

Big 12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 8, 2024
Kansas City, Missouri, USA
T-Mobile Center

Kansas Jayhawks Coach Brandon Schneider Holly Kersgieter Zakiyah Franklin

Postgame Press Conference

Kansas - 77, BYU - 53

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Kansas head coach Brandon Schneider and student-athletes Holly Kersgieter and Zakiyah Franklin. Coach?

BRANDON SCHNEIDER: I thought our guys really adjusted well defensively late in the second quarter and then on into the second half in terms of just doing a better job of guarding the ball, protecting the paint. I thought BYU was terrific early in the game in attacking the paint and forcing us into a lot of situations where we had to rotate. Once we shored that up, I was proud of how we defended.

Q. First of all, Zakiyah, what was working for you, 20 points today?

ZAKIYAH FRANKLIN: Just getting the ball in the lane. We know that our percentage overall offensively is good whenever we get paint touches so that's all I wanted to do is attack the rim.

Q. Ya'll said that defense has been a big part of this back-end stretch of the season and it showed again today. What was it like out there coming together as a team?

HOLLY KERSGIETER: It showed in the second half, not so much the first. Honestly we had a team goal to keep them under 50 and at the pace they were playing they were going to score 80 in the game. So at halftime we had to make an adjustment and we did that well in the second half. I wish everything could go according to plan all the time, but they came out aggressive and played really hard and we fought back.



ZAKIYAH FRANKLIN: I would agree. Like she said, we had to make a few adjustments and some of those adjustments was just doing better guarding the ball, maintaining our gaps and we kinda saw how that helped us and contributed to us on the defensive end.

Q. Holly, you guys held Lauren Gustin to just 10 points and Kaylee Smiler to just three. Two players that had really big performances in the prior two games. What did you do today to take them out of the game scoring wise?

ZAKIYAH FRANKLIN: It was pretty much a team effort. Credit to Taiyanna Jackson and I doing a good job on Lauren, and overall just team effort. I think that's what we did pretty much.

HOLLY KERSGIETER: Yeah. We just knew we had to get out on 11, obviously we know they have multiple shooters and she's part of that group. We contested Gustin really hard in the paint and just that defensive awareness had to be better in the second half and it was. And obviously they were two guys we were going to put emphasis on and we did that well.

Q. It's your guys' first Big 12 Tournament win since the '18-'19 season. What do you think that says about the program moving forward?

ZAKIYAH FRANKLIN: I would just say the growth overall. Pretty sure Holly can attest to this as well as Coach Brandon. We've come a long way and we have a really special group and we were able to get the job done today so we are really excited about that.

HOLLY KERSGIETER: Definitely. I know in the back of my mind, that's kind of the first thing I was thinking about is man we've been here and fighting for this win for so long and then to come out and have such a big margin of victory and capitalize it like that. It's kinda just something extra special to have to celebrate. Obviously we were worried about other things, but that was nice to -- and just for the program overall. Not just us but for the people before us and those things. So it's exciting.

Q. Ladies, how important was mental resilience and composure in maintaining control of the game especially during the challenging times?

HOLLY KERSGIETER: I mean it's March, that's it. When you get to this point in the season, nothing is going to be handed to you. Everything is going to be hard. It's going to be harder when you have a game like today and they came out really aggressive and maybe the plan wasn't necessarily working. Like you said, we had resilience and I don't think for one second that we had our heads down.

We knew we had to come together and pick it up, so we did. So to answer, it's tough but you just have no choice. You have to do it. It's March. But it's fun when you do it and you win.

Q. Can you talk about Ryan Cobbins? She had a great performance on defense tonight and then obviously that 3-point play really pushed you forward. She had the only points off the bench until the ending moments from Laia and Skyler. So what has she meant to your team not only tonight but her flexibility throughout the season?

ZAKIYAH FRANKLIN: She is a veteran leader, came from a pretty good program and just coming to us, we have used her a lot and I think that pretty much she has shown the little things she is able to do. So she has been great for us.

Q. Holly, I know you mentioned it earlier about it being March. Both of you are seniors. Does this give you any added motivation trying to get into the tournament?

HOLLY KERSGIETER: Yeah. We know it's the last time for us, so it's a little sentimental, but it's more like, man, this is it. And it's motivating to play harder and to play tougher. So it's something to keep in the back of your mind but not something to keep all your focus on. I'm here for my teammates and for the people under me and for my coaches, not just for my career. So yes but no. There are other things to worry about but definitely adds to it a little bit.

