

Big 12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 6, 2025

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

Kansas State Wildcats

Coach Jeff Mittie

Zyanna Walker

Serena Sundell

Postgame Press Conference



to that three-point line. They did a good job at that and we were able to get enough offense from there.

Q. Do you think you guys have done enough with today's win to be a top-16?

JEFF MITTIE: I don't know. Yes, I think the 100% the Committee should -- no, they're not going to listen to me.

We're going to enjoy playing in the tournament here. And you never know what's going to shake out. I think that honestly we're challenged for the Committee. We need to do everything we can to make it easy on them. Obviously we're playing without the pre-season player of the year. We only lost one game all year with her, but you know what?

This team has won a lot of games without her. So we need to make it easy, and the teams left tomorrow are going to be playing for a Big 12 Championship, so that's our focus.

Q. Coach, JJ Quinerly has been phenomenal all season, especially as of late, and I remember last year she was a bit of a problem for you guys in the Big 12 tournament. Looking ahead what's the game plan for tomorrow?

JEFF MITTIE: Let's clarify, she is a problem for everybody, right?

Q. Of course.

JEFF MITTIE: I am a big JJ Quinerly fan most of the year. Okay? Not tomorrow. Okay? Now, we know she is talented. We know that she is playing extremely well. I thought she was one of those four or five players that was up for MVP of the league. I thought she had that kind of a year. We will do everything we can to keep her in front, make things hard on her. But a player like her, she is obviously talented. So it's not just going to be a one-player assignment for us.

It's been the strength of our defense that we have enough players that we can rotate, and she is certainly one that will challenge that tomorrow.

Kansas State 80, UCF 65

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Kansas State Head Coach Jeff Mittie, student-athletes Zyanna Walker and Serena Sundell. Coach, if you would open with comments on the game and then we will have questions.

JEFF MITTIE: Yeah, we expected a good, hard-fought game, and for us it was. I thought it was good for us to have a grinding game where things were tough to come by, and we had to raise up and make some plays.

I think for us, also, it was good for us to see a variety of players rise to the occasion and play well, particularly in the fourth. That's what it takes this time of year. It takes multiple players making plays, and a team making plays, and I thought we did that certainly in the fourth quarter today.

Q. Coach, three-point range you guys shot 50%; they only made one. How big of a factor was that for you?

JEFF MITTIE: I thought we did a good job on the three-point line. It wasn't necessarily -- that's not what -- they don't have a high-volume three-point shooting team, you know. We did have good awareness of Peterson. I think the one she got was the bank, right? She had a tendency to do that. She banked one in yesterday.

I thought the three-point line was good, and I thought we found just enough offense from the three-point line and timely offense. Serena got the big 3 in front of the bench at a time where we needed to answer a run by them, so we had some timely makes. Taryn got us off with a good start there so, yeah, good. Normally we are a 20, 25, three-point attempt, but they had a concerted effort to get

Q. Serena, what changed for you between the first and second half? First half you had 2 points, second half you had 19.

SERENA SUNDELL: I am not exactly sure. I just know credit my teammates, credit Coach Mittie getting on me and saying you need to get it into your teammates and let the rest work itself out.

That was my focus. And it's hard to do when you are missing shots that I usually make, wide-open layups and whatnot. For me to be able to get to my teammates and trust the girls around me and that I'm going to start hitting shots, that was my focus.

Q. Serena, was it changing from 23 to 4? What was the jersey number thing?

SERENA SUNDELL: I had blood on this jersey, and it was quite a bit, so I changed. And somehow they got it out, and I got it back. I don't know.

Q. Serena, I know it's hard for the team to be without Yokie right now, but you've been in this position before, playing in the Big 12 Tournament. Especially in March, what does it mean to you to take on that leadership role for the team?

SERENA SUNDELL: Yeah, Yokie is a great player, and she's done a great job leading us even from the bench. I think right now we are having fun trying to figure it out without her. We have a different style of basketball when she's not on the court. We can up that pace and get into traps like you saw today.

