

Pac-12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 3, 2021

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Washington State Cougars

Kamie Ethridge

Postgame Press Conference



Washington State 57, Utah 48

THE MODERATOR: We are here with Washington State women's basketball coach, Kamie Ethridge. Your first win in the Pac-12 tournament against Utah tonight. Talk about the win, your thoughts on the game, then we'll open the floor for questions.

KAMIE ETHRIDGE: Well, again, I'm so impressed with Utah, with what Lynne does with her program. You don't want to play anybody at this stage. But when you just played someone and beat them, they're a little dinged up, didn't bring a player, however that plays out, I just thought their guys played so hard. Had a great plan for us. Obviously made every basket really, really difficult.

So I'm so happy for our team. It's the first time I've won here at the tournament. We had one player who is older than me and they hadn't won either. Another first for our program, at least this generation, I guess.

It's a big step for us. It's not like we played awesome; except on the defensive end I thought we were really, really good. But offensively it was not the prettiest thing. I just thought our players, we had a bunch of different players make a lot of plays that ended up giving us either momentum or a little bit of a lead or hanging on when we were not so calm. I think that's a big statement, that it's not just one player, that we had multiple different players that really helped us get this win tonight.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach.

Q. You had three players in double-digit scoring. How big is that a key for you guys to get that double-digit performance across the board?

KAMIE ETHRIDGE: Well, obviously, I mean, I think the really good teams have four and five. We play certain players a lot of minutes. We obviously need scoring from different spots on the floor.

I was really happy with Bella tonight. I thought she was a great presence. Her line, she's working so much harder at being big inside, giving us someone to throw to. Then defensively, I love that she gets good numbers because she works so hard. 13 points and 12 rebounds is a great stat line for her, with five being offensive.

But I love that we had big players step up. Krystal made a huge three at a big time. Charlisse probably struggled a little bit, but you want her on the floor, you want her on your team. I couldn't be happier with how we had different players make big shots at different times.

Q. You guys were able to pull through and lean on other people. That's been something that hasn't always happened this year. How encouraging is that for you to see as a coach?

KAMIE ETHRIDGE: Yeah, it is. I think we've had games where she's the only one that scored, then these guys that play a lot of minutes, no one else around her does. We've got to balance that out.

I thought Utah did a great job on Charlisse. She missed some unusual shots tonight, but it's a big game, a big moment, first time in this place. I expect her to be better tomorrow.

It gives us a lot of confidence when we can win games when she's not her best, and other people stepped up and made big shots. Still, Ula played every minute of the game. Didn't shoot the ball great, but there's a reason she plays every minute of the game. She's just a calming effect. I expect her numbers to go up.

I think there's plenty of points out there we can maybe get a few more points as we go. I'm glad we had enough tonight.

Q. Obviously a huge win in terms of your NCAA tournament résumé. How does it feel to be one step closer to being on the right side of the bubble, making some history for this program?



KAMIE ETHRIDGE: I think everybody's worried about that. I think this game, you felt like if you lost this game, there would be lots of excuses not to put us in. Winning it I know doesn't totally guarantee anything, but I think we have a great résumé. I think we've had some great wins.

We play in the best league in the country in women's basketball. We've been very successful this year. We've played everybody just toe to toe, as good as we possibly could. Yes, we lost some, but we want to be in that tournament. I think this team really has deserved it.

We get another chance to play one of the best teams in the country tomorrow. We're excited about that. That's the only thing that needs to be on our mind at this point.

Q. You talked about getting that first conference tournament win. Another kind of notch of what you have done this year, getting the first conference win for this program in four or five seasons, talk about how that almost summarizes all the great things you have done.

KAMIE ETHRIDGE: I said to Steve on our radio, before the game, that thing of it's hard to beat someone three times in a season, but you turn it and go, Well, Stanford does it all the time. Some of the top teams in our league do it all the time.

That's another thing that we, me, having been here three years now, we've never really done that. We've struggled just playing anyone once and beating in any games. This was a big one, to come to the tournament, win a first-round game.

Yes, we were the higher seed, but it's still such a crapshoot. Anything can happen. It is the third time you've played someone. A kid can have a bad night. There's just so many things that can go wrong for you.

So for us to have the maturity, the competitiveness. I just love our mentality. I love how we weren't great, we took some punches, just found a way to make big shots and make winning plays.

We're going to celebrate it. We're going to be happy every time we do something for the first time. Hopefully there's a few more to come.

Q. Maybe it wasn't Charlisse's best game efficiency-wise, how do you get her right back into the killer mindset facing off against a very good defensive Arizona team tomorrow?

KAMIE ETHRIDGE: I just don't worry about her. She's her

biggest critic. Every great competitor is like that. I don't think there's anything -- I don't have to motivate this team, quite frankly. Maybe there's one or two that you got to bring back to earth and get them serious again. But she's not one of them. She's a serious basketball player. She's a serious competitor. She wants to be good and wants to be better, not just for herself but for our team. I'm not worried about her at all.

The worry is that we logged a lot of minutes on our main players, and they have to recover quick, less than 24 hours, go against one of the best defensive teams in the country. There's not an easy path to winning in this tournament. We have to play more games than the top four seeds if we want to advance. But that's the nature of it.

But again, I'm not worried about our team. I think the leadership on our team, the competitiveness of our team, they'll get themselves ready to compete as hard as they can against Arizona.

THE MODERATOR: We appreciate your time. Talk to you tomorrow afternoon.

KAMIE ETHRIDGE: Thanks.

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