

# Big 12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 7, 2025

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

**Baylor Bears**

**Coach Nicki Collen**

**Bella Fontleroy**

**Sarah Andrews**

Postgame Press Conference



Addy Brown had 41, and tonight Bella held her to 6 with 9 turnovers. So I think Bella took that match-up personal.

**Q. Sarah, Coach talked about it, it's been a tradition for Baylor and Iowa State to go at it. What does it mean that you beat a team like this here?**

SARAH ANDREWS: I feel like we got over that hump that we were in the last few years going against them. I think we're playing with a lot of fight. And like Coach Nicki said, they got a home-court advantage when you come here, and you've got to weather the storm when they go on runs. We just put it behind us when they went on a run and came back at them.

**Q. How important was that 16-2 run that you came out with? Because it came down to the wire at the end.**

NICKI COLLEN: Yeah, it was the difference. Sometimes that's what it is. You look at last night's game and Iowa State went on a 17-4 run in the first quarter, and that was the difference in the game.

It doesn't matter -- you get frustrated as a coach when you build leads and teams come back, but the reality is everybody is good at this time of year. And you knew they weren't going to quit playing. We were making everything we threw up to start the game. Our defense was super aggressive and on point. Then I think the fouls started to take their toll.

You look at Nette's plus-minus in under 20 minutes, we were plus 26 because we had that match-up where we could neutralize Crooks and we could play to and through and kind of had that inside game. When we didn't have her, it was up to our guards to create off the bounce to make threes. And we just didn't see the ball go through the basket from three on a lot of the ones in the second half.

I thought we came out really poised. And oftentimes when you are the team that didn't play the day before, you can be lethargic. You see that a lot in these events. The team that played the night before comes out a little better. So it was key to the game for sure.

Baylor 69, Iowa State 63

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Baylor Head Coach Nicki Collen, student-athletes Bella Fontleroy and Sarah Andrews. Before I turn it over to Coach Collen, I did want note this is her 100th career win at Baylor. Coach?

NICKI COLLEN: Yeah, this seems to be an annual thing, Baylor and Iowa State in Kansas City. And they've all been nail-biters, and it just feels good to be on the "W" side of it this year.

This is clearly a home away from home for them. I know they refer to it as Hilton South, but that crowd travels and they really provide their team a lift, and that place started roaring when they tied it up.

Super proud that the minute they tied it up, we were able to make a basket, get the lead again and weather it, little by little, play by play. So, you know, whatever it took.

**Q. Coach, Jada was clutch all game, but that three in the corner, what did that mean?**

NICKI COLLEN: Yeah, the corner was huge. We have seen her make big free throws in the past. So you knew where I was going in that situation.

When she got to rhythm and bounce in that middle game, she was good all night. I thought her pressure on Ryan was good. And I was hoping not to have to play everybody so many minutes, but you just -- this time of year you just figure it out and you say we need to win today, tomorrow, and Sunday, and then we rest for a week.

So really proud of these guys' efforts. I think that last night

**Q. Bella, did you take this match-up personally defensively, and what was your mind-set coming in defensively?**

BELLA FONTLEROY: Yeah, she is a great player. Obviously you saw last night what she is capable of. She scores at all three levels. But not only her ability to score, but her play making and finding her teammates when they're open. Ball pressure on her was a big emphasis. But, no, she is a heck of a player and a heck of a person.

**Q. Coach, they kind of said at the beginning, 100 wins. What's your reaction to reaching that?**

NICKI COLLEN: Just grateful. Grateful for the opportunity to be at Baylor, grateful to have the resources to sign good players. And whether it's out of high school like Bella or in the portal like Aliyah, I think the brand speaks for itself.

And when everything is in place for you to be successful, that's what you're supposed to do. I don't think a lot about it. Just grateful, grateful to be at Baylor. Really want 101 tomorrow.

**Q. Crooks had more than half their points, but you slowed her down in the second half. What did you do to slow her down?**

NICKI COLLEN: Especially down the stretch I thought we fronted her better. When she got two feet in the paint and the ball, it was two points or an and-one. So I thought -- you know, Kyla had really struggled against her, and I thought her last 4 minutes might have been the best 4 minutes of Kyla's career from a defensive perspective.

She got the one-rim-run layup too. That is bonus. When we get offense from Kyla, we're really happy. She is out there to screen for her teammates and play defense and rebound.

I thought she got her hands on some balls, did a good job, other than once she tried to take the lob away, and she jumped before the ball left the passer's hands. We tried to not let her get it, which is very, very hard to do. I thought as much as we could we were trying to front her.

**Q. For Coach, you guys were able to force 22 turnovers tonight, just from the very beginning of the game. What did you see kind of differently in that pressure?**

NICKI COLLEN: Yeah, I mean, I think it's -- we know that our advantage is our pressure defense. We know it's our athletic advantage in the game. I think that that showed itself in two ways. One, ball pressure, really making them

uncomfortable. I thought Nette was able to get around and play steal early on some of their post feeds, and late in the game we got our hands on everything.

We knew they were trying to play to Crooks, and I thought collectively these guys did a good job. Even on that lob pass I talked about, Sarah came over and stripped it. We started to make plays at the end.

Against Iowa State, you're so fearful of the three. And you want them to go two by two by two, but sometimes you gotta live. You don't want to give up and-ones, but you can live with some twos. But I think that's where we excel.

I thought our failure to capitalize on some of our turnovers was almost what hurt us tonight. There were times we got a steal and got into transition and missed the layup or fumbled it or dribbled out of bounds. We gave it back too many times and didn't get the numbers. But there at the end, they all got their hands on balls. They knew where it was going. They knew where it was going to go.

**Q. Congratulations. Sarah, last year you guys played Iowa State in the quarterfinals. How have you improved or progressed this season having just won against that same team?**

SARAH ANDREWS: I think last year they went up with two minutes or something left, and this time I just kept telling everybody when they went on their run: There's still a lot of game left. Keep our heads up. We're going to fight till the end.

And they went on their run, and I kept telling everybody: Pick your head up. The game is not over. We can't sit up here and be upset they went on a run. Because Iowa State is a great team, and you gotta expect them to go on a run.

So it was more about staying poised and telling everybody: Hey, we're fine. They're going to go on a run, but it's about us punching back.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much.

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