

Big 12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 7, 2025

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

Kansas State Wildcats

Coach Jeff Mittie

Temira Poindexter

Kennedy Taylor

Postgame Press Conference



you've got to be able to make plays. It's not so much a coach's game as it is a game where these players have to make plays that you've practiced because there is an element of chaos in here that takes some of the plays out.

I thought our group played really, really well today.

Q. Coach, you only played with eight players today. So two questions with that. Was there a reason Sanchez didn't play, and do you feel like that contributed to your team running out of steam at the end?

JEFF MITTIE: No, I don't think so. That was a decision on the lineups that we had were playing well. I don't think so. I thought -- no, they're young. They're young. They can play.

Q. Jeff, 26-7, you guys have had a heck of a year so far to this point. How good is it to know that you all continue to be able to play after this game and just the sense of pride that you've got among your team right now?

JEFF MITTIE: Well, I'm -- yeah, I've been proud of this group all year. One of the things that we've talked about is establishing the new bubble for us is that top-16 group. That's where we want to be every year, and we're in it right now.

We're not concerned that we're in the tournament, it's about seeding and those things. That's where I want the program to be going forward.

I'm proud of this group. We've done a lot of really good things. You asked a minute ago what I learned about this group. There were some lineups on the floor that we hadn't used a lot with the small lineup. And that group played really well together, and I think they found their way at times.

Going forward, we've got a lot to play for. We've got a lot here in the next couple of weeks to get better. We feel like we're going to get Lee back, and we know that Lee will add -- obviously, it's an obvious statement when you have a

West Virginia 73, Kansas State 69

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Kansas State Head Coach Jeff Mittie, student-athletes Temira Poindexter and Kennedy Taylor. Coach?

JEFF MITTIE: It was a heck of a game. Heck of a game. Both teams battled, I thought, extremely hard. Both teams played well. Both teams shot the ball well.

It wasn't because of bad defense. I think both teams really did some good things at that end. These things boil down to a couple plays and a couple things that either you make 'em or don't make a shot or something, and they made plays.

And we made a lot of plays in this game. I can't fault our group. I thought our group played well. I thought our group did a lot of really, really good things. Certainly proud of their effort. But when you have two really quality teams playing, someone is going to walk out with a loss, and it's going to boil down to probably two or three plays, and that's what happened today.

Q. Coach, what would you say you learned about your team in this game?

JEFF MITTIE: I liked our response better today than the last -- I thought we had a good response to their runs, and there were a lot of -- the physicality of the game. I thought that you saw, once again, different players make plays. I thought Kennedy had a really good game down low. I thought that Temira mixed her game up better today than she has.

Against this team, they put so much pressure on you that

player like Lee.

Having said that, I think we found more out about ourselves in the last six weeks that we can be an incredibly dangerous team going forward.

Q. Temira and Kennedy, I would like to know, just a feeling of going forward, knowing the season is not over and the arrays of emotions that you must be feeling right now.

TEMIRA POINDEXTER: This loss, it really hurt us, really bad, I mean, for me personally. I came into this team, and they were just so welcoming and just -- I feel like I came in and just, like, blended in with the team really well.

It was tough to lose tonight, but like Coach says, I feel like it's going to drive us to push us to go harder in the next thing we've got, up next.

KENNEDY TAYLOR: Yeah, like Temira said, joining this team, I was really excited because there were some people that I already knew on this team.

I just feel like tonight's loss really hurt because I feel like the seniors really wanted this. I just feel like we played hard and we never gave up.

Q. Coach, a minute ago you brought up the top-16 seed. Do you guys feel like you've put yourself in a position to, come Selection Sunday, see your name on one of those lines?

JEFF MITTIE: Anybody that watched this game probably says this was a heck of a game and it had to go one way. And as I've said numerous times, we're an interesting case because of missing the Preseason Player of the Year for, I guess, now 13 games, whatever the number is.

I think this team has done enough. I think this team has shown that we're a really good basketball team. You know, this one -- this one really hurts. Some games, if you don't play well, you don't do things, you walk out of there and it hurts. But not like this. This one hurts. This one comes down to two or three plays. Everybody's gotta say, What could I have done better?

This team gave everything they had today. We come up on the short end, but I do think we have done enough. And I think that, you know, we'll see where it shakes out. We don't control that part of it. That part is over for us. But we will see where it shakes out.

