

Big 12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Saturday, March 11, 2023

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

Municipal Auditorium

Oklahoma Sooners

Coach Jennie Baranczyk

Naveah Tot

Madi Williams

Postgame Press Conference



Iowa State 82, Oklahoma 72

THE MODERATOR: We are joined Oklahoma Coach Jennie Baranczyk, and we are joined by Naveah Tot and Madi Williams.

JENNIE BARANCZYK: Great game for women's basketball. I thought Iowa State had great players step up, and we fought back. We couldn't quite overcome it and we continued to adjust, but I do want to give Madi a shout-out. It wasn't easy for her to show up these past couple of days, but it's a testament to how much this actually does mean to people, how much it means to her. It's not just about playing basketball, it's about playing with this team.

Q. Madi, Jennie touched on it, your process of being able to get on the court these last couple of days, what is that process like for you, and how important was it for you to be on the court these last two days?

MADI WILLIAMS: I mean, it was pretty important for me. The number one priority for me was just to be able to be there for my team. It was just a lot of warm-ups, a lot of warm-ups, staying warm and connected to them.

Q. Madi, in this game it looked like you seemed more comfortable compared to the TCU game. I don't know if it was rust or what it was. Talking about this game in specific, what was the difference between yesterday and today, and why do you feel like you were so successful scoring the ball today?

MADI WILLIAMS: I think -- I'm sorry, I don't know how to answer that question. Just a second. It was just about getting to spots and my teammates being able to find me and get me the ball and just staying aggressive.

I think that we all did a good job of trying to demand the ball in the paint and looking for each other.

Q. From your perspective, Naveah, how much of a game changer is it when Madi is playing the way she did today?

NEVAEH TOT: I would say Madi is a huge game changer. She can get in the paint. She can shoot threes. She can take somebody one-on-one, and she is unstoppable. When she is like that, nobody can guard her.

JENNIE BARANCZYK: Madi's mobility from day-to-day, there was stuff she put in and things that we were trying to make her more comfortable. It was hard. Every day she has continued to get better and get more comfortable.

But make no mistake, she is dealing with some stuff off the floor. I think they tried a couple different things, but she makes a huge defensive presence for us, as well.

Q. Naveah, what are you feeling right now knowing that the Big XII tournament run is over, but you still have the NCAA Tournament?

NEVAEH TOT: I would say -- I hate losing, but maybe this is a good loss for us to kind of find our way for the March Madness tournament. People say they lose a conference and then make a run for the Final Four, and that's going to be us. Go back to our roots and find a way.

Q. You guys traded blows in the first half back in forth, and after halftime it seemed like they turned up the intensity. Where did you feel that they did things differently after halftime?

MADI WILLIAMS: I think we could have done a better job coming out ready to play. And when I say that, I just mean being aggressive, and, you know, being ready to guard the ball.

They drove by us a few times in that third quarter and we didn't make any adjustments in the way that we guarded one-on-one or even helped each other.

NEVAEH TOT: I would say the loose balls and our fouling, those were like the two biggest parts that kinda changed the game for us. So we have to get better at that. We have to want it more. We have to tough it out, like, find a way.

Q. Madi, how different is it being in the situation as a senior knowing from here on out every game could be your last game?

MADI WILLIAMS: It definitely gets you in the mindset of not taking anything for granted. And, I mean, you kind of had that mindset all season.

And then just wanting it to be a good one, so finding the joy in that, too.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, ladies.

Questions for Coach?

Q. Jennie, during warm-ups, Ana, we don't really know exactly what happened, and then she comes outright after she gets taken off the floor and plays, toughs it out. Can you walk us through what happened in warm-up and talk about the persistence of her being able to stick out whatever happened?

JENNIE BARANCZYK: I wasn't out there. You saw me run out there. I heard a different story than what happened. I heard something else. Doesn't matter.

Yeah, she hurt her ankle, and, you know, that's part of it. Then she played, and hopefully she'll be okay tomorrow. We evaluated her. We had doctors evaluating her so it was her decision, but I don't know exactly what happened. I wasn't out there.

Q. Jennie, through the first three quarters it seemed like they were hitting all kinds of shots on offense. From your perspective defensively, they talked about it, but how much is it things you needed to do better defensively, how much was it them hitting some tough shots, or how much was it both?

JENNIE BARANCZYK: I think Diew was phenomenal. She hasn't necessarily been 4 for 6 lately, but she showed up to play. Some of that we didn't adjust and she took the brunt off of things.

Obviously we know Joens is very, very good, and so is Donarski, in terms of scoring. I felt like we needed to do a better job of team defense, and part of your team defense is being able to guard one-on-one. We left people on

islands. That could have done better.

That's what Madi was alluding today. We probably should have gone zone earlier but they're so good from 3-point range. You pick your poison. They went at us, and so some of that is definitely them and some of that is we've got to guard a little better.

The biggest thing was the offensive rebounds. As soon as we would cut it they would make an offensive rebound. We cut it to 8; they get a big offensive rebound. Normally we're pretty good at that, and tonight we weren't.

Q. What's the relationship between you and Coach Fennelly? I know you, former Drake coach; now at Oklahoma. Just what is that relationship like? You play him a little bit more now.

