

Pac-12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 5, 2021

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Arizona Wildcats

Coach Adia Barnes

Postgame Press Conference



UCLA - 58, Arizona - 49

Q. What are your initial takeaways from tonight's game?

COACH BARNES: You know, we struggled. I thought both teams, solid defensively. Just the way the game was, it was extremely physical, which I thought it was good. Both of our percentages were really bad. They're very similar. If you look at UCLA from the field, 33 percent. We're 32. I thought both of us struggled from the 3-point line.

They shot more free throws. I think that was one of the biggest differences, but I feel like the rebounding at times, I know they were only plus-6, but the times and manners they got them really hurt us.

I thought in the first half, especially, they got all the 50/50 balls. They got all those passion plays that we usually get. I thought that we weren't strong with the ball. Off of rebounds and different things like that we weren't able to finish with confidence. And Michaela, 10 for 11 from the free-throw line. She really hurt us. She was really the only one scoring.

And you know, like, for me indication of the game and our offense was four assists on the 18 field goals. And you're not going to win a lot of games like that. So it was just UCLA played better than we did today. And they deserved to win. They're a good team.

Q. Every time you guys got down by one or two points they were able to go on a run. What happened defensively there?

COACH BARNES: You know, they hit some big shots. I felt like when we made small mistakes, we had a tough time with Onyenwere. I think Michaela was taking it coast to coast; we weren't stopping the ball.

I felt like when they were isolating us and isolating her on the block or at the elbow, we weren't kind of smothering her like we should have and she was really the only one scoring.

And they hit some big shots. Like there was one point I think we went through a 9-minute, 12-second scoring drought and we have to be able to convert. We have to be strong.

I thought we had a really tough time converting inside. And they played better than we did. If you look at both, both the stars had 24 -- Aari, 24; Michaela, 24.

But I felt like they came up with big offensive rebounds. Came up with big passion plays and got to the free-throw line more than we did. I think that was the difference in the game.

Q. You guys were right in it at the very end. You came within two points and then Michaela answered with that layup after Shaina's and that was sort of it. You never gave up in this game. And you got down by 10 and it just sort of stayed there. Sort of what was going through everybody's mind when you're at that point when there's a little less than three minutes left and you start making that comeback?

COACH BARNES: We had to get stops and scores. A lot of times in this game we always play in five-minute segments; we call them wars. And the only war we won was the very last one.

I think we weren't able to stops and scores, or if we got stops we couldn't score. We had crucial turnovers down the stretch. Kind of going in a lot of traffic, we're flopping a lot, not holding our ground, regardless of whether it was physical, we like physicality. But I felt we had a tough time with that.

When we did something good, like Shaina drives and we give up another basket when we're in a deficit like that we can't play like that; we have to get scores and stops.

We weren't able to do that. Some of the rebounding --



Lauryn Miller had huge rebounds. They had a rebound off free throws. Those are a difference in a game in a one-possession game or two-possession game. It can't happen.

Those are the times you have to bear down and get stops. And I think they made some big shots down the stretch.

And those little things matter. The passion plays in the first quarter, the balls that we get taken away on our rebounds from not being tough. Like those matter because those are the difference makers in games.

Q. What is this sort of, your goal was to make it to the title game and win a title. And for the second consecutive year you're not making it there. How do you go home and you're going to obviously prepare for the NCAAs. But this is one goal this year that you haven't achieved?

COACH BARNES: Yeah, it's hard. I felt we had opportunities. Going through the droughts in the first half -- I thought we started off strong. I thought both teams defensively were solid. I thought we were super aggressive. But just not being able to convert. I think the challenge for us sometimes is just being able to have the confidence to take the shots and we have different personnel.

So we have more shooting lineups, more of a defensive lineup and driving lineup. I think the paint was really congested today. So at times, like, we struggled. But I think both teams struggled offensively because we both played solid defense.

It's unfortunate. I felt like this year we had a chance. I felt like we have some really good teams in our conference. And Stanford is kind of the one that has the target on their back. I felt like this would be -- we'd have an opportunity to win this game.

We beat UCLA earlier in the year. That was a long time ago; I thought we're both better now. But I thought they played better to win today. We had to play a little bit better, we had to take care of the ball better, we had to box out better at crucial times, stop the ball early in transition. That was one of the keys we weren't able to do, especially against Michaela. Doing those things you're not going to win games.