Q. Temira, you had a pretty good look there with a few seconds left to potentially take the lead. Obviously it

didn't go in, but what's the mind-set going forward to make sure that shot doesn't impact you down the road?

TEMIRA POINDEXTER: Just to keep shooting. I mean, I don't know, it felt like a lot of pressure shooting that shot, but that's not going to stop me, like, in the next couple of games. I'm not going to think about this moment. I'm just going to continue to shoot the ball and not doubt myself.

Q. Coach, with a shot like that, I'm sure you're happy with the look. What do you tell a player like Temira? Do you have to tell her anything after a shot like that?

JEFF MITTIE: Just keep shooting. I mean, you know, we've told her from day one when she stepped on here not to turn down any shots and be aggressive and get your feet set and shoot it.

I would take that shot again. I would take that shot again. I would take that match-up. We got what we wanted.

Those don't always go. The best shooters in the country shoot 50%. You're going to miss half of 'em. And we had a couple good looks in there. It wasn't just Temira's look, we had a look at the top of the key, we had a couple good looks in there.

So, you know, the last -- the focus obviously can get too much on the end of the game. There was plenty of looks in the last five minutes of that game that, for the most part, I thought we executed pretty well.

Q. That first quarter, how pleased were you with that? Was there a specific plan to -- how prepared did you feel like your team was to come out and punch West Virginia in the face like that?

JEFF MITTIE: Well, it felt like this. When we went through our plan last night, they got some rest, and we had our shoot-around last night, I felt pretty good about it.

When we walked through things this morning, I felt good about our preparation. I felt like they understood where we needed to get the ball. I felt like they understood what to stay away from, because against West Virginia it's not always about what you want to do; it's what you want to stay away from.

So when we played well, everybody was really good in that area. Once again, Zach, I would just say this is a game where both teams played really, really well and unfortunately there were a couple of plays we would like to have differently.

Q. And Kennedy, at times it looked easy for you down in the paint. You didn't miss a shot. I'm sure it wasn't, but what was working for you tonight?

KENNEDY TAYLOR: I felt like I was trying to get in good position, and make the pass easy from my teammates. So I did exactly what Coach Falco told me, stay poised and patient in my shot. That's really what I was trying to do.

Q. Coach, there has been a lot of conversation this weekend about the physicality of this league. How do you think that help you guys moving forward and helps grow up those forwards in the absence of Ayoka?

JEFF MITTIE: The tournaments get more physical and more physical, and today that was probably the difference in the game in that they got us to about four or five feet and there were critical rebounds. So we've got to continue to improve on that; we'll get better. I thought our group battled, but as the tournament comes -- that was an NCAA Tournament game. That wasn't a first-round game; that was a deep NCAA Tournament game, okay?

You need to understand that was two really good teams. That -- Mark, congrats to them. They've got a really good team. I told our group, you know, we walked out of here last year after beating them by three. They felt the way we do today. It's not good, but we've had some great games.

Q. Kennedy, you're from Kansas City. How much have you enjoyed playing in this tournament in front of the home crowd?

KENNEDY TAYLOR: It's been exciting. When I first found out that this is where the tournament was going to be, I told my parents; they were super excited. We were trying to get family to come down, so I had my parents, my brother, my grandparents, my uncle, a bunch of people come out to see me, so it meant a lot to kind of come back here and play how I did in front of everybody.

Q. Coach, what can you say about Kennedy Taylor's performance today and over the past couple weeks, especially in the absence of Ayoka Lee?

JEFF MITTIE: Excited about the way she is playing. Really think she has improved. I really think she has the -- the patience today was big in the post. We felt -- you know, we went to her in stretches where we needed baskets, and she delivered for us. I thought she played really well today, but we've seen her play really well in this last -- she has played well all year, but as the league goes, it's her first run through the Big 12, so she has played well against some of the best centers in the country.

Q. I want to ask about Serena Sundell, now the program's leader for single season assists. What can you say about her? Of course, we have talked about her all season, but what can you say about her and her performance today?

JEFF MITTIE: You know, she just does -- as we've known, she just does everything, right? She does everything for us. We ask a lot of her, we put her in the post, she is our primary ball handler. Defensively she drew a tough assignment today with Quinerly, but she does everything for us. She just continues to deliver in the biggest moments.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much.

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