

Big 12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 5, 2025

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

Houston Cougars

Coach Ronald Hughey

Gigi Cooke

Laila Blair

Eylia Love

Postgame Press Conference

Colorado 66, Houston 58

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Houston Cougars Head Coach Ronald Hughey, student-athletes Gigi Cooke, Laila Blair and Eylia Love. Coach?

RONALD HUGHEY: I want to first of all thank our group. We were heavily outmanned all year and for the fight and the resiliency that our kids played with all year, again, had some unfortunate things happen with injuries. A lot of other teams would have folded. Especially when we had to play a couple of games with five people.

So, again, just to be resilient and fight through and keep the faith and represent as best we could with the University of Houston across our chest, that's the first thing I would like to say to them being able to do that.

I thought we came out and started off slow today and picked it up in the second half, especially in the fourth quarter. That was the first time we were able to press all year. If you know anything about Houston, that's what we are known for, but we didn't have the numbers to be able to do that this year. But we thought let's lay it all out there the last ten minutes. To be able to force that really good Colorado team into 33 turnovers, 25 in the second half was tremendous for us.

Hats off to JR and her group. They had some injuries, they came in prepared, they moved the basketball, did not let us deny them or pressure them. They kept the ball going. They wanted to get us with ball screen stuff. When we figured that part out, they wanted to be able to keep it going.



The thing they did really well was 14 getting all of those out-of-area rebounds. When we really pushed them into bad shots or bad opportunity, she kept balls alive for them. And hats off to them.

Q. If each of you could take some time to reflect on your season, what it's meant to you as a team and as a program and for the university.

LAILIA BLAIR: That's a great question, actually. If I could reflect on this season, and you said my time at Houston? Great question. I would say just the challenge, accepting the challenge. And I think our group, each group that I've been able to be a part of, especially this one, showed that they could accept the challenge. We all accepted it even though we knew the dynamics. We didn't give in, say "woe is me." We didn't act as the victim. We just kept fighting.

And I'm appreciative to be part of something where I can say I don't have any regrets and I gave it all that I had, and I'm sure my teammates can say the same thing.

EYLIA LOVE: Just to piggyback, I would say this year has been a challenge, but I've had a lot of personal growth both on and off the court. And I've only been here for a year, but I've enjoyed my time.

GIGI COOKE: I need you to repeat the question.

Q. Reflect on the season, what it's meant to you and your team and the university.

GIGI COOKE: It was an exciting season. It wasn't how we wanted it to end or whatever, but I've enjoyed being around the group we've been around. I think we've -- you know, beyond the circumstances, we all have fun. We all laugh and giggle. We still love the game. You can see that regardless of any circumstances we have been through, and it shows, because we play our heart out. The ups and downs gonna come, but you make the choice to, you know, play for it.

Q. Eylia, if you could touch on what it means to you to play in your hometown in front of your home crowd,

and what that's been like for you.

EYLIA LOVE: It means everything. College for five years is a long time, but I've never played in Kansas City, so just having my fam -- I'm sure you all heard them out there, Loud and proud, and I'm happy to have them all here, but, yeah.

Q. Gigi, what did it mean to you playing with the seniors on the team?

GIGI COOKE: Oh it was fun! It was so fun! Yeah, I'm a youngin', redshirt sophomore, so being able to play with them, for this last year, it was exciting. Two great individuals beside me right here. They have a lot of skill. They have a lot of years in college so they know what they're talking about.

So just looking up to them and keeping, you know, the connection there. It's always been great playing with them.

Q. Laila, this is your fifth season and last game as a Cougar, what did you want to tell the Houston Cougar fans?

LAILIA BLAIR: First I want to say God is so faithful. He's kept me healthy. He's kept me going and standing right in front with the right attitude and a great perspective with everything. And also I just want to thank the city and thank the university for supporting me all these years. Especially with me being a hometown kid, it is a dream come true to say I was able to do these things, accomplish things in my hometown. A lot of people can't say that, and I'm just blessed, and I'm fortunate, and I'm grateful for every opportunity. Even my coaches giving me the opportunity to be unapologetic, not only as a player but as a person and stand in front of my faith and stuff like that.

And also all of my teammates. I'm thankful for Houston granting me more relationships, and like I told my teammates, relationships is wealth to me. And I take that very seriously when I can connect with people so, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much.

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