

Big 12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Saturday, March 8, 2025

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

Baylor Bears

Coach Nicki Collen

Aaronette Vonleh

Jada Walker

Postgame Press Conference



Baylor 84, Oklahoma State 74

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Baylor Head Coach Nicki Collen, student-athletes Aaronette Vonleh and Jada Walker. Coach?

NICKI COLLEN: I need this mic. I think you jinxed me, Julianna, because I haven't lost my voice all season. Wow, what a game. We got off to a slow start, had to call an early timeout, but we rebounded. We found ways to get downhill, get paint points. We didn't have a lot of threes for a long stretch, but we were getting it down in the paint. And I thought once we started rebounding and scrapping, turned into a really good game.

Just happy to be in the championship.

Q. Talk about your career high in points.

AARONETTE VONLEH: I didn't know it was a career high until the end of the game. I was just trying to be useful for my teammates, and they were really good at finding me when I was open. So it was just making layups, really.

Q. Coach, when they went to the 2-3 zone, how did that affect your play?

NICKI COLLEN: It hurt us. I think not having Buggs, and then Bella fouling out, we didn't have a traditional lineup. We have been really good against zones this year. But it was a standard 2-3, and we haven't played those lineups together, between people fouling out and where we were at.

It was like once I got to a timeout and could diagram what I wanted and they could understand it, then we started to be

able to feed it back in and play to numbers on the back side.

I think they went to the 2-3 because we were getting the ball to Nette too easily, and they wanted to surround her with more bodies. And I knew with the right spacing we could do it, we just had to get to an action that we run regularly. We usually don't have a 2 guard set the screen.

I thought at first it really bothered us. To open overtime, we really hammered it inside, made some shots. Jada hit a shot. I thought Waiata's three in the corner -- Jennings was huge. I was telling her to move it. She said, Nope I'm going to shoot it. And I clapped.

Eventually we figured it out.

Q. What can you say about Aaronette's performance tonight?

NICKI COLLEN: It was awesome. I mean, she knows I probably believe in her more than she believes in herself. 37, I really don't expect that every night, I promise. But because of who Ténin Magassa is and how good she has been defensively this year, they have not had to double team all year.

So I thought she was aggressive early. The crazy part was she missed her first four shots, but she was playing to the rim aggressively and making good moves. Once it started to go in, she picked up a couple of fouls and she just continued to want the ball.

I always say it doesn't matter what we run. If she wants the ball, our guards are going to get it to her. We did that a lot of different ways tonight. But I thought her screening and rolling was really, good, too. It wasn't just low post, she got drop passes, she got roll behinds. And I thought we played effectively on the ball screens, which we didn't do the first time around.

Q. Aaronette, you came to Baylor to play in big games. Is this what you were expecting?

AARONETTE VONLEH: This is exactly where I wanted to

be finishing out my last year, and I'm glad we're playing for a championship. And I know we have what it takes on our team to be successful and win a ring. It's exciting, and I'm glad that I was able to pick it up at the right time.

Q. Nette, you said at the end of that TCU game you were hoping to get another shot at them. Well, you're going to get another shot at them. What's it feel like knowing you're going to face them again?

AARONETTE VONLEH: Third time is the charm. I think we're going to be very prepared, and I hope that we carry the momentum that we had in this game right into that one.

Q. Jada, going into overtime, talk about the tenacity of this team, y'all were able to hang on and stay in control?

JADA WALKER: Yeah, that's what we've been doing all year. It's been a game of runs for us a lot, but we've been on the winning side of it.

So I'm really proud of our team, the way that we can fight and, even though we went into overtime, still battled with two people fouling out and still being able to come in with subs and get the job done.

Q. Coach, couple weeks ago you gutted out a win at K-State, and from then to now, earning this rematch against TCU, how would you summarize the state of your team over that stretch?

NICKI COLLEN: I think it started in February when we lost to TCU the first time. I think February was an undefeated month for us, we built confidence. I think we took a lot of confidence into the TCU game the last time.

We missed some shots we usually make. I thought our defense was elite. I thought their defense was elite. And they made a couple more plays than we did to end up with the regular season championship.

Proud of this group for getting back here, not hanging their heads. Oklahoma State had beaten us once, they beat K-State and beat TCU, that's a really good basketball team.

What Jacie Hoyt has done with that team this year is impressive. Nobody was talking about the portal kids they brought in, and all they've done is find ways to win and be really, really good.

I'm just proud of what we did tonight against a really good basketball team, especially with the way they punched first and we had to fight our way back into the game, and then

took a bigger lead, and then Micah Gray, three threes later, we were in a dogfight.

Had to keep finding ways. Had the last shot to win it in regulation. And sometimes you can be, like, upset and almost let that carry into overtime, but I don't think we did that. And I needed that time with them to get us into what we needed to be in, I think, to be successful.

Q. Coach, whistle-heavy game today, four players on the court that ended up fouling out. How do you adjust to those whistles actively in the game?

NICKI COLLEN: Good question. I mean, it was obviously, at the end of the day, like, 24-22. That's probably more even because they had to foul at the end with the lead; otherwise, it probably would have been pretty even.

It's always frustrating. I don't think you ever like that much play stoppage. But I also think it was a really physical game. It was physical in the lane all night long, ask this one.

Rebounds were tough to come by. You had to be first to the floor because I thought that was something they did really well was really attack the glass and come up with loose balls in the lane.

But, you know, I think the thing I was proud of is we made our free throws. In a game like that, it hasn't been our strength this year, hasn't always been our weakness, but I thought we made a living there tonight.

Q. Coach, going off the fouls, lots of fouls, but at the same time you kinda kept them away from the right person in Stailee didn't go to the line as much as she usually does. How good was that?

NICKI COLLEN: Stailee was pretty good. She had 25. They say a downhill player. We didn't foul her, but I thought early in transition she bothered us, and then obviously like -- we were -- Bella is a good match-up for her, but Bella was in foul trouble all night.

So it was by committee, and we ended up switching a lot of action. So they all had to guard her, had to box her out. She got named First Team All-Conference for a reason. It hurt us that Bella was in foul trouble as it hurt them that Stailee was in foul trouble, and Bella was in more because Stailee played twice as much as Bella. We got the W.

Q. Coach, Y hit a couple of big threes and played good defense. Did you expect something like that from her with Bella in foul trouble?

NICKI COLLEN: Look, the kid is a competitor. You don't know what to expect. I know she is going to play hard. I know she is going to run around, she is probably going to mess up the switch, forget who she is guarding, but she is going to play hard.

And I think that's -- there is a fearlessness in how she plays, and I know she is never afraid to play in big moments. I thought her threes were big. She is a confident player. She missed one three on a possession. We got the offensive rebound, threw it back out to her, and she shot it again. It wasn't like she was afraid to take a big shot. We needed them. She hit one, and then Jada hit a really big shot. She is fearless, you know. I'm probably the one that holds her back.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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