So it's been a challenge, but I think in the long run it will be good for us for when she does come back. We will have girls who can step up, and we can all lead together.

Q. Zy, I don't believe we have talked to you since you got Big 12 Defensive Team. How did that feel?

ZYANNA WALKER: I was super excited to see all the work I've put in and the effort I put on defense. It's been a focus for me, always has been. Glad to be recognized for it, for sure.

Q. And you're putting the ball in the hoop a little bit more today. How did it feel to see the shots go in?

ZYANNA WALKER: Felt good. Yeah, just whatever I can do to help my team win. And today it was being more aggressive, getting to the basket and getting to my spot and making the right read at the right time.

Q. Serena, do you feel a bit of a homecoming game whenever you have a game in KC?

SERENA SUNDELL: A little bit. It was good to see a bunch of purple out there, and I had 15ish people on my pass list. So it's fun playing in T-Mobile Center and being close to K-State and then also close to home, right in the middle. It's perfect for me.

Q. How about the students in the stand?

SERENA SUNDELL: I love it. They're crazy, but in such a big arena, 11 a.m. game on a Thursday. That's exactly what us as players want to feel some sort of energy so that was awesome of those guys to bring that energy today.

Q. Coach, this is for you. Talked with you at the beginning of the week. You said you were more focused on your own team as opposed to any team you were going to face in the tournament. What did you see from them today?

JEFF MITTIE: You know, I thought I saw better fight in the second half through some of the struggles that -- we had trouble guarding them off the bounce and we needed to get better at that as the game went on. I thought in the fourth quarter we did a better job of that. I was pleased with the responses today coming out of timeouts. I thought we responded better today.

I will go back to it wasn't just one player. We had more players. You look at the balance of our offense today. I thought Imani Lester and Kennedy Taylor gave us big lifts at the center spot. I thought Taryn Sides -- we were a better team today with Taryn and Zy on the floor together. They played very well together. So I liked our response.

Q. Another early game, 11 a.m. Do you guys prefer being that first game, or would you rather play later in the day?

JEFF MITTIE: I mean, I don't like 11 a.m., necessarily, but that's the time we have. So, you know, pregame meal, I'm sure they don't like it that early, but we do practice at that time. So, you know, we've got an early team. They're kinda weird that way for college students. We got an early team.

So you say you like it?

SERENA SUNDELL: I like 11 a.m. games.

JEFF MITTIE: Good, because that's what time we play.

Q. Serena, being a senior, was there a sense of urgency today?

SERENA SUNDELL: Coach would say no, first half. It got better as the game went on. I think we can do a lot better job, like as Coach was saying, playing with joy and people are getting fouled, and even if it's a late call, you have to celebrate, you need to get your teammates fired up.

We're kind of searching for that emotional leader. That's not what I do great, but I want to do a better job of it. I think that can bring a sense of urgency to a team. And then once someone gets going, I think we all feed off each other. We need to get that going earlier tomorrow. I think we'll be able to do that.

Q. You got this big win today, and you come back tomorrow. What's the mind-set tomorrow?

SERENA SUNDELL: Yeah, quick turnaround, but it's that time of year. It's fun basketball. Mind-set, I don't know, we want to survive and advance at this point in the year but know that we have a really good opponent, West Virginia team. They have a lot of girls that I have seen and Zy has seen now for a few years. So we have a good idea of what they're going to bring to the table, and we need to go out and execute, take care of the ball.

Q. Serena just mentioned playing with joy and celebrating. For any of you, how important was it to have that mind-set coming into the game with how the regular season ended?

SERENA SUNDELL: I think right after that last game we said, okay, it's a new season. Everyone is 0-0. So anybody can come in and take any game.

So, yeah, just knowing that each game could be your last, hopefully not, but you need to have that mind-set every possession, every play. Just enjoy the little moments and celebrate 'em, because they could end up being a big deal at the end.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much.

JEFF MITTIE: Thank you.

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