JENNIE BARANCZYK: He's a lot older than me, if that's what you mean. No, Bill is a staple in Iowa. I've known him for a long time. I've known him since I was in high school. I have a lot of respect for what they've done. I have a lot of respect for what they've built in terms of a fan base.

This was a home game for them today. I know that the Iowa State fans take a lot of pride in that, and they should. It's a huge advantage to be able to have this many fans.

So I think what he has continued to build -- and this is what we are trying to do at Oklahoma, is recruit players from Oklahoma that come and make such a huge impact. That's what he's done at Iowa State. He's taken the Iowa girl and built something special.

So I have a lot, a lot of respect for him. He's always been very, very -- very good to me.

Q. Can you speak to the resiliency of this team? Seems like you have a lot of players that are willing to put it out there on the floor.

JENNIE BARANCZYK: You know, we do. It's amazing what they've done in these two years. I wasn't with them their first few years, but to be able to process with them and to watch them kind of grow and kind of figure out, okay, are we good? Are we not good? Okay, okay, and to have that expectation and be able to watch them through this whole journey, they're incredible.

I mean, to be able to watch what Madi has gone through from behind the scenes that not everybody gets privy information to, but when I'm watching her -- and she is the greatest person in the world. You cannot help but love her. She plays with a smile on her face. She is an incredible

leader. We all know that. We all see that.

But what we don't see is the true, deep love for this program and for the women in that circle with her, and for her to be able to do what she did today is pretty darn special.

And then you look at Ana and what she has overcome. I know everyone, oh, she's got all this experience, but she doesn't. She doesn't have a lot of playing experience.

She has a lot of experience being in Oklahoma, but for her to stick with it and still keep playing -- and, you know, this is one where it's first postseason and you win a game and it was crazy. Then, you know, I think she is still going through that.

I love coaching them. I got so, so lucky coming into this situation with these incredible women. I've always been really lucky with the people that I've been able to coach, but these guys are so amazing, because of them. They share the ball. They want it bad and we have to get tougher and we have to do all these things, but I love coaching them. I cannot say that enough.

Q. Coach, I've asked your seniors what it's like for them knowing each game could be their last. Talk about what they mean to you. Are you approaching this differently knowing that your time with those women is limited?

JENNIE BARANCZYK: That's the hard part about what we do. You put your heart and soul into these women and then they graduate. So every year it's hard. Every year you don't want to take one second for granted, and that's where you get frustrated as a coach, because you want to keep going.

I would have loved to have had one more game here with them, right? I think we live that all the time. Like she said this isn't the first time thing, I'm just so lucky -- I shouldn't ever say this, and Joe is in the back and he's probably going to fire me for saying this, but I'm glad there was COVID, because I got two years with these people and I wouldn't have gotten that.

So I'm not glad that there really was, but they came back and she stayed, and nobody does that of their caliber and with the coaching change. Yeah, I just want to be with them and I want to coach 'em really hard, and I know we're going to continue to be really good. It's not like we're going to just savor this and we're never going to be good again. We are going to continue to be really good.

But I love coaching them.

Q. Jennie, you mentioned the girls and staying and all that stuff at present, the coaching change. In many ways is this like the perfect coaching transition? Sherri had a great run. She goes, she leaves you with a bunch of good players, a bunch of good people.

You were able to convince them to stay. You get better, you have more success. Just seemed like a perfect scenario for a coaching change.

JENNIE BARANCZYK: I think you could use that word very easily. And the transition doesn't have to be very easy, and especially when you have -- I mean, it's going to be when Bill retires. That could be a hard transition, too, because he was there for so long.

Sherri was here for so long, and for her and I to have the same vision for the program to continue to get better, that's not typical. So for her to cheer us on, and us to come in and honor that and be able to have this incredible culture, yeah, I would say perfect is the absolutely right word.

Q. Jennie, sharing the regular season title, falling short of championship game, is it disappointing? I'm sure you guys really wanted to have a sole championship?

JENNIE BARANCZYK: Yeah, but I don't think we're happy about this. That's what we talked about in the locker room, it can fuel us. That's what Nevaeh was referencing, Payton Verhulst in our locker room was at Louisville last year, and they lost in their conference tournament, and then they went to a Final Four so that was her reference point.

But what -- would we have loved to have a sole championship? Yeah, that's the goal. That's everyone's goal, to be here. So I don't think it's because we were co-champions and, oh, we were ready to win it because of that. We want to win every game that we play. I think it's literally that simple.

Q. Talking about Madi and what she has been through. Was today a nice hurdle for her? She played yesterday and didn't look like herself. Today she looked like herself. Is that good for her self-confidence going forward? She can be back to where she was?

JENNIE BARANCZYK: Yeah, I think so. And where we have to get is how we were able to finish without her, the rest of us, that's where we needed that today. We needed that to really build that confidence, and instead I think we were like, okay, we need Madi, we need Madi, and although we do need Madi, you need everybody. You

need everybody in March. But for her, absolutely, for the team to have that confidence, absolutely, but the rest of us can step up and share some of that as well.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

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