

Big 12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Saturday, March 9, 2024

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

Iowa State Cyclones

Coach Bill Fennelly

Audi Brown

Audi Crooks

Postgame Press Conference



Iowa State - 67, Baylor - 62

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Head Coach Bill Fennelly, student-athletes Addy Brown and Audi Crooks. Coach?

BILL FENNELLY: Certainly that's what March basketball is supposed to be about. That's an NCAA Tournament atmosphere. So proud of our team. We do work on press offense, you can quote that. Didn't look like it, but I think the last thing I would say is -- I say this a lot at home but it's another example. The Iowa State fans are -- it's ridiculous how many people are here. Without them, we're not winning the game. So thank you to them.

Q. For you both. What changed over that final three minutes when you guys went on that big run?

ADDY BROWN: I would say coming out of the timeout there at the end we rallied around each other and it came down to who wanted it more and we knew that. We picked each other up and brought the energy. I think you saw more energy on the defensive and offensive end and started moving a lot more on offense and finding the open man.

AUDI CROOKS: We came together really well after that timeout, took a breath, settled down, observed the atmosphere. And we knew what we needed to do. We needed to pick up on defense and we did that.

Q. For you both, just how important was Emily Ryan down the stretch for you guys and her poise and leadership and ability to knock down those free throws?

ADDY BROWN: It was huge, that's our leader and you guys see that. She has been here the longest and has the most experience, but for her to step up to the line and keep calm and keep us calm and while having to shoot those free throws is huge. I knew she was going to make them because that's what she does. She steps up and makes big plays for this team and keeps us all calm. That's our leader, our go-to.

AUDI CROOKS: Everything she said. She is a calming presence. Sometimes in the heat of the moment our youngins can get a little fired up and she calms us down and keeps us cool.

Q. What was about their press that bothered you guys?

ADDY BROWN: I think we were just sped up. It wasn't anything they did. It was the choices we made with our passes and we just sped ourselves up, but once we calmed down it was perfectly fine and we beat it with no problems.

AUDI CROOKS: Again, everything she said. We've seen that press all season long. We just needed to calm down and make the right plays and once we did that we were able to get the ball across the court and do what we needed to do.

Q. Audi when you hit that 3 early in the game, was that a big momentum swing for you guys?

AUDI CROOKS: I thought so, I got the green light from Coach, I said hey why not? And it just kind of bounced around a little bit and I was like please, please! I want the green light! And it went in and I was so excited. It was just kind of like here we go and Coach was on the sidelines with his hands up like that. It was a fun, feel-good moment and it was a good way to start off the game.

ADDY BROWN: Right on the rim, go in!

Q. Bill was talking about the fans and kind of the crowd. Did it feel like a home game?

ADDY BROWN: Yeah, it did. I literally said before the game. I told Audi when our hype video played, I was like we were at Hilton. We're literally at a home game right now. The fans are like our hype video and it felt like we were at home. So thank you to the fans who came out and we hope to see you again on Monday.

AUDI CROOKS: Right. Even yesterday when we were watching games. We weren't even playing. I felt like there was more fans from Iowa State in the building than anybody else. We didn't even have a game that day. And that's no discredit to anybody else, but I would say Iowa State has the best fan base in the nation and you saw it. Both sides were packed and everybody was on their feet cheering and they made the drive here and it's just an unreal atmosphere and we're incredibly grateful to have a fan base like that.

BILL FENNELLY: I wish I could have talked like that when I was 18 years old. Holy cow.

Q. Bill, was it really a matter of them speeding you up defensively that caused all the turnovers or did Baylor do anything else specifically?

BILL FENNELLY: They were ultra aggressive. They started trapping us. They always pressure the ball. Their press bothered us. I thought we were in the right spots and I think what happens is when you get pressed a lot people run away from the ball a little bit. And they're down there like, hey, Emily, I hope you get it up the floor. We had trouble with it. We made a couple really bad decisions. The biggest thing we told our kids is you gotta play through the contact and we had about four possessions in a row that were awful and we work on it constantly. Once we changed our entry point, it was -- it definitely bothered us. They don't want to say that too much, but it was very good. They can guard you now.

Q. Bill, was that game kind of another chapter, another example of this young core you have and staying calm through the adversity that you guys see in this conference?

BILL FENNELLY: Yeah, I think it is. That's a really good team. It's a top-20 team that's played great. They're going to be a really hard out in the tournament.

But I think what happens is -- and, again, I think in the huddles, there was -- our team is balanced between the young guys that -- let's just keep playing, and Emily Ryan who keeps everyone organized. And when you get that combination it's kinda different, but I think today probably was more that way considering the moment, considering the stress level than we have had all year. There was no

panic by the young ones and Emily is always talking, we're fine, we're fine, next one. She just -- she is the leader that they needed and they needed her really bad today and she came through as she always does.

Q. They kind of talked about that turnover or that timeout with like 7 minutes. I think that was the last one you guys took. Before that run, was that a turning point and what did you say to them?

BILL FENNELLY: Really what we said to them was the stuff that I told them before the game. You know, whatever happens in a game, you need to be yourself. If they beat us, they beat us, but don't let them take away your will. Don't let them cause us to lose our poise. We just talked about that. We changed our press offense. We moved people in different spots and I just kept saying, if we can get the ball to half-court we're going to score.

I think they probably felt the same way. It was either going to get a steal in the backcourt or we were going to get it past half-court and someone was going to make a play. And we just kept saying play through the contact, play through the contact, because we hadn't shot a free throw the first 36 minutes of the game. And I just said you gotta put your head down and go, and late in the game they did that. Addy did it, Emily did it. Nothing major, just tried to clarify what we needed to do against pressure defense.

Q. Bill, first game for you guys in this building. I know you really appreciated Municipal, but I just want to know your impressions of this place.

BILL FENNELLY: It's a beautiful facility, obviously. I think the uniqueness of this facility for our kids is with the fans here like they were, it's a great atmosphere. Most of you see it when our guys come, but I loved Municipal. Some of the greatest memories in my career at Iowa State have been in this community. Kansas City loves this tournament and Iowa State obviously does, too, but it's a phenomenal facility and the staff is incredible.

I'm just grateful that we get to play again.

Q. Emily ended up breaking the all-time assists record for the school. What's that accomplishment mean to this program that's had so many good point guards?

BILL FENNELLY: (Pausing) sorry. Obviously it's a great record. We've had a lot of great point guards that have played at Iowa State, and for her to do it says a lot about her, says a lot about the people that she has played with. You get an assist because you throw it to someone who can make a basket. Emily will never probably have her jersey retired. She won't be viewed in some regards like

some of the All-American players we've had, but there is no one that I've ever coached that loves her teammates, loves her school, loves her coaches more than her. It's been an honor for me to coach her. I've had a lot of great people. You guys just don't see it like I see it, but there is no one like her, ever will be.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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