

Big 12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Saturday, March 9, 2024

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

Baylor Lady Bears

Coach Nicki Collen

Dre'Una Edwards

Bella Fontleroy

Postgame Press Conference



BELLA FONTLEROY: I have to agree with Dre. Like Coach Nicki said, it's really hard when we're shooting 30 percent from the floor. No matter how hard you go on O rebound, sometimes you're just not going to come up with them and whenever we are not making shots it's difficult. But I will say I was proud of our team, the spark that we created from our press and just our defense. We got after it and we really did play hard. Definitely, like Dre said, disappointing but very proud of our effort today.

Q. Dre'Una, that were the challenges of defending Audi Crooks? You had some success but what were the challenges going up against her?

DRE'UNA EDWARDS: I think size is an obviously challenge. She is an amazing player though. I think the biggest thing is being undersized and trying to push her out the block and push her in a different area where she is not as good or her field goal is not as good. I think overall our team defense on her was hard for sure, especially when you got shooters all around you. So it's kind of hard to have a big post player like that and then have shooters around as well.

Q. Bella, the defense in the second half was great for y'all. Is that sustainable? Is that something that despite the result can carry over into the NCAA Tournament?

BELLA FONTLEROY: Absolutely. That has been the biggest part of our identity. We always talk about playing Baylor basketball and getting down, defending, denying one pass away, being in the gaps, being there for rotations to take charges. That's Baylor defense and part of Baylor basketball so you can definitely expect to see that.

Q. Coach, you mentioned the O for 11 from 2. Were you happy with the looks that they were getting at that point in time?

NICKI COLLEN: Some of them. I thought that, you know, we needed to do a better job. Crooks is -- she's kind of at the charge arc. I thought when we played around her in the lane we were effective. We rolled behind her. We were able to get to the rim to play around her. What you

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THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Baylor Head Coach Nicki Collen and student-athletes Dre'Una Edwards and Bella Fontleroy. Coach?

NICKI COLLEN: Obviously a back and forth game. We changed the tempo of the game with our press again today. I thought we got some easy ones against the press. I thought we started to turn them over. I thought we won almost every statistical category. It's hard to win rebounding when you shoot 30 percent it takes 78 shots. So obviously their numbers were better on the boards, but 15 offensive rebounds. We turned them over 22 times. We created a lot of extra possessions. I thought our defense dug in really hard down the stretch. We just fouled too much. Hard to win games going 3 for 24 in a quarter, especially when it's the fourth. That was our Achilles heel. We were 0 for 11 from 2. We obviously got a bunch of three's in that stretch, but it was the 0 for 11 from 2 that probably hurt us. Had a break-away layup we missed and just couldn't create separation and we fouled when we got frustrated.

Q. For both players, what clicked defensively in the second half and then how disappointing was it to kind of go cold offensively down the stretch?

DRE'UNA EDWARDS: I think we brought a lot of energy in the second half. Defensively, we got into our press and I think we did an amazing job in our press. Offensively it's disappointing for sure, but we got to continue to shoot and we've got to continue to rebound. We've got to get some O boards when we're missing shots like that. But overall, I think we did a really good job on our defense.

can't do is play through her. And they weren't going to call it. We weren't going to go body-on-body with her. They didn't call any of them. I'm not saying they were fouls. I think if she has the position first, it's hers. And if we're creating contact, I thought those challenges weren't good decisions. You have to get in there and you have to play off 2, step around her, you gotta drop it off. I thought we could have dropped behind her more than we did. But I thought Sarah's jump shots, I thought -- you know, Jada missed a break-away layup in the fourth. Do I wish that had gone in? That could be the difference in the game when you think about it, having to foul at the end or be in a one-possession game. So I thought we got a lot of wide-open looks in the fourth quarter. We just didn't make them.

We didn't make the same shots. Bella started the game making three three's, and didn't make one the rest of the game. So I think she had three in the first quarter and then went 0 for 7 after that. We were doing a good job of getting a piece of the paint, moving it, kicking it, one more. The reality is it's not a great mystery when you look at us, when we get outscored in the paint and we get outrebounded, we lose, you know? Both those things happen and that's credit to Iowa State. Obviously there was way more defensive rebounds. They shot it better than us. Turned it over, but shot it well when they got shots on goal. So there were obviously fewer defensive rebounds. So a lot of times you have to take those two things; turnovers and rebounds in terms of extra possessions. How many extra possessions did we create? And we created more extra possessions between 15 offensive rebounds and winning the turnover battle by 14, but it's what do you do with those? You know, like, what do you do with those? So I thought not being able to score in the paint and do a good enough job playing around her. I thought we started the third quarter. We missed four straight layups and three of the four were really not guarded and we missed them.

So I think we need to finish better in the lane for us to be successful for sure.

Q. Coach, like I asked, Bella do you think that defense -- is that something after Texas Tech yesterday and obviously the second half today is that does you feel is trending in the right direction?

NICKI COLLEN: Here is the way I look at it. Did you want to advance? Or did you want to go home? It's as simple as that. If it's the thing that is a catalyst for us to survive and advance that's what you do. You know, you can be tired in May. And so this idea the one thing about our team is we've played with depth all season long. Yes, did Sarah Andrews play over 30 minutes both games here, yes. But

we knew we had a day off tomorrow should we advance. I think you're in the same position when you are in the NCAA Tournament.

You are never playing more than two games in three days so you have the ability to the -- why hold back? What are you saving it for? So to me, it's -- and you gotta understand like every team is different. Not every team is pressable. So what we would do to Iowa State or Texas Tech, our advantages are different, we don't know who our opponent is going to be, we probably wouldn't have pressed Miami. We would have wanted to shorten the court not spread it out.

So I think you want to -- against Iowa State they're so good at executing in the half-court and knowing where they want the ball to go and they're going to stay in that tunnel and roll Crooks to the rim, and they're going to have Addy Brown and the ball in Emily Ryan's hands, and when you have a power forward in Brown, and you have Ryan, you are going to do a good job of feeding it to Crooks.

You can just put two people out there if you make the shot if you leave them. We did a terrible job on Crooks and covering the arc. We didn't take enough away from her in the paint in terms of going and digging her out and we also didn't recover on shooters so they got open three's in the first half. We did a better job of guarding the three's, so it was making them go two by two by two, I thought it was effective. I thought our defense was really, really effective and we missed the switch on Addy's, when she turned the corner and got the 3-point play. That was a huge play for them, a big finish for her, and it should have been a switch for us. That was a scouting report mistake we didn't do a good job on and she made a great play down the line. When they get the right people to the line, that team does not miss free throws.

Q. The fact that you were one or two shots away from being on the other side of this, in the fourth quarter you were still in this. If you played full four quarters you could have won this game?

NICKI COLLEN: Yeah, look, the reality is if I'm on the flip side -- Bill, when he comes up here, I'm sure he's frustrated with their execution and turnovers, and I think as a coach you're always analyzing every part of the game, you know?

Question, if we would have done X, Y and Z, we would have won the game, just like they did X, Y and Z and won the game. It doesn't mean you're not perfect. You're not perfect in wins, you're not abysmal in losses. That's why I almost never talk to my team after wins and losses immediately after because it's emotional and it's about, like, looking at the film, what did we do well, what did we not do

well, how do we get into space differently next time? What combinations -- what did we miss?

The tape doesn't lie. And then you can teach -- because to me coaching is teaching; it's not just yelling and screaming and motivating. It's fixing, you know? We've got a lot of things to fix but our challenges is, like, you can't go 3 for 24 against an elite team.

Iowa State is an elite team. Like, they've -- and both of us were playing well coming into this tournament. They know their identity. They know they're going to play through Crooks, and they're really good at it. To me, am I confident in my team? Absolutely. Like, if you would have told me Sarah Andrews would get as many open looks down the stretch as she got and she would miss 'em all? Other than the deep heave, which I'm sure Bill is goin' really? We play great defense for 30 seconds and they hit a 30-footer. But sometimes you've got to be lucky. Maybe that made up for all those wide-open jump shots she had in the lane that she didn't finish and she usually does.

So, yeah, I'm confident with my team. I told them now we have a week before the NCAAs are announced and we don't know our opponent. If they're not motivated to get into the gym, they never will be in their life. Nobody shot it well. If you aren't motivated to get in the gym over the next week when we don't know our opponent, not worried about who we are scouting or resting, anything like that. You gotta get in the gym.

When you get that many open looks and we can't knock 'em down, you better want to get in the gym or you shouldn't put on on a Baylor uniform. That's the mentality. If you want to be truly elite, you've got to figure out how to win in every game. You've got to be the person, we've got to have someone step up and make a shot in those late-game situations. Dre' got an open look, Sarah got multiple open looks, Jana got a couple open looks, Yaya got a wide-open three at the end. Any one of those goes in, we're in a different press conference, but we didn't make 'em.

Bill is always going to roll the analytical dice, and he's so good at saying at the end of the day this is what we're going to do, and if I get beat it's because I believe in this so much. Obviously I have a lot of respect for him and his program.

I have known him, the whole family is here, hi, Fennellys, but we have had some good battles since we've been in this league, and I just don't like being on this side of it is

Q. Was there any concern that a loss would affect the potential for hosting or not?

NICKI COLLEN: Yes, I'm not going to lie. We want to host! And I think losing in the quarters hurts us for sure. Not because I don't have a ton of respect for Iowa State, I think it's about another good win, another, um, top-30 net win it's about momentum going into the tournament. I don't know if we were going to host if we didn't win a championship here, but anytime you lose this time of year you're worried about that for sure. It's not the most important thing, but certainly it's something we would love to do.

THE MODERATOR: Good luck in the tournament, Coach.

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