

# 2026 Phillips 66 Big 12 Women's Basketball Tournament

Wednesday, March 4, 2026

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

## UCF Knights

## Coach Sytia Messer

## Khyala Ngodu

### Postgame Press Conference



Kansas - 56, UCF - 35

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by head coach Sytia Messer and student-athlete Khyala Ngodu. Coach, a couple comments on the game, please.

SYTIA MESSER: I appreciate everybody staying out and watching us and supporting us tonight.

I felt like, offensively, first quarter, going into the second quarter, we had an offensive drought, and we weren't able to hit easy shots to get our rhythm going, and I thought that's where some of the game separated.

From a rebounding standpoint too, we didn't have our best rebounding night. But our kids fought, and they have fought all season. We battled different types of lineups. We had some injuries and lost our leading scorer this season. And this young lady stepped up. I'm telling you, she stepped up to the plate. And just proud of her. We know we've got work to build on and do, but we're looking forward to the future of UCF basketball with the people we have returning and our recruiting class.

**Q. Coach, Kansas came out and played a lot of 2-3 defense, especially in that second quarter. Were you expecting to see any of that? And then how did you adjust your game plan?**

SYTIA MESSER: Well, we started trying to, in the second half, finding soft spots and look for our high-low, kicking it back to our opposite guard to hit the 3.

Kansas hasn't played traditionally a lot of zone. But, you know, that's part of it. They challenged us to make shots, and we didn't shoot it well tonight. So kudos to them.

**Q. One more thing on the high-low game. Kansas plays a lot of that high-low between Lilly Meister and then Jaliya Davis. You guys did a pretty good job of taking that away for the most part, forced a couple turnovers. How much did you game plan for that, specifically?**

SYTIA MESSER: We game planned quite a bit for it. I thought Khy did a great job. Savannah, Mo coming in to defend it. We wanted to make sure we had two players, two posts sitting on Davis the entire time, and we felt like -- she did a great job on her rebounding, but we kind of disrupted a little bit offensively. So that was intentional.

**Q. Khy, can you just sum up the last few years of your career and how you feel like your game has evolved up until this point? I know you had the injury a little bit this year. But obviously a year of a lot of growth and production from you. But can you just kind of talk about your evolution over the last couple of years?**

KHYALA NGODU: Yeah, it's been a journey. When I first came here as a freshman, one of the main things I wanted to do was not so much focus on the statistical aspect of the game but more so, like, growth. You know what I'm saying? Like growing, things like my body, becoming stronger and eating better and developing a jump shot, being able to finish with both hands. Just little things that I didn't have coming out of high school and just staying patient with it.

My freshman year to now, it's been a great opportunity just being able to just grow. We've had a lot of great development coaches, position coaches at the post position, and they've helped me a lot. And I owe a lot of my ability to them as well.

**Q. I know you guys have had experience with it being based in the Orlando area, but what was it like playing on the court for the first time in the U.S.A. on a large-scale competition?**

KHYALA NGODU: It was nice. Honestly, I don't think it feels that different from the regular court. Especially when I'm playing I'm just focusing on the game. I think it's cool. The lights and stuff, it gives you a feel like you're doing something special because normally we play on regular courts. And with this court being for the tournament, it feels like an upgrade a little bit. So it was a nice experience.

**Q. You saw Jaliya early in the season. I'm wondering, from that point to tonight, did you see a different player, or how -- was she similar or more, obviously, refined at this point in the season?**

KHYALA NGODU: Honestly, I didn't get the chance to play against her. I actually had a fever for the Kansas game. I didn't get an opportunity to play against her. But I watched the game, of course, and definitely a lot of development there. So our game plan, like Coach said, was to send two out and just make it tough for her.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports