

# Big 12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 7, 2025

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

## Iowa State Cyclones Coach Bill Fennelly Audi Crooks

### Postgame Press Conference

Baylor 69, Iowa State 63

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Iowa State Head Coach Bill Fennelly and student-athlete Audi Crooks. Coach?

BILL FENNELLY: First of all, on behalf of all of us, I want to thank the Big 12 and the people of Kansas City very, very much. Honored to be a part of it. Obviously disappointed in the result of the game, but I am not disappointed in the people that wear an Iowa State uniform.

We played as hard as we could play against a very good team. I love coaching our team, and I'm blessed to do it. And I'm looking forward to the next time we go to practice to get ready for another game.

**Q. How were you able to climb back into that game when it seemed like Baylor had a chance to run away with it? Seems like multiple times.**

AUDI CROOKS: Honestly, we just showed a lot of grit and tenacity. We know Baylor has a tendency to get into hot streaks, but to our credit we continued to fight back and chip away and eventually took the lead after they had a big scoring drive.

**Q. After that shot by Arianna, how much momentum did you guys feel like you had?**

AUDI CROOKS: That was a big shift for us. Just really, really proud of her. I know she was frustrated after yesterday's game. So happy to see one go in for her. Yeah, great to see one go in.

**Q. Obviously it was a much closer game than when you guys played down there. What changed this time**



around?

AUDI CROOKS: I think the mentality, our approach to the game was different, able to get established early on in the inside, and I think that opened things up for us. We were more aggressive to the basket, made hustle plays. Give a shout-out to Kelsey Joens, got a lot of extra boards and tips for us, and I think we had an attack mentality, and this time when they threw a punch, we didn't fall down.

**Q. They forced a lot of turnovers on you guys. What were they doing and how much does that impact the game?**

AUDI CROOKS: I mean, you gotta talk to the people that handle the ball. Most of the time I'm not in that frontcourt, but I mean, to their credit, they're handsy, they're physical, they play with a lot of grit, and defensively they're in your face. They applied pressure I would say the whole game and made it difficult for our guards and for us to handle the ball.

**Q. Coach, Audi had more than half your points. Talk about her value to your team?**

BILL FENNELLY: We would be here a long time. I think the value that you see on the court is one thing, but the value that she brings to our university and our program is exponentially bigger than anything she does on the basketball court. The way she handles herself, the demeanor that she carries herself with, the joy that she plays with I think is infectious, and it's been something that's really impacted our team over the last two years, and certainly impacted me, to be honest with you.

She is a great person and a great player. It's hard to believe she has accomplished what she has only as a sophomore. So a lot of great things in her future.

**Q. Audi, you ended up breaking the single-season scoring record at Iowa State. What's that mean to you?**

AUDI CROOKS: It's news to me. It's an honor. There are a lot of greats that came before me and happy to etch my

name up there alongside that record book, but that's not something that I achieved alone. That's a really big team accomplishment, I think, not just to my credit but I've got probably the best assist leader in the country in Emily Ryan and Addy Brown, constantly looking to get the ball in, all the guards, so you've got to give them credit as well.

**Q. Bill, you have been adamant over the last week or so you thought this was an NCAA Tournament team. Now that you've done everything you can do heading into Selection Sunday, how do you feel about where you sit now?**

BILL FENNELLY: I'm trying to put this the right way without getting -- there is no question our team belongs in the NCAA Tournament. I don't -- I'll debate anyone on that one, if you want to. The way we play, how we play, the schedule we played, the people that we have on our team, if you're trying to showcase the sport. We play in one of the best leagues in the country. Again, I'm not in the room, but some of the teams I hear they're talking about, tell me when and where, and we'll show up and play ya. I'm trying to be nice and politically correct. I'm not very good at that either. My wife is not here, is she? Good. I'm sorry, that's not a very good answer.

**Q. What was your message to the team during that timeout where you guys fell behind 10-0?**

BILL FENNELLY: I think it was mainly just everyone take a breath. I'm trying to be politically correct again. You might -- no, I mean, you -- like she said, the one thing we talked about when we play some of these teams that are ultra physical is when you get punched in the mouth, you either -- they either knock you out or you hang on and sometimes you've got to lay on the ropes and protect yourself, and let 'em punch and come back. That's all.

I just kept telling them, play the way we play and whatever happens, happens. To their credit, that game could have got ugly easily, but, you know, you saw people make plays, but you can't see what's in their heart and their soul and how much they care about one another and how much they care about wearing an Iowa State jersey. I wasn't overly concerned about it. I was more like, everyone take a breath, let's get going, and luckily we survived the first quarter.

**Q. Audi, a lot of ice on you, first of all. Hope you're doing okay. We can see that. But what kind of pride do you take in being able to compete with that physicality at such a young age? How does that help you going into tournament time?**

AUDI CROOKS: Yeah, that's huge, and that's kind of as to

be expected at this point. Night in and night out teams bring whatever they can in the post defensive realm just to try to be physical and try to make things difficult for me.

So that's something that I definitely take with a lot of pride, handling that, being efficient, especially when my teammates are looking for me in the paint. I make sure if I get the ball I'm at least going to get a decent look at it. Just gotta be strong in the paint, gotta be prepared for anything in this league, and especially heading into postseason, hopefully.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

BILL FENNELLY: Thank you, everyone.

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