

Big 12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 6, 2025

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

Colorado Buffaloes

Coach JR Payne

Kennedy Sanders

Tabitha Betson

Postgame Press Conference

Colorado 61, Arizona 58

THE MODERATOR: All right, We are joined by Colorado Head Coach JR Payne, student-athletes Kennedy Sanders and Tabitha Betson. Coach?

JR PAYNE: I am so excited, like, I don't know, I'm so excited, so proud of our team. Total team win. You guys made it. Awesome!

So many different key plays from different players at different moments, whether it was Kennedy hitting a 3 or Tabitha making a game-winning free throw or Grace's rebounds or Sara coming in, playing very injured, or Kindyll playing with four fouls. Honest to goodness, I could name every player on the team and what they did to contribute to today's victory.

And I'm just really, really, really proud of our team and our resilience and excited for tomorrow's game.

Q. Coach, going off that point, this team has been next man up for a couple months now?

JR PAYNE: Yep.

Q. With Kindyll foul trouble and Jade not having her best game, these two come in and have phenomenal games. Follow up on the two freshmen and Lior getting going in the fourth quarter and providing a spark?

JR PAYNE: I thought Lior's and-one on the elbow jumper was one of the biggest plays of the game, and it takes a tremendous amount of composure to make that shot.



If we count Kennedy as a freshman, which she didn't like, she wants to be a sophomore, but we basically had three freshmen and two seniors out there for a large part of the fourth quarter. And great composure. Everybody on the floor, just good composure, good communication.

Somebody just said after one of the ESPN reporters said, well, your freshmen just became sophomores. And what a great quote. For these guys to play in such big moments in a big game and to do what they did was remarkable.

Q. Coach, with Kennedy and Tabitha's performance and Erin making hustle plays in the second quarter, what do you think it says about the future of this program?

JR PAYNE: Obviously, if you can look at what the players did, as young as they are today, their future is really bright. It's not just basketball play, it's the character of that group is very, very high. They're competitive, they're great teammates, and I think this young group is going to be good for a long time.

Q. Coach, a three-point win, a whole bunch of players really dug down deep. What can you say about the grit and resilience this team has and heading into TCU tomorrow, No. 1 seeded team?

JR PAYNE: I think we have shown our resilience all year long with injuries, people being out, different lineups, people playing out of position, having to go for maybe 8 minutes a game to 35 minutes a game. It's a very, very resilient group. I think that's the biggest strength of our team.

Q. Kennedy, since you are the ball handler, the first part of this game looked a lot like yesterday, and the third quarter looked like yesterday. How did you settle down in the second quarter and especially in the fourth quarter?

KENNEDY SANDERS: We talked about being all in it together, and I think we were today. We talked about not leaving each other on an island, and we really played well as a team. We switched up our fast break and worked on

it a lot, but having everyone confident, dribbling the ball up the floor and being there to help each other was important.

TABITHA BETSON: I agree. I think a big thing was trust this game. There have been other times where it's been crunch, and we've kind of been like who do we turn to, kind of looking at each other, like what do we do?

I think today was a big step for us in looking at each other and being like, I trust you to handle the ball. And we trust each other to be there if we need each other, and that was a big thing in limiting our turnovers.

Q. Tabitha, especially in the second half you stepped up, scored, kept the pace when Arizona was scoring really well in that third quarter. What did a performance like today mean to you?

TABITHA BETSON: It's meant a lot. It's a long season, as we all know, and it's just chipping away. It means a lot to step up for my team. And everyone means so much to me, and JR has supported me all throughout the year. So it's great to do that and provide something for my team.

Q. Coach, you mentioned Sara-Rose, and I know you are load managing with her and saved her yesterday. She comes in, I thought she single-handedly got you back in the game the first half and then has the read there on the final play. Talk about her effort today and how she is fighting through a foot injury to play like this.

JR PAYNE: I'm beyond proud of her for what she is doing, all the players that we have had throughout the year being injured, doing everything they can to get healthy. But I think it shows what she is willing to sacrifice for her team. We tried not to play her yesterday, and fortunately we were able to not play her yesterday so she could feel as fresh as possible for today.

But, I mean, she was awesome. And she just did what she does, which is handle pressure, be a great rebounder on both sides of the floor. Very fitting that she sealed the deal with the final defensive rebound.

Q. Kennedy, you had 7 points in the fourth quarter. What were you seeing out there in terms of shot creation and, you know, being able to score at will?

KENNEDY SANDERS: We honestly -- it wasn't really from me. I just was more confident, but we had a lot of good draw and dish from Kindyll, from Johanna. So it was really good. But I wouldn't say it was on me, but just from the passes we were getting in and getting good kick-outs and they had to crash in.

Q. Coach, after yesterday, turnovers were the story, and trying to fight self-inflicted wounds definitely a focus. What was the message this morning or in your preparation for today and how to kind of remedy those issues? How do you think they translated?

JR PAYNE: As Kennedy alluded to, in our shoot-around today we spent -- to Toriano's chagrin, it was his scout and he really wanted to work on Arizona stuff, but we spent most of our shoot-around working on the press attack, and mostly to make sure we were organized.

We have very capable ball handlers, passers and all of that, but we wanted to make sure we were organized because Arizona's press is really good. I think we were organized and confident. We had many different people that broke the press today, from point guards all the way through our fives. So I think that definitely paid off.

Q. You talked about the turnovers and all that, but you are 2-0 now and a shot at TCU tomorrow. How exciting is it the way you came out and played. Saturday didn't come out the way you wanted it to down in Lubbock, but talk about being in this spot.

TABITHA BETSON: It's super exciting. It's my first time in the Big 12 Conference Tournament, so it means so much to win and get on this roll now. How much I love the team, I'm so excited and happy to play with this team, and I love playing with them, so it means so much, and I'm just trying to keep this going and get another win.

KENNEDY SANDERS: We talked about this is a new season; nothing else really matters. Everyone has a clean slate. Come in, compete, win and advance, and that's what we did today, so it's been exciting.

JR PAYNE: What they said. We're just -- again, I think they have echoed how much they want to play for each other and compete and keep playing as long as we can.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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