

# Big 12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 6, 2025

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

Utah Utes

Coach Gavin Petersen

Gianna Kneepkens

Postgame Press Conference



Texas Tech 75, Utah 64

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Utah Head Coach Gavin Petersen and student-athlete Gianna Kneepkens. Coach?

GAVIN PETERSEN: Congratulations to Texas Tech. They came ready to play and used that big second quarter to kind of really get us on our heels, and we were playing come-back and trying to claw back the rest of the game, which exerted a lot of energy.

They did a good job of taking away what we like to do in terms of sharing the basketball and holding us to only 14 assists, 8 for 28 from the three-point line. So we weren't able to get into a rhythm. And then we gave up ten threes on the defensive end, which is not something we normally do.

But credit to them. They made us have to defend. They were winning the point of attacks and getting downhill, and everything opened up for them. So hats off to them.

**Q. Gavin, Texas Tech gave you fits last time you played them this year. Obviously you guys came out on top. What is it about Texas Tech that makes it challenging to play, especially when you get in the deficit?**

GAVIN PETERSEN: I think their athleticism is something that we don't see all the time, but I think in this league that's something we are getting more accustomed to in the Pac-12. It was a little more the skill and the finesse stood out more than the physicality and athleticism in this league.

So we just got to embrace that and be able to work in the off-season and get even better in the recruiting area as well to fit in a little more smoothly into our new setting here

in the Big 12.

But the way they pressure the ball, 94 feet, it just gets you out of your rhythm. And, you know, we had some wide-open looks. If we don't knock those down, then we start thinking about them and then second-guessing ourselves or pressing a little bit too much.

That's what that type of defense does, and I don't think we were able to recover from some of those misses in the second quarter.

**Q. Gianna, what are your overall emotions right now? Obviously that was a tough game for you.**

GIANNA KNEEPKENS: Yeah, I think a little disappointed just because I feel like we probably should have played hard a little more consistently. I think it kinda came down to that. I think that's hard, but we still have games left this year. So we just kinda have to learn from this and we can still make a run in March. So kind of focusing on that.

**Q. Coach, you kinda got thrown into the head coaching position after those first couple weeks of the season. How do you feel like you adjusted on the fly, and what do you think your team with you at the head coach position is capable of accomplishing in the Big 12 with a full off-season of preparation for that?**

GAVIN PETERSEN: Yeah, it was a very unique situation, but I think our team, they embraced me as their new head coach. And obviously I leaned on them and our leadership group throughout the season as we met regularly and made sure we stayed on track.

So I think it went well. I'm looking forward to an off-season so we can build on, we can hit the recruiting trail. We have a great recruiting class coming in. So getting that runway to prepare and plan for next season, I'm looking forward to it. But at the same time, I'm really going to focus in on trying to coach this team for more than just one more game, because it's a special group.

A lot is owed to this senior class and this player right here. They've put Utah basketball on the map and they've made

it what it is. So I want to go out and enjoy this team for as long as I possibly can.

**Q. Gavin, obviously rest is great and allows you to get that first-round bye and stuff like that, but is there a difficult situation having a first-round bye? Would you rather sometimes just get into it?**

GAVIN PETERSEN: No. I would rather be one of top four seeds, to tell you the truth. That's just because of your body of work throughout the year. I'm a big MMA guy, so they talk about ring rust. Ring rust is something if you allow it to be. But I don't think mentally, even physically -- I think our kids were ready before tip, and I think you just gotta give Texas Tech credit. They had nothing to lose and they came out firing, and they were fired up.

**Q. What does this do for you moving into the NCAA tournament? Obviously it's looking like you will be there. What lessons can you learn from this?**

GAVIN PETERSEN: I think we have to learn how to play consistent basketball at a high level with our effort, and our focused intensity. No matter who you play, whether it's in the Big 12 Tournament, or now in the NCAA tournament, you're going to get some really good teams that you've got to match or outplay them or outwork them.

There are moments when we did that, and then there's moments when we don't do that. We cannot allow ourselves to be front runners and allow shot making to dictate that. We've got to be able to, if shots aren't falling, to find different ways to contribute and add to the team and pull out a victory. What this will allow us to do, though, is we will get some rest in the next few days. We can get back to practice, so we can make sure we maintain our physical fitness and practice on some things that will get us ready for whoever that first-round game is in the NCAA tournament.

**Q. Gianna you had a lot of experience in the Pac-12, playing in that tournament. How would you say that environment compares to this one and what impression has your first Big 12 Tournament left on you?**

GIANNA KNEEPKENS: Yeah, I would say it's similar vibes. It was fun besides the part where we lost. There was a good crowd. It was loud. We had our families there, seemed like they had their families there. It's always -- March is always a fun time so it was good to be out here.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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