

Pac-12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 2, 2022

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Utah Utes

Coach Lynne Roberts

Jenna Johnson

Gianna Kneepkens

Postgame Press Conference

Utah - 66, Cal - 60

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Utah's Lynn Roberts and Gianna Kneepkens and Jenna Johnson.

COACH ROBERTS: I really appreciate all of you guys being here. I know this is a long day. The 8:30 game is late. But you guys being here covering our team, our conference, women's basketball, it matters and I really, really appreciate it.

The other thing I want to say is great job by Cal. I thought they played really, really well. They defended us great. They're young and feisty and well-coached. And they did a really good job tonight. They made things hard for us. So I do want to say congrats to them on a really productive season for them. And they're going to get nothing but better, that's for sure.

I'm really proud of our team. It was not easy. The game was not easy. It was physical as heck. And I thought we just hung in there. We did a great job on the boards. Didn't turn it over. Had 17 assists on 26 made baskets. That's kind of what we try to do.

We didn't shoot for percentage, especially from 3. But to Cal's credit, they really defended the 3-point line really well and weren't helping off our shooters, so we needed to score in the paint. They made it hard.

But I think Jenna inside, Gianna attacking, these two did a tremendous job kind of, I don't know, taking the brunt of the load of scoring.

Total team effort. We were locked in. That was good. I think there was a little bit of nerves on both teams. I think we've seen it all day from everybody. That's behind us.



I'm really proud of our team. Anytime you can win in March, it's a good day. So I'm pleased.

Q. You've talked a lot this season about how these two freshmen sitting to you, they're fearless, they'll take any shot. But their first postseason experience, they combined for 38. And they hit such big shots. And every time you made a basket, seemed like they showed up. What about them and the fearlessness, their first March game, just talk about that?

COACH ROBERTS: Isn't that kind of crazy? Pretty impressive. I think the one thing I've said consistently is that we knew they were talented when we recruited them. We were fired up when they committed. And you just never know how quickly it's going to translate. And it's translated -- they've adapted to the level, to the physicality, to the speed, to the intensity. And at every turn they've kind of adapted on pace.

So this is their first March Madness situation. And to be completely candid, I wasn't sure how they would be. But they have proven time and time again that they're ready to roll. So what a gift to be able to coach these guys. And they love being at Utah. They love being a Ute. And I can't wait to see what we do the rest of the season and in the future.

Q. You started in the first half with five points and ended with 20. How did you kind of get yourself going? And you were just kind of consistent throughout the whole game; how did you keep that momentum going?

GIANNA KNEEPKENS: I would just say, I mean, I just tried not to force it. My teammates found me on -- they gave me good passes, all I had to do was finish it. I'll say I just tried to play the right way. And yeah my teammates, credit to them for finding me.

JENNA JOHNSON: For me, staying aggressive and staying confident in the third quarter. They were playing good help defense and all that. So there's times where G got back-door cuts off that, which worked well. And then just being aggressive and not playing on my heels or



anything like that down the stretch.

Q. Coach, your team averages nine to 10 made 3s. Only hit six tonight. What does it say about your team that you can win without hitting nine to 10 3s in a game?

COACH ROBERTS: That's a good thing. Like I said, 18 attempts for us is not that many either. So Cal was doing a good job -- didn't seem like we got a lot of clean looks from 3 at all. But, yeah, but 17 assists again on 26 baskets means we're not trying to do too much one-on-one.

If we had made our free throws for percentage -- we're the number one free-throw shooting team in the conference before tonight -- if we made free throws it would have made things a lot easier on ourselves. We did a good job attacking and scoring inside.

Q. Coach, Jayda Curry had her usual output, 16 points, but it took her 18 shots to get there. What was the game plan and how did you execute it to make her work for everything that she got?

COACH ROBERTS: She's a really kind of an electric scorer that can get going really fast. Kennady McQueen had the brunt of that the majority of the time she played. It's hard to take Kennady out because she was doing such a great job on Curry.

But we tried to be really physical on the ball screens, not let her use them. Try to ice them as much as we could. But I told the team before the game, too, we're not going to hold her to zero. We've got to try to keep her off the free-throw line, which we did a good job of. She averages almost nine, I think, a game. She only had four. Defended the 3-point line really well with her. I feel like we did a really good job and she had 16. That speaks to her ability.

Q. Gianna, you hit the big buzzer-beating 3 sometime in the fourth quarter. You looked so unfazed. Why are you able to hit those shots in a moment like where the time is running down in a close game to hit a big 3 like that and keep your team in the game and sort of have that passion and moment?

GIANNA KNEEPKENS: Well, first, I don't really remember that. But I think that (laughter).

COACH ROBERTS: That sums up Gianna Kneepkens right there.

GIANNA KNEEPKENS: Like I said, if it was kind of coming down to it, just take it with confidence. And if it wasn't there, I was going to find my teammates. So, just like

playing confident.

COACH ROBERTS: And you don't remember it.

GIANNA KNEEPKENS: Nope, don't remember it.

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