Q. What did you think about the atmosphere, especially when you went on that 12-0 run to open the second half?

HOLLY KERSGIETER: It was great. We were excited to be here in general. This place is really great. It's a great arena. And obviously the crowd showed up and I think on that run the crowd was a big part of it and it helped us a lot. We try not to rely on that. We try to be internal about our

motivation and what keeps us going and it's each other. But inevitably when you have a crowd like this in an arena like this, it's great. So it was a lot of fun.

Q. Coach, you played BYU three times now this season. Is there anything you had to do differently to adjust with them knowing your game and vice versa?

BRANDON SCHNEIDER: I think the biggest thing was trying to stay out of foul trouble. We did things well in both games. It was trying to take those things and bring them all together. I thought obviously the first time we played them it was front-line play that really led us and the second time it was perimeter play. Tonight I thought the effort was much collective as you saw with five players in double figures on the offensive end.

Q. Coach, you touched on the defensive adjustments you guys made and especially with BYU coming out so hot, how much of an emphasis was there on slowing down that transition game they were taking advantage of?

BRANDON SCHNEIDER: It was a big emphasis and it always is for us. I think that's why it was a little bit frustrating that we gave up a few transition threes early. Our pick-up point had to be -- we had to discuss that and do a better job and just locate 10 in particular because she really got going early.

Q. Coach, you get another shot at Texas. How are you more prepared to face them now than you were earlier in the season?

BRANDON SCHNEIDER: Well, you know, sometimes -- here is the good thing about coaching. You can turn on a film in early January and not recognize the team. And we are not even close to being the same team that we were in early January and I give our players a lot of credit for growing and improving. With that being said, Texas is Final Four National Champion good, led by a freshman that's just having an incredible year. So a very difficult challenge, especially on a short turn-around like this with them getting the bye. We won't spend a lot of time looking at that film because they kicked our butt. And hopefully we're a little bit better and can be more competitive tomorrow evening.

Q. Brandon, Holly said something about the excitement level playing in this building. I wanted to know how you felt about bringing the team over to this building, playing here for the first time.

BRANDON SCHNEIDER: I would say I'm just really grateful to the Big 12 and even to the NCAA and other

powers that be that recognized that there was some pretty gross inequities going on around the country. I think people are doing a lot to try to remedy that. It's terrific that our young women get to have this experience and playing this venue with even just the locker rooms and the size and the police escort. Those are things that -- young people remember the games but they're going to remember a lot of the other things too when it comes to the experiences they have.

So, yeah, I thought it was terrific. I couldn't be happier with our fan base because they've been really following us, you know, doing a great job and for them to come over tonight it meant a lot to our entire program.

Q. Like it was mentioned, first Big 12 Tournament win since '18-'19. What's the adjustment going to be on the back-to-back playing again tomorrow?

BRANDON SCHNEIDER: It's something we have done this year. We actually did it against two extremely good teams. We played Virginia Tech in a really close game, a 1-point game back in November and had to turn around and play UConn the next day. So I think we will reflect back on an experience like that and just emphasize recovery, nutrition, rest, and turning the page very, very quickly.

Q. Coach, you said earlier this week how important the match-up between Twin and Gustin would be going into this and how she had to limit her foul trouble compared to what happened in the game in Provo. How do you think she was able to come out on top tonight?

BRANDON SCHNEIDER: People ask me about the match-up and I just wanted there to be an actual match-up. I wanted them to play against each other and tonight, fortunately, for us, Twin was able to be in. I don't think we ever took her out due to foul trouble and that was an important piece.

Q. Coach, nine wins in the last ten games as you prepare for Texas. What's clicking for your team would you say?

BRANDON SCHNEIDER: Well, I think we're defending. I think that's been something that has really been at the forefront of our improvement in our turnaround. But to compete at the highest level, you're going to have to have balanced offensive and elite execution against a defense like Texas. So we will do everything we can to put together a complete game.

Q. Brandon, what did you think of Wyvette tonight and

what can she provide for you offensively when she's able to take and make the three like that?

BRANDON SCHNEIDER: It just makes us so much better when we have the ability to stretch the floor because I do think we have some players that can draw attention, whether attacking the paint off the dribble or obviously trying to keep some heat off of Twin.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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