

Big 12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 7, 2024

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

Houston Cougars

Coach Ronald Hughey

Britney Onyeje

Laila Blair

Postgame Press Conference

Texas Tech - 74 Houston - 60

THE MODERATOR: Coach, if you would give us an opening statement.

RONALD HUGHEY: Yeah, first of all I would like to thank our seniors for a great year. Coming into the Big 12, which is the best conference in the country, we had an opportunity to get some quality wins. We got five conference wins and had some opportunities to play some grueling, tough games. I know some teams that went into different conferences and they didn't even win a game. So, again, for us to come in and compete and fight the way we did, I'm proud of our group for being able to do that.

I thought Texas Tech came in after losing those kids and having that losing streak and decided they were going to fight with everything they had to be able to win this game and I thought they had the energy to do that. I thought we were inconsistent in our energy and being able to do that and the breakdowns for those threes. I think if you control those threes off the ball screen action you have an opportunity to win the game but hats off to them. They did what they needed to do to win the game.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for our student-athletes.

Q. What does your head coach and coaching staff mean to you all?

LAILA BLAIR: Good evening. It mean a lot. They put us into a position to make it through the season and to continue to build us up not only as players, as people, a woman. So appreciative of them for sure.

BRITNEY ONYEJE: And I want to add to Laila, as well.



We're all a big family. Our coaches mean the world to us. They make sacrifices like we do and they put a lot into this game like we do. There are no words that can talk about it, but we are a whole big family and I'm grateful I got to play with this coach for the past four or five years. I can't say nothing more. I'm excited that I got to have this in my life.

Q. Coach, you mentioned this being your first year in the Big 12. What are you going to take from this year and apply to next year?

RONALD HUGHEY: The first thing we started meeting about the things we needed to do. The one thing about the Big 12 is having an opportunity to have Big 12 players. You have to really get down and come up with a decisive plan on recruiting to get the opportunity to have the kids that can compete at this level. You can go out and get players and try to scheme all you want to, but if you don't have the right players on the floor to be able to create plays, because at the end of the day we all know each other's plays. Comes down to players making plays.

The other thing is having the opportunity to dissect everybody's system. The original Big 12 schools knew each other, so they all knew what they were going to face.

We all came in having to try to figure out that. Watching the film, you can go through all the film you want to. Until you are in the action, then you know. Now we know which opportunity comes with each program, and now we know how, you know -- just give you an example: Kansas playing through the high-low. Iowa State playing through pack line, Texas playing through their post players, now you have an opportunity to know what you are playing with.

It's like what we did in the American, we had an opportunity to be there and find our way to the top and had the opportunity to play in the championship game last year, but we knew those programs. So that's the big thing about the Big 12 this year, we had the opportunity to learn a lot, learn a lot, but it starts with the players and having the opportunity to recruit those players to be a part of the program.

Q. Coach, you mentioned thanking the seniors. But

you have two seniors up here. What have they and the rest of the senior class meant to your program?

RONALD HUGHEY: I can't even put it into words. It's tremendous. I can start with these two right here: Laila Blair with her faith, just taught me so much about being persistent, holding your head high, God got us, those kind of things, because I know that, but when you have somebody who is under 22 talking about that every single day, being able to do that, that gives you extra motivation for that.

Again, she helps you in that area. It helps me at times when I need it. We are not perfect. We all get weak, we have doubts, those kinds of things, so you have people like that. And you have to feed off each other, and she can give us that.

You talk about Britney Onyeje who has great work ethic and a pleasant attitude, or I'm going to go out and get it every day and be a fighter no matter what's going on, and you are able to see that and you are able to feed off those kids, because that's who they are, so those bits of pieces of those seniors reside in me, because I try to give them that, but they give it back to me, and I'm proud of them for that.

Q. To the seniors: Coach talked about what you give to the team, but can you talk about what you're leaving for your teammates as they carry on to the future and continue just to be great?

BRITNEY ONYEJE: Yes, I can talk about how -- well, what I'm leaving to the team is leadership, and just speaking up and being positive all the time. I feel like I held that to a high this season, and all the seasons I've been here. I just want to -- I always put it on the court, so I want to leave being a dog.

Go in the game, give it all you got. Doesn't matter what's going on outside, all that matters is the game. So I wanted to leave that on the court, and I hope I'm able to transfer that energy into my teammates, and I'm pretty sure I did. We all got a dog in this, and we just gotta get there mentally. That's what I would say.

LAILA BLAIR: Dog grit. I would say the thing about leaving something, a mark, is really big to me. I hope and pray that I was able to leave a standard of, really living out, like, you know our motto, everything matters and approaching every practice, every film session, every off-season, every time I step on to the court people can see I'm not taking this opportunity for granted. So my hope and prayer is that my teammates saw that, and they can lead from that standpoint and hold themselves to that

standard every day and hold that up for their teammates and just being a light. So that's what I would say.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations on your careers, ladies. Thank you.

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