And so they were the better team today. For us, we're not going to win a lot more games if we don't have balance. Shooters have to be ready to hit shots. People have to do their roles and their roles. We struggled at times, and credit because it was good defense. But we have to fix

that. And we will be before the NCAA Tournament. I thought we were passing the ball, we just didn't convert.

But I'm proud of my team. We played hard. We didn't give up. We gave ourselves chances, up to a minute and a half we're still playing hard going down hill. We don't give up; it just wasn't our night. And that happens sometimes.

So nothing to do about it. We have to bounce back and get better. We have a week to get better and prepare for the NCAA Tournament. But unfortunately we're going home.

Q. The Selection Show isn't for another ten days and you won't have a game for about two weeks. How will you approach this time between now and then?

COACH BARNES: I mean, we have to get better. The good thing is we're healthy, but there's some things we have to fix and we have the time to fix. Just some offensive tweaks. Getting in, getting shots up. It's just I think just finding that continuity. I think the defense isn't the issue. I think just fixing a couple things on offense and which it's all fixable things. It's things that we can do.

And we're capable of doing it. And I'm UCLA would have liked to have shot a better percentage too, but we both played good defense. I think the difference maker for them was Michaela. She got to the free-throw line 11 times. I thought the game was really physical for Aari, and she got to the free-throw line seven times.

I thought overall they shot more free throws, but very similar stat lines. If you look across the stats very similar. I thought we had crucial turnovers down the stretch that we can't have. We had to get some scores and convert and we just weren't able to. So, tough, but we'll get better. We'll use the time to get better, get back to basic things. And I'm glad we have the time actually before the tournament because we could use it right now.

Q. Helena didn't score for the fifth straight game. I know we've been harping on it a lot, but how can you get her going? And how important will that be for your team in the tournament?

COACH BARNES: It's really important. I thought Madi was aggressive, and Helena passed up shots. She does other things. She's not only a shooter. She had six rebounds. In the last game she had seven. She's doing other things, but we need her to be an aggressive shooter.

I know in 19 minutes, like, we gotta get her more shots. But she can't pass up the shots. I think for us is like her coming off being aggressive. And like we continue to say

that to her, but we need her to be.

But she's a driver, she's a facilitator, but we need her to loosen up the defense. With her on the floor and Madi it spreads the floor and gives passing lanes for Aari to drive down hill. But when they get the ball we need to hit shots.

Madi had good looks and those will fall. I'm very confident in that. But we need to get Helena going. I thought Shaina had a solid game. The challenging part is when they brought [inaudible] in, she's very hard to (indiscernible) dribble. She played well.

She goes downhill, so they went to zone. So, then we put shooters in. But we have to go hit shots. And I think 3-for-17 from the 3, we're better than that. We have Helena and Madi, so we have people who are capable of doing it. Just for us -- we have to do it. And a little stronger, more solid inside, I think, could have been a big difference maker too.

Q. Do you think Helena is limited at all physically? I know she missed the game against ASU.

COACH BARNES: A little bit. But she's fine. Sometimes confidence, when you haven't scored in a couple of games, you become more hesitant and tight. But she's a great shooter even if she misses a 3, I'd love for her to take three more.

She's able to take even some contested shots because she's a great shooter. We need to get her going and find more shots for her. And we will.

And I think the two weeks off will be good for her. But we're healthy. I don't think that's a factor in why she didn't score today.

Q. What did you have to say to your team after today's loss in the locker room?

COACH BARNES: We talked about there's some things we have to fix. And talked about definitely in the really important in the game down the stretch we have to box out. I thought they came up with some big boards. I felt like just the whole game kind of -- they had 11 offensive boards, felt like they had 20. But it was the manner in which they came or the fouls, or, like, we have to go box out. I thought they came up with a lot more 50/50 balls and passion plays and that's what we do. And that was kind of -- I don't like that.

But we played hard. We have to get better. I talked about the areas we have to get better in and the things we have to address. But it's all fixable. I'm not going to hang my

head because I don't want my team to hang their heads because we still have basketball to play. We've got to get better in the next two weeks. And we will. But get better, get ready for the tournament. The good thing is we're still playing. Our season is not over. We've done a great job this year. We don't give up. We have fight. We're going to fix the things that we're not good at. And we'll have momentum going into the tournament. But I'm confident that we can fix what we need to and get things going.

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