people probably wouldn't do that.

NYAMER DIEW: For sure, Mo is not going to play the Big XII tournament again and she deserved a starting spot. I can be streaky, but Mo is always there. She came up to me after the game yesterday and said, it's fine. You just keep your head in it.

Mo is a great teammate, a great person off the court, and I just knew it was more comfortable to come off the bench. Like why not just help everyone out. I want to be there for my teammates when I can and I don't want to mess up my own mojo, but like my teammates, they're doing great. Like that starting five they have a great connection.

So I think a lot of it is my connection with Mo and knowing Mo deserved it.

Q. Can you take us through when you had that talk with Coach?

NYAMER DIEW: Yeah, I went up to Steyer after we came out of halftime and I was like, hey, is there a chance I can come off the bench? She was like, oh, yeah, if that's more comfortable for you. And then I talked to coach and he said, thanks for saying that. A lot of people don't do that.

Q. Is part of that your personality, you are more comfortable bringing your energy off the bench?

NYAMER DIEW: I love to support my teammates, and sometimes if you can see the flow of the game and bring in a set of energy when everyone is a little tired, you see things differently from the bench at times, so helping my

teammates out in whatever way.

Q. Is it a reminder tonight that anyone can have a big game or go out with a big night, and that's your formula to winning?

ASHLEY JOENS: Yeah, we all trust in each other and we believe in our team, and anyone can go off at anytime. We know if we stick together, play together, things are going to go well for us.

NYAMER DIEW: Yeah, for sure. I think it's also what Coach Fenn said at the beginning of the year. Like when Steph wasn't injured we had seven potential starters, so like you just got to play your role, and at any given time your time will come, so stay ready.

Q. Ashley, I feel obliged to ask about going over 3,000 points; 14th player in NCAA basketball to do that. What does it say about you and the team around you?

ASHLEY JOENS: Yeah, obviously I wouldn't be able to do that without my coaches and my teammates. They do an amazing job putting me into a position to score that many points, and obviously it's a big honor and I wouldn't be able to do it without them.

NYAMER DIEW: Ashe is a hard worker. We see it day in and day out. She is definitely deserving of this so congrats, Ashe.

Q. They were feeling good when they were up 8, hitting shots and getting stops. What switched it for you guys? Was it better defensive intensity? Because you ran away with it for a while after that.

ASHLEY JOENS: I think we just had to buy in more defensively, get some rebounds, and use that our advantage to get points on the offensive end as well.

NYAMER DIEW: Basketball is a game of runs, so just stopping them when they go on a run or scoring with a bucket just to help us a little bit. And I also think it says a lot about our first half and how we were able to get such a big lead and we were never giving it up at any point in the game.

Q. Ashe, I'm not letting you get away with that easy of an answer on 3,000 points. Talk about what it takes, how many shots, how much you've worked. I know you like to inspire little kids and a lot of them are watching today. What it takes to do what you did today. I know you have always credited your teammates but what you've done individually to do that.

ASHLEY JOENS: It all goes back to when I was growing up in the backyard. You're back there shooting, not really thinking about what you're going to do eventually. Obviously there was always the dream of playing college basketball, but to be able to do it here at Iowa State and to be able to do it this successfully has been a huge blessing.

Q. Ashley, what's your feeling right now? You are going to the Big XII Championship game.

ASHLEY JOENS: We feel really good right now. We're going to get back to the hotel, get our schedule for tomorrow, and get ready to go.

Q. Nyamer, can you talk about the energy you bring? In this arena, every time you hit a shot the people exploded, and you seemed to really kind of help the crowd. Can you talk about that part of your game that you bring?

NYAMER DIEW: Yeah, I mean, I feel like it's not hard playing with this team. It's really not hard. Threes are exciting. We shoot a lot of them. Knowing that sometimes it's not going the way it is, but like always having Mo and the rest of my teammates always supporting me no matter what's happening, I feel like there is no way you could be so upset about something, because turn around and we might hit a three and it's exciting.

Q. Ashley, what was it like going up against your sister tonight?

ASHLEY JOENS: We don't really notice it, I guess. You're just out there playing. You don't really realize it at the time and then we can talk after the game.

Q. No words back and forth during the game?

ASHLEY JOENS: No.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, ladies.

Q. Bill, who is going to be on Rori Harmon tomorrow?

BILL FENNELLY: Probably -- the thing about Texas is obviously their size. You have the best on-ball defender in the league and a lot of size.

So we'll try and figure out something. What I told the team was same thing I told them after the game last night: Don't think about Texas. Celebrate what they did today. It's the coaches' job. We'll get Emily ready tomorrow. Let Emily enjoy this one a little bit.

Q. Were you going to start Diew in the second half if she hadn't come up to you?

COACH FENNELLY: Yes.

Q. Is it good vibes coming all the way back around for somebody to do something like that and have the game they did?

BILL FENNELLY: She was going to start the second half. We changed our defense, and right before the second half she walked up to me and said, Coach, Mo should start. I would rather come off the bench. Is that okay with you?

And I'm like, yeah. I was stunned and very proud that she cared enough about her teammate. Ny is very much into -- she senses what's going on, and when it's going in a certain way she is like, can we just repeat what we did in the first half?

So it was her decision, and luckily it was in time we could get Mo back in there before we got in trouble.

Q. (No microphone.)

BILL FENNELLY: Right on the court, two, three minutes before the start. As soon as I walked out on the court she grabbed me and said, Coach, and that's what happened.

Q. How much does that sense of momentum from Ny play into her game?

BILL FENNELLY: Ny is an emotional kid, obviously. When things are going well she gets excited and it brings energy. Yesterday she never got into the flow of the game. She got in foul trouble and never had a chance.

Today, obviously when you play Oklahoma, the thing that we said a thousand times, if we didn't say it 10,000 times, is you have to keep scoring. You have to keep scoring. That sounds silly, but against them, you do.

We felt like Ny could give us an extra perimeter option because of the way they defend. She hit a couple early and just really had one of those games like she had when we played Baylor at home, kind of a similar game.

Q. The last time you coached in a Big XII was when Bridget was here and Ashley's freshman year. After the season you've had and everything you have been through what's it like that it's going to come to an end in a Big XII championship for Ashley?

BILL FENNELLY: I think it's a great tribute to everyone, what our players have done and what my staff has done,

the fans. I mean, it's what you want to do. Wouldn't have -- you lose today doesn't mean there are a lot of good things that haven't happened, but certainly a chance to play in your conference championship game the last time here, which is sad for me, in a lot of ways, but our kids are excited about the opportunity, and we know we have a huge task in front of us.

There are only two teams playing tomorrow and we're one of them so that's kinda cool.

Q. I don't know if you can be humble to a fault, but Ashley whenever she discusses or is asked about an accolade, very, very humble and differential. I will ask you to reflect on 3,000 points and what that means to be in that rarified air.

BILL FENNELLY: I think there are a lot of things Ashley has done, a lot of awards. She doesn't like to talk about it. It's very uncomfortable.

And I think someone told me there are 14. She got the COVID year, yeah, she did, but that doesn't take away from the fact that you are on a list of 14 people to ever do something. That's pretty impressive, and that list is some of the greatest players to ever play the game.

For her to be one of those people says a lot about her and her work ethic, her ability to do those kinds of things. Very proud of her. I didn't realize it was today. I really didn't know that. I should have known that, but I'm glad you guys reminded me.

Q. Coach, you've talked about how Kansas City is your favorite city next to Ames. Is there something fitting about the fact that the last year we are in Municipal, that Cyclone fans get to come and cheer you guys on?

BILL FENNELLY: There is a sentimental part of that, I guess. I love playing here. I think it's a phenomenal venue. I think it's perfect for women's basketball in so many ways. But change happens. I think for our kids, to get to do it tomorrow will be special.

Yeah, it brings back a lot of memories of some of the other teams that we've had here that have gotten to play in this game. So we're very proud of that fact and proud to represent Iowa State tomorrow.

Q. Coach, Ny looks energetic on the bench, but what kind of impact, does it make for the team and energy when she is in the game playing as well as she did today?

BILL FENNELLY: No, I think we have a lot of kids on our team that -- I don't know what the word is. They don't -- they're not outwardly emotional people, but I think what you saw today from Ny and from Nae, Lex, Emily, I mean, they feed off each other a little bit.

When one person is doing it the way Ny did it -- and I think the other thing that happens is when you care about your teammates and you have trust and faith in each other, when someone does well -- I mean, that's the ultimate thing to me, when you are happy when someone else is doing well.

That doesn't happen very much. Most people are -- we live in a "me over we" world. When it is "we" it's kind of cool. I think that's what you saw from her teammates and Ny today.

Q. Oklahoma is making the run late; Ny hits a three; Emily Ryan beats the shot clock. The timing of those two, how big did those moments feel?

BILL FENNELLY: Yeah, I think that's a great point, because they were big. We had about a four- or five-minute spurt where we really looked confused. They went to a zone, and we don't see a lot of zone, and that's on me.

Everyone kept thinking I should call timeout, and my dad is probably yelling at me because I didn't. But, yeah, I mean, that's what March is about. And Em throws that one in at the buzzer, it's a fluke, but that's what makes it cool.

We seem to hit them in the fourth quarter when we needed to have them, because we were struggling to get something in the basket.

Q. Bill, you got such great fan support here. Sort of a dichotomy with the men's and the women's and all your fans coming. Next year we go to a different format when the women start and finish right as the men start. Are you confident that the fan support you have seen will continue at this level in these numbers with the new format? What kind of challenge does that produce, especially for Iowa State?

BILL FENNELLY: No, that's a great question. It is a challenge. My boss is sitting right behind you and she is looking at me like, don't say anything. I like them together; I'm going to say it. I love Kansas City. I love the tournaments together.

I don't know how many people are going to be able to spend ten days down here. I don't know many people that have that kind of job. Most of our fans plan around spring

break and whatever. So T-Mobile is a beautiful facility, but I think this is the greatest -- besides the NCAA Tournament, I've said this is the greatest tournament there is in the country.

We've changed it. I said this to my would I, too, she is here, too, this are a lot of things at home I don't get a choice on. I don't get a choice with this one, and it's a great question, Barry, because I don't know. It will hurt the fan base, no question. For our guys and us to be here at the same time and our fans love it and we have crossover -- we have fans that love both men's and women's. Some schools have women's fans and some schools have men's fans, but we have both.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

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