

Pac-12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 4, 2021

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Washington State Cougars Coach Kamie Ethridge

Postgame Press Conference



Arizona - 60, Washington State - 44

Q. Your team suffered a 60-44 loss in the quarterfinals round in the Pac-12 against Arizona. Opening statement and thoughts on the game.

COACH ETHRIDGE: I just thought we got beat by a really good team. They just manhandled us. And congratulations to Arizona. I thought they were just savage on us and smelled blood from the very beginning. Made it so hard for us just to score points.

So we didn't even get shots. The first half was just as bad as it could get on the offensive end of the court. Really disappointed in how we played on the offensive end. Couldn't be more happy and more impressed with our ability to hold them, though.

Just, I love our defense, love our kids, I love how they played. We were just not good enough on the offensive end yet to relieve pressure and be able to score from multiple positions against that kind of pressure.

Q. Not to give an out for excuses in a sense, but do you feel the team was maybe tired at the beginning of the game having played a really scrappy game 24 hours earlier?

COACH ETHRIDGE: There's no question that the main players that play as many minutes that ours do are pretty on fumes a little bit right now. But they're great competitors.

I just think Arizona's, you know, they're a more experienced group. They have a system of just high pressure. And they were really good at it. And we just -- we don't have the fundamentals. And we needed a post that would set really good screens to get someone open. And we were lost out there in that position.

We needed guards to get into people and get open and we

were lost there. We needed ball handlers to not get sped up and try to do too much. And we had that going on.

So there wasn't a position on the floor where I just felt like we had some poise and composure and ability to play sped up or play -- or not get themselves sped up. We just got sped up all night.

And that's not just on our players. I mean we just didn't have them ready for that. I think Arizona really stepped it up and stepped up their pressure. I think their trap on the ball really bothered us and got them going. And still we're down nine or whatever at half or eight at half. It's just unbelievable to play that badly and still be in the game. We just didn't clean it up enough after half.

Q. Did you feel like Arizona maybe even threw some different defensive looks at you guys, or was it the same stuff they were running, but they just ran it extra effectively today?

COACH ETHRIDGE: They know us well. They were really good on ball screens. We tried to insist on using them and we shouldn't -- we really didn't intend to, but it's such a habit of ours to just call for a ball screen because it's been so successful for us.

But they just have great athletes. And they can switch a lot of positions on the floor and they can just be ultra aggressive.

They took the ball out of Krystal's hands. They can keep her from bringing it up. We need more guards in the gym that can handle the ball. We need more point guards in our gym. And we're a little short on depth and, really, playmaking guards that can handle that kind of pressure. There's not a lot of teams out there that can handle that kind of pressure. So we're not the only ones. But I was a little disappointed that we didn't handle it better.

Again, it shows, because in the second half we did. We only had six turnovers in the second half. But I just think you gotta give them a lot of credit for how they played.

Q. How tough is it to prepare for a team like Arizona



where, you know, so much of the focus goes to stopping Aari McDonald, and yet you guys did a fairly good job on her, 6-of-17, 13 points with nine assists. But then someone like Baptiste goes for 17 and there's Cate Reese to deal with. How tough is it to face a team that has that one superstar but still a lot of really complementary pieces as well?

COACH ETHRIDGE: Again, defensively I don't think we could have done better. I'm really happy with how we played. We can prepare for that. I thought we guarded them great. You tell me 60 points, 61 points wins the game and I take that every day of the week.

44 points won't win games against the teams. We can't simulate it in practice. We don't have players. We run our stuff in practice. We don't have practice players, guy practice players this year, so we can't simulate that kind of pressure. So we have a lot of success against each other in practice. And then you get into a game like this and you just flat out can't simulate this in practice.

So this is a challenge for our team to understand. You know, this is what top 10 looks like. And this is how you have to compete. And you have to be able to handle these kinds of bodies and that kind of pressure and still be able to make plays. I think we still have a young team that has a lot of room for growth. And we can certainly try to get them there.

And that's the exciting part about our program, I think, right now.

Q. What do you think this wait is going to be like over the next week and a half, just waiting to see if you guys are in for the tournament or not?

COACH ETHRIDGE: We're excited. I don't know -- again, we've played a really hard schedule. We played teams unbelievably hard. We're in a great league. We've won some big-time games. We're going to go forward as though we're in the tournament.

I feel like we've earned our way in. I think we've proven that we can compete with really, really good teams that are making the tournament. We're going to go back, and we're going to get some rest and try to pick up the pieces a little bit and try to figure out how we can be better in these kinds of environments and against this quality opponent.

And I'm very confident in the committee's ability to compare us with other people that will be at-large bids. So we're going to -- we'll be on pins and needles for sure. We'll be anxious when it's selection night. But we really do expect to hear Washington State's name being called.