

Big 12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Saturday, March 9, 2024

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

West Virginia Mountaineers

Coach Mark Kellogg

JJ Quinerly

Jordan Harrison

Postgame Press Conference

Kansas State - 65, West Virginia - 62

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by West Virginia Head Coach Mark Kellogg, student-athletes JJ Quinerly and Jordan Harrison. Coach?

MARK KELLOGG: Really good college basketball game again. That's two times against Kansas State that the game felt somewhat similar where we jumped on them early in the second quarter. I thought they settled in again and got us in some foul trouble, got us out of our rhythm in the second quarter and then we competed. There were some runs both ways, crowd got into it. I thought there was a couple of times that I was looking at our team and waiting for them to respond, which they have done all year and they did again tonight in a great way and gave ourselves an opportunity late. But just didn't quite have enough. Credit to Kansas State. Really, really good basketball team. Posed some problems for us. Lee does for sure. But I thought we did a pretty good job on her. I thought our posts battled. I thought Kylee Blacksten did a really good job tonight on her and obviously these two guards have done well for us, they led the way again. JJ kind of got going and it took Jordan just a little bit, but then we kind of finally settled in, I thought, and Jordan got going and then JJ had the really good look there late for her that was almost in and would have forced overtime.

Proud of our group, disappointed obviously in the result, but really proud of what we have in the locker room. I've had a blast coaching them all year. I don't think we're done. I think we still have some basketball in front of us so I will be excited to watch and prepare for that.

Q. JJ, compared to last year when you guys were on the cusp of making the tournament, you didn't know by



the time of the Big 12 Tournament whether you were going to make it. This year, there is more confidence surrounding that. How does this year's loss compare to last year's in that regard?

JJ QUINERLY: I think last year was more heartbreaking just because of the way it happened, a buzzer beater loss. But this year we thought we stayed together the whole game. I love this group of girls and I'm going to fight for them to the end of the game. We did that, came up a little short, but that's the way it is.

Q. JJ was that the look you wanted? Was it the look you planned for in the last play of the game?

JJ QUINERLY: Yes, either me or Jordan.

Q. Talk about the adjustments that you guys made on Lee in the second half, only holding her to 6 in the second half. Can you talk about what you guys wanted to do with her in the second half?

JORDAN HARRISON: I think we went back to, you know, playing behind her. We started fronting her in the second quarter and it didn't go how we wanted it to. So going back to the second half, we started playing behind her again, made her make tough shots, have to put the ball on the floor instead of just lobbing it up.

JJ QUINERLY: Same thing what Jordan said. Credit to our bigs. They did a great job on her. I mean, instead of 6 points she could have had 60, like she did the other games, so it is what it is.

Q. Y'all started up 10 or 12 in the first quarter and then around three minutes to go things started to cool off. Was it an adjustment by Kansas State or were things just not falling?

JJ QUINERLY: I think for us we came out in the second quarter a little relaxed, a little too calm. I mean, we are a calm group of girls probably all the time, and I think we gotta -- need to start coming into the game with that fire under us like we did in the first quarter.

JORDAN HARRISON: Probably what JJ said, and we just got a little too comfortable. We started relaxing a little bit seeing that we were up 10 or 12 points but, yeah, what she said.

Q. I know it was a tough game tonight that you guys lost, but it was a heck of a battle. Jordan, if I was starting an all-girls team point guard the heart that you was giving out there I seen the way that you was coming after the steal, coming after the ball trying to get your team in the lead. Amazing game for you and you girls, even though that you came up short I just wanted to say you still played your butt off.

JORDAN HARRISON: Thank you.

Q. Tonight's game followed a similar pattern with regard to last time you met. Hot start first quarter then Kansas State started to climb back into the second and carried that into the second half. Did you feel the same way? If so how did that impact the mentality of you and the team?

MARK KELLOGG: It felt very similar. We turned them over quite a bit the first time at their place in the first quarter, similar here where I thought we had 'em sped up. That game was playing at a crazy pace there for a while. When we can play at that, I don't know that we want to sustain what that pace was, I don't know that they necessarily did either. But it came down to a screeching halt I guess from our viewpoint.

He switched to zone in the second quarter, foul trouble bothered us a little bit. When Blacksten can play for us against Lee, she can space the floor and get perimeter shots and open up the paint. When Kyle is not in we can't do that, so Lee can control the paint a little bit more, and they went zone, and I thought we got stagnant in the zone and made shots in the first quarter like three's that we didn't make.

So we lost our flow, lost our way a little, too, on the defensive end but survived it to go down three. We were okay at half, needed to make adjustments which I thought we did, for the most part, but it felt very much like it did in Manhattan a few weeks ago.

Q. Coach, with Lee inside it's going to be tough. Your equalizer is creating turnovers. You created 21 tonight but only scored 18 off those turnovers. Did you have a number coming in tonight in your mind regarding that?

MARK KELLOGG: Not necessarily. We had some goals. The turnovers, we've been 20 plus. We do thrive on points off turnovers. Sundell does a really good job, and I thought

she bothered us in some of those transition opportunities, her length, and she'll go straight up, and these two that were up here are so elite on the open floor, but I thought she bothered them a little bit. We probably didn't get the amount of points that we should have off the turnovers. We got outrebounded, but the offensive rebounds were the same; there wasn't a difference there. We missed more shots, so they got a lot more defensive rebounds than we did. So I thought we were okay in that area. We needed to make more three's than them. I thought they hit timely there's. Gregory, who loves those transition three's, that kid has hit those her whole career. She hit two of those in transition and even the Walker kid got one over there in that left corner.

When you are playing them, you gotta to give up something. I thought we really did a pretty good job on Lee. I know she had 22 and 11, but that better than it was the first time we played her. But then you have to limit them from three, which we did a pretty good job of, other than the timely three's that ultimately separated it.

Q. Coach, you talked about the impact that Kylee Blacksten has on the defensive side. What impact does she have on the offensive side being able to draw Lee out of the post where she is a big-time shot blocker and rim protector? Is that a focus for you guys?

MARK KELLOGG: It is and always is, and Lee is so dominant inside, Kylee doesn't play that way on the inside. She is a forward that unfortunately we play her more as a 5, but she is really probably more of a 4. But, yeah, she can open up so Lee has to guard her on the perimeter when they play man, and that's when the Jordan and JJ's -- paint is open now so you don't have the shot blocker in there. So when we don't have Kylee, we are not afforded that luxury.

Even late JJ had the read play where she could drive it in there, kick it out, and Kylee got the three and missed it late, but she can do that and seems to do pretty well when we play Kansas State from the offensive end.

Q. You have lost close battles against some of the top competition in the Big 12, and some of the best in the country with how good the Big 12 is this year. In these close match-ups, where you fall just short, does it kind of just feel like you just can't get over the hump when it comes to playing these teams? If so, what makes you think that, or why do you think that is?

MARK KELLOGG: I don't think that at all. These are one-possession games, I think you go hang on to every possession in the postseason. I think we lost our way a

little bit on some of those possessions, and they just made the run and we just didn't respond quick enough to some of those runs.

That's what I was a little disappointed in. We needed to stop it, squash it a little quicker. Instead of it being a 4-0 or 5-0 it turned into 7, and in a game like this 7-0 seems significant. And we played from behind a little too much through the middle two quarters. First quarter, then we got the lead, right, I think once early in the fourth, but then gave it back. So I felt like every time we had a look, maybe scored, they went and scored right behind it, and kept us at bay or we couldn't get the lead back. We got the lead in the fourth, and we wanted to get it again to see if we could separate, and we just couldn't answer.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks.

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