

Pac-12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 3, 2022

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Oregon Ducks

Coach Kelly Graves

Nyara Sabally

Sedona Prince

Postgame Press Conference

Oregon - 63, UCLA - 60

THE MODERATOR: We welcome the Oregon Ducks, head coach Kelly Graves, Nyara Sabally and Sedona Prince.

COACH GRAVES: I want to congratulate UCLA on a great season. A lot of respect for Coach Close and her program. They've just gone through, with all the injuries and everything else that's happened in that program this year, you've just got to give them a lot of credit. They're a tough out. Always have been.

Seems like we always play them here. I don't want to play them anymore because every game comes down to that kind of a finish. But whatever happens, I wish them the best moving on.

As far as my team, I was really proud of our group for certainly how we competed. I didn't think we were at our best most of the game. But in the first half they killed us on the boards. I think they had 14 second-chance points but only two in the second half.

I thought that was a real key. I think these two right here were a big part of that, and certainly down the stretch they seemed to get every rebound.

So really pleased. And at this point, whether it's one point or 20 points, you're just glad to move on and play again. And we're fortunate enough to be playing tomorrow.

Q. What is it about this team's resolve, especially in the fourth quarter? We saw it last week against Utah and saw it here tonight in such a close game.

COACH GRAVES: They've shown it this year. We haven't



been our best. We've been really inconsistent for most of the year. That's game to game, sometimes, and sometimes within games.

But for whatever reason, lately, we've played really, really well late and in the fourth quarter. And I think that just shows we have a lot of character. We're a young team still. But they just get the job done when it's needed.

And it's nice to be able to rely on really these two and then our two guards. Endyia and Te-Hina I thought played great second halves tonight. In games like this, in big settings and close games, you've got to rely on your stars. And our stars came through when they needed to.

Q. Over the last several years you guys have kind of led with your offense -- kind of led the way. How much fun is it to win games now with -- the defense really led the way tonight, how much fun is that? Or just what is it like, I guess?

COACH GRAVES: I didn't have a lot of fun out there, if that's what we're talking about. No, honestly, it's really nice to be able to say we can rely on our defense. I haven't been able to say that. We've been the kind of team that would score 80 to 90 a night and outscore you.

If you were incapable of doing that we were going to beat you. It was rarely with our defense. But over the last month our defense has been really, really sound. And it was tonight, especially down the stretch, when we needed it. And it feels good.

You ask me off the record, I'd prefer to score 85. (Laughter) but we'll take a 63-60 win anytime.

Q. The switch on the rebounding numbers from the first half to the second half, what's the catalyst for that? Is that a look at the box score? Is that Kim? Is that the two of you getting together and saying we've got to fix this? What's the thing that turns that in the second half?

SEDONA PRINCE: We met up in the locker room at halftime. We put that as our number one thing we had to



do to win the game. And so that's what we did. That's what we focused on.

Every single person was crashing the boards, was just boxing out their player. And so, yeah, it paid off. We got some really good late rebounds that got us the win. But yeah we just kind of came together and decided that was what we needed to do to win the game.

Q. I was talking to some Oregon fans in the hotel and they said they love watching your team. They just don't understand, you look so relaxed during games. You're often sitting there. You've got your legs crossed. Sometimes you're leaning back -- 14 lead changes, seven ties. I was just curious, how is your blood pressure? Do you think that that vibe makes your players stay calm?

COACH GRAVES: Well, I'm on medication for the blood pressure, for the weight loss and everything else that goes along with it.

Oh, I'm all about love. I never get on these guys, ever. If they only knew. I get that a lot. Believe me, I have my moments.

But if I'm relaxed in those kind of moments, I think our team is as well. And they know I have confidence in them. It's pretty easy when I can say, okay, let's run a certain set that involves, let's say, Te-Hina and Nyara, something good is going to happen. If those Duck fans only knew. Right, Nyara?

Q. Sedona, do you share the fans' assertions that Kelly is a relaxed guy out on the floor?

SEDONA PRINCE: I think, like he said, in the tense moments we look over at Kelly and he's just sitting there chill. Which is so different because some games he's trying to motivate us, which is much different. But it gives us a sense of peace and calmness in those moments.

But, yeah, he can turn it on when he needs to and try to motivate us. That's what I love about Kelly.

Q. I know you guys have done words and themes when you hit postseason time. Do you have one for this year or anything you guys as players have put together?

SEDONA PRINCE: I think ours this year is bend don't break. We've been talking about it a lot, just because other teams are going to get runs and get up on us. They're going to get energy, and we're going to bend but we're not going to break as a team. And we're going to bounce back

and trust each other to make those plays to win games.

Q. Charli announced her retirement today. Wanted to get your thoughts on that.

COACH GRAVES: She's a great coach. She's been doing it for a long time. She does it the right way. I think she has a program where you don't see very many people transfer. I think they enjoy playing for her. Great competitor. Her teams are never ones you look forward to playing, ever.

From what I understand, I did not see it, I understand she looked really happy. I know it was her decision. I know her kids have moved on. She's had a great life and just done just a tremendous job down there. We're going to miss her, for sure. But I always support the coaches in whatever their next journey might be.

And I don't know, she's pretty competitive. I have a feeling we might see her on the sideline again. But really going to miss her.

ASU, that's where my wife got her degree. It's where my son got his master's degree. So we've always been Arizona State fans to some degree. So we're going to miss her. I wish her the very best, and I'm glad she's happy. I hope she stays happy.

Q. Going back to your point about defense, Maddie came in. She doesn't play a lot of minutes, but, man, she was clutch against Osborne there in the last couple of minutes. Can you just talk about her a little bit and what she does for you guys, even though it doesn't always show up in a box score?

COACH GRAVES: I'm glad you mentioned her. We weren't exactly sure that we wanted to play her tonight. Just the more rest she gets -- she's not doing that well. But she's that important to us, and we have that much confidence in her, even if she's at 60 percent or 70 percent or whatever she might be. She's so tough. Man, she's tough, don't you think?

SEDONA PRINCE: Yes.

NYARA SABALLY: Yes.

COACH GRAVES: She wanted to go. We got the okay from the trainers before the game. And just felt the need to put her in. She probably won't show up on the box score. Probably all zeros. But I'm glad you recognized that. We recognize how important she is to us down the stretch. Thanks for pointing her out.

Q. Nyara, I know this has been kind of a rather

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

up-and-down year as far as your own availability has gone