

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 6, 2021
Greenville, South Carolina, USA

Texas A&M Aggies

Gary Blair

Postgame Press Conference

Georgia 74, Texas A&M 68

THE MODERATOR: We are ready to continue with Texas A&M Coach Gary Blair. We'll take questions.

Q. N'dea just talked about some of the lessons you guys learned, the building blocks. You weren't really worried after this loss. Do you feel like this was -- sometimes you say you learn more from a loss than a win. Is that the instance here with two weeks until you play next?

GARY BLAIR: Not a bit. You don't ever learn by losing. I'm not looking for momentum that way. My team was ready to play. We had a good plan. We talked about they were going to take us out of our sets, and we were going to have to run a lot of high ball screens and create.

As a result, you saw Morris and Nixon both get in double figures because we couldn't get our wings open to run some of our sets. That's due to Georgia's great man-for-man defense.

We talked about it, we worked on it. But sometimes we just couldn't get Walker. She was shooting contested shots all day long. Sometimes she's got to realize you have to shoot those at the end of a shot clock possession. But when you've got a lot of time on, you have to create space or drive the ball and try to find somebody else.

When we drove the ball, they were covering out on our wings the majority of the time. We couldn't get it to them.

Hindsight, yeah, we should have got the ball inside more. But that's hindsight. Hey, it wasn't that easy getting the ball inside with as much pressure as they were putting on our point guard.

Connally early putting pressure, then Morrison is probably



the best defensive guard in our league. Give her a lot of credit. She came in and created havoc. She wanted the ball. They outplayed us today.

The key point was in the third quarter I think when they called timeout. We had a four-point lead. We gave up six of the easiest points you've ever seen, then we were playing catch-up the rest of the ballgame.

But we've got to work on getting ourselves open to be able to run our offense. That's all on me. When we were in transition in the second and third quarter, we were pretty good. But when we were running halfcourt offense, we were not very good. That's my territory.

But Georgia's a very good ballclub. They take you out of what they want. Morrison and Staiti played magnificent for them. Isaacs early in the ballgame, she hurt us on a couple plays early, not late.

We just got to do a better job. That's all it is. We don't need a loss; we needed a game like this to be able to play against pressure man-for-man, similar to in the days at Mississippi State that used to be so good man, or back in the days when Baylor were man, and back in the days when we were pretty damn good ourselves.

But we need to do a better job protecting the ball. We forced them into 16 turnovers, but missed some of the easy conversions that we should have had.

Next.

Q. You have about two weeks or so before you begin tournament play. How will you address everything you just mentioned, some of the things you need to address? How will you get the team ready for play? How will you keep the intensity up with everything going on? How can you let this loss go and move forward?

GARY BLAIR: We have to have intensity during practice. Might not practice as long but practice more efficient. We've got to practice against pressure. It wasn't nothing their full court was doing or whatever; their halfcourt

defense was that good. We have to do a better job. Sometimes it comes too easy in our practice sessions and our kids are shooting 55% consistently, particularly inside.

Well, we had trouble getting the ball inside. Then a couple of the other chances we just felt like get Staiti away from the basket like we were very efficient doing that against South Carolina and against Tennessee and a couple other teams. Let Ciera set the screens, N'dea clean up down low. The problem is we have to hit some of those shots or go deeper in the shot clock to get a better shot.

We had probably 10 to 15 forced shots, and it wasn't the end of the shot clock. That's on me. I've got to get us into a better offensive flow and us be able to score a little better. I'll work on that.

But rest? We don't need rest. We've had enough off because of COVID and cancellations. It's been a long season. But this team is too much of a veteran team. We're healthy and we're still hungry.

Q. I know y'all like to take it one tournament at a time. Now that it's on to the next one, how excited are y'all? The last time you won a national title in Indianapolis. This tournament in its entirety is in and around San Antonio.

GARY BLAIR: I'm happy for our fans. I'm happy for our parents. It's a little bit closer that they'll be able to come.

I just hope we get a good draw. That's the most important thing you want now. Hopefully we'll be able to hold onto a 1 seed. You know how committees are; you never know what's going to happen.

It doesn't matter if you're a 1 or a 2. As long as you're playing in the state of Texas, that's home to us. But we saw some mistakes today that we've got to clean up. We got to play with more of a sense of urgency, particularly down the stretch when we got down by 10 or 12 or whatever it was.

We missed four out of eight free throws down the stretch. That could have got it to a one-possession game. We didn't hit those. Other than that, I'm excited to keep playing. I'm glad it's in Texas, three and a half hours away from us. Whether we're playing in Austin, San Marcus or San Antone, this team has a lot of basketball left in them.

At the same time respect your opponent. We really respected Georgia today even before the game started. We just got beat by a team that played better than us today. I didn't say they were better, I said they played better. I think our kids will admit to that. They got all the

hustle points and loose balls. Staiti had six blocks and probably changed about six others.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, coach.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

