

# Big 12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Monday, March 11, 2024

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

## Oklahoma Sooners

## Coach Jennie Baranczyk

## Payton Verhulst

### Postgame Press Conference



Iowa State - 85, Oklahoma - 68

**THE MODERATOR:** We are joined by by Oklahoma Head Coach Jennie Baranczyk and student-athlete Payton Verhulst.

**JENNIE BARANCZYK:** I thought Iowa State was phenominal and we were not. I thought Audi Crooks was absolutely incredible and then everyone just opened it up around her. I'm so happy we didn't totally throw in the towel and did put up a fight in the last five minutes of the game, but disappointing, and at the same time Iowa State was really good.

**Q. Payton, you all started 2 or 13 from the field. What did you feel like was behind the offensive struggles early and how do you feel like you all responded to the game as the game went on?**

**PAYTON VERHULST:** I don't think we are strangers to shooting droughts. We just weren't shooting the ball more than we could have and not taking the shots we have been taking all year, me included. I think we just needed to find our feet a little bit and we just didn't until the very end, and at that point it was a little late.

**Q. Payton, I know this is disappointing, but there is still the NCAA Tournament ahead. What do you think you take out of the last couple weeks in terms of going ahead toward the NCAA Tournament?**

**PAYTON VERHULST:** Yeah, obviously this is a hard loss for us. This is going to hurt for a while, but like you said we're going to be being looking forward to the NCAA Tournament. Obviously we don't know anything about where we're going or what we're doing but we do know who is on our team and what we're going to do, and we're going to work really hard this this week and the weeks

leading up to the NAAs, so that's all we're worried about.

**Q. Payton, I know you're disappointed with today's result. I'm just wondering what it was like for you to come back to your hometown and to play in this arena?**

**PAYTON VERHULST:** It was awesome. I always came to watch games here growing up, so it was surreal for me to be able to play in front of my family and friends and people and little girls watching the game. So that was fun.

**Q. Payton, you transferring to Oklahoma. What have you taken from your first year and especially coming back here and playing in front of the hometown?**

**PAYTON VERHULST:** Yeah, the biggest thing honestly that I've taken away is playing basketball at Oklahoma and playing for Jennie has been really fun, and that's honestly the biggest thing: I can get back to having fun in basketball again.

**Q. Payton, you talk about bouncing back and looking forward to the NCAA Tournament. How does the experience -- do you feel like right now the experience that y'all went through early in the year sorta help you here moving forward as you try to bounce back from this?**

**PAYTON VERHULST:** I have no doubt that we can bounce back. Again, we're going to put in the work, everything that we need to right now and the results will take care of itself.

**Q. Jennie, Audi Crooks was pretty dominant today. I'm interested from the opposing team perspective, such a unique talent. How do you game plan for a player in that way that can really do so many things in the way that she does?**

**JENNIE BARANCZYK:** Obviously we didn't game plan very well, especially this game. But I think it's really impressive you have a freshman that you have to game plan for, and you really do. You have to change, and you have to pick your poison, and tonight they were hitting on

both sides, both inside and out, which makes it more challenging.

But, again, there are a lot of things you have to be able to do, and the first thing you have to do is try to limit her touches as much as possible, and that's something we didn't do, and you have to hold your ground as much as possible, and we didn't do that. So it's impressive that she was able to do that on this stage.

**Q. Jennie, you talk about the defensive end but on the offensive end. I asked Payton about the slow start. Yesterday y'all were aggressive in attacking the bigs said. Do you feel like you got away from that early?**

JENNIE BARANCZYK: You know, Ryan, I feel like we didn't -- I don't know if we just came out nonchalant. I don't know if we came out too tight. I can tell you that I'm really sad this was our last Big 12 game. That's not the way we wanted to go out. We don't get to be the decision makers in any process, and no matter what we knew this was going to be our last Big 12 experience, and we wanted to be better.

I don't know if we took too much of that, but I don't feel like our movement was great. I don't feel like our intensity was great, so I don't know if I know the answer to that. I do know that we have great women in the locker room, and I know we have had a really interesting season, so this is one that when this team responds well, look at what happens. When this team doesn't respond, well look at what happens.

So in this game, I don't think we responded well or started well or finished well. And at the same time I'm excited to be able to see what we continue to do, because two months ago we didn't have a future in postseason. Now we do.

So I'm going to be really excited to see how we respond to that.

**Q. Coach --**

JENNIE BARANCZYK: That was a better answer than "we sucked"! I was trying.

**Q. Coach, what was it like seeing Payton Verhulst going through this year at Oklahoma, and what can she add to the stretch of the NCAA Tournament?**

JENNIE BARANCZYK: Payton was someone I recruited when I was at Drake. I offered her when she was in seventh grade, so I have seen her grow a lot. And she had rec specs and was this young girl that loved playing, and I

think you get to see that sometimes.

Payton is somebody that -- you can tell she is a middle child of six kids, and she wants everybody to do well, and there is a time and place that she's got to put that aside and she's got to go, and you can see when she does that. And you can see when she tries to include everyone.

Payton is somebody you have to have in your program, and we're just lucky that you have to have that type of person in your program, and she's pretty good at basketball. So I have loved to watch her. She thinks like a point guard, sometimes. She tries to overpass, and sometimes she really has to put the ball in her hands, but I think we have seen glimpses of Payton, and the more comfortable she continues to get, the sky is the limit for her. She is really special, and she has a special soul, and she just happens to be a really good basketball player.

**Q. Coach, playing in this building versus where you were the last couple of years?**

JENNIE BARANCZYK: I don't necessarily want to get into comparison mode, because I do think that when you have a conference tournament, they do a great job in the Big 12 of hosting tournaments. So regardless of what the building is, the experience has been nothing but phenomenal for us. I credit the Big 12 staff, Dana and her staff do an incredible job. We have had two different commissioners since I've been here.

I think the city of Kansas City does a great job of hosting the tournaments. Fortunately and unfortunately we have played Iowa State a couple of years, so we have had a lot of fans, but I do feel like I don't want to go down that road. We're going to take away really positive experiences from the overall experience for our student-athletes.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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