

2026 Phillips 66 Big 12 Women's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 7, 2026
Kansas City, Missouri, USA
T-Mobile Center

Colorado Buffaloes
Coach JR Payne
Zyanna Walker

Postgame Press Conference



West Virginia - 48, Colorado - 47

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Colorado coach JR Payne and student-athlete Zyanna Walker.

JR PAYNE: What an incredible tournament we've been privileged to be a part of. I'm really proud of how our team competed.

After last week, I don't think there were very many people outside of our locker room that believed we would come here and do what we've done. But we have a tremendous amount of belief in ourselves and in each other. We have a very resilient team, and I think we saw that on full display for three hard-fought games.

So I'm really proud of my team, individually, collectively, and I think a loss like this, Zyanna and I were just saying, one point is just so much worse than, like, a 15-point loss because you just think, ah, every single little thing could have changed the outcome. But that's why you play the game.

So two great Big 12 teams that are going to keep playing throughout March. And we'll rest and recover, and then be excited for whatever we have next.

Q. Coach, that last play, could you talk about what you saw there, what you drew up there for Jade?

JR PAYNE: I mean, they were denying everywhere. And Jade had been very effective down the stretch of the game, attacking. The fact they were playing tight everywhere, we thought we could open up a seam for her to take advantage the way she had throughout the second half.

Q. Just credit Jordan? Obviously defensive player of the year for a reason.

JR PAYNE: Yes, absolutely, great defensive play by her.

Q. You talked about Jade. I know she's been struggling a little bit lately. But she was such a big part of your rally today.

JR PAYNE: Yes.

Q. Could you talk about her effort and kind of being aggressive and getting you back in that game a little bit?

JR PAYNE: I think there was sort of a stretch there where she was being really aggressive and we were getting top-down paint touches and attacks. And we needed that against a good defensive team.

So there were many people that were getting that. Zy was getting them, Dez was getting them, Jade was getting them. But, yeah, I thought her resilience from picking up two fouls in the first however many minutes and then having an aggressive second half was really key for us.

Q. Holding West Virginia to a season-low 48 points, what did you think of your defense today?

JR PAYNE: I thought it was phenomenal. I thought our team executed game plan on a very short notice. I thought we guarded the 3-point line very well. I mean, it has to be one of their lowest scoring outcomes of the season.

And, Brian, you'll probably know this stat because you're great with stats, but there have been many teams this year that we've held to their season low because we're very strong defensively. So I thought our team just executed game plan beautifully.

Q. A.D. only played 22 minutes. What kind of went into that decision?

JR PAYNE: I mean, she was tired. They played three games in three days. When you have a group on the floor that is organized and executing and doing what they need to do, you go with that group. So it wasn't anything she did wrong.

Q. You talked about this in your opening statement, but if you look at the schedule, you guys won 10 of your last 14. And even though it was a little bit of a tough end of the regular season, you went off the bubble into the tournament. Could you talk about the resilience that that's taken over time and then especially coming into this tournament knowing that you did have to have a couple wins?

JR PAYNE: Yeah, I think that takes a whole lot of courage to -- we didn't want to struggle like we did in the last week of league. We dropped two games that we felt like we could have and should have won.

That could have really, I don't know the right word, but that could have tanked us, you know. And the resilience of this group to make a decision that they weren't going to cry about it, they were going to do something about it, I think, is pretty remarkable for a group of young women to come together and play the way they did after that.

Q. Zy, we talked earlier this week. You were so excited for this tournament and said you love this tournament but you've never been to that final game. How much pain is it for you to come that close to being in that final game?

ZYANNA WALKER: Yeah, it's painful, especially like losing to West Virginia. I lost to them last year in the same game. Just knowing like we were right there, only lost by one point, I really felt like in the game we really had the momentum. So, yeah, it's tough.

Q. Coach said the defense was phenomenal today but the offense was a struggle. When they get up by 12, looked like they were really poised to maybe kind of run away with this thing. What did you do to settle yourselves down, get yourselves back into this game?

ZYANNA WALKER: Just stay together, instill confidence in one another just because there's plenty of time left, and we know that basketball is a game of runs. They're going to go on their run and we're going to go on ours.

Q. Coach mentioned how hard it is to lose by one point. How do you not dwell on this as you look towards March?

ZYANNA WALKER: 'Cuz the season's not over. We still

got the most important part of the season, March Madness. If you dwell, it's just going to hurt you.

Q. Coach, it's been an interesting week for you. You personally signed a new contract, win two games, lose this one by a close margin. What's this week been like for you?

JR PAYNE: It's great. I miss my children when I'm gone, but other than that, anytime I can hang out with these guys for five days, it's a pretty great week. Plus, we won two games, so it's been a good week.

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