

# Big 12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Tuesday, March 12, 2024

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

## Iowa State Cyclones

## Coach Bill Fennelly

## Emily Ryan

## Audi Crooks

### Postgame Press Conference

Texas - 70, Iowa State - 53

**THE MODERATOR:** We are joined by Iowa State Head Coach Bill Fennelly, student-athletes Emily Ryan and Audi Crooks. Coach?

**BILL FENNELLY:** Yeah, I know it's late, we got deadlines, right? First of all, certainly want to congratulate Texas, phenomenal team. They looked like a Final Four team today. On behalf of our team, our school, I really want to thank T-Mobile, I want to thank the Big 12, amazing event. Loved everything about it. Really appreciate that. Certainly thank all of you covering the tournament. It means a lot to our players, to our fans.

Lastly, it's never fun to lose a game, but the good news is I get to go home with these guys on the bus, we get to go back to practice and they get to play in the NCAA Tournament. So could not be more proud of them, what they've done, how they've done it. Excited to go back to work.

**Q. Bill, what are you most pleased with about this team this year?**

**BILL FENNELLY:** We might be here all night. I would say, Randy, the simplest thing is just the way they have embraced the Iowa State way of doing things. The way they've shown up. They've never made excuses. They accomplished a lot of things that very few people thought they could. Our freshmen are phenomenal people who are turning into great basketball players and they are led by the best leader I've ever been around. So I guess I would quantify -- like I said, we would be here all night if you let me talk about our team.



**Q. What are you most proud of this year when you look back?**

**EMILY RYAN:** I'm really just proud of the way this team comes together every night and plays for each other, rather than individual stats. Obviously, Audi had another great night tonight, but as a team it's just always next man up and everyone is happy for each other and that's the fun part of showing up every day, that we can do it together and regardless of the outcome the message stays the same, that there is no other team that I would rather be in the locker room with and lucky to be going back to Ames with. Just happy I get to do it again.

**Q. What has this tournament experience been like for you? Kind of like how the season has gone, maybe people did not expect you guys to go as far as you did.**

**EMILY RYAN:** Yeah, this week has been an absolute blast. Being able to do it with these guys and with the crowd behind us like we had it's super special and it's moments like this that you play for and why you come to Iowa State and why you do what you do. I'm just lucky that I was able to be a part of it and experience it with these guys. Like I said, I'm just couldn't be more glad that we have more basketball to play.

**AUDI CROOKS:** I second what she said. I mean, we did for the most part what we came to do this week. We played a really good two games, a really good half, I would say, in this game. But we got a lot of work to do, a lot of learning to do and we still have postseason. So I'm excited to see what else we can put together.

**Q. Audi, in a similar vein to the question Randy asked Coach Bill Fennelly and Emily, Coach told us since Media Day that your favorite word is growth. How could you describe this team's growth throughout the season?**

**AUDI CROOKS:** I remember going overseas. We just kind of rolled the dice and we were just kind of playing ball and we grew and we had a lot of growing pains along the way. We had a lot of learning moments and a lot of things we needed to figure out, still need to figure out, and it's just

a process. I mean this game is just going to continue to evolve, people are going to keep switching things up and you have to be on your P's and Q's night in and night out. We've grown in the way we play together cohesively, and we know each other's tendencies really well now and it's finding a way to put together 40 good minutes of offense and defense and if we do that I think we will be all right.

**Q. Audi, congrats on being on the All-Tournament team. When you look at this game you have Madison Booker, freshman, several freshmen on your team. Nationally this has been a big year for freshmen. I know you've been focused on Iowa State, but do you have a sense of how good this freshmen class has been nationally and just your thoughts on being a part of that?**

AUDI CROOKS: Yeah, this freshmen class is unreal. The talent is unreal and I think you could roll the dice, I feel like every Big 12 team has a freshman or some young talent that could be on the All-Tournament team and could have honors. It's going to be fun these next couple of years to continue to play against them and against the other younger and older talent still around. It's a great league, it's a lot of fun.

**Q. The challenges that came behind trying to slow down Texas and how they score?**

EMILY RYAN: Yeah, like Coach said, they're a super talented team and they have a lot of different talent in different spots. So it's hard to pick and choose and they were hitting a lot of tough shots tonight and Madison Booker was Player of the Year for a reason and she proved it tonight and hats off to them and the way they showed up. They showed up ready to play and we weren't probably where we needed to be either. So huge congrats to them, they have a lot ahead of them as well.

**Q. What are the challenges also that come with kind of trying to fight through the deficit that you guys had to pretty much the entire night?**

AUDI CROOKS: Yeah, we dug ourselves a hole and a lot of times this season we have been able to climb out of that but tonight was not one of those nights.

We can't continue to put ourselves in those bad situations. We need to prepare. I think our preparation could have been a little bit better this game. We could have been a little more focused. It all could have been amped up a little bit, defensively. We weren't very sound in my opinion and those are things you can't not have together when you are playing in this league.

**Q. Coach, with a loss like this over the course of your career how can this help a run in March?**

BILL FENNELLY: I don't know. I'm one of those people that I don't know that losses ever help you, to be honest, but I think it's -- what helps is what our players having through. I think our strength of schedule is rated in the top-ten in the country.

We play really good teams, we play in a great league, so I think the biggest thing is when you get to the postseason, we've seen a lot in this league that I don't know that we're going to see anything in the NCAA Tournament that we haven't seen in the Big 12.

I think that's part of it. Hopefully when we get home and get back to work we can clean up a few things. But whatever we see, we will be ready to prepare for it.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

BILL FENNELLY: Appreciate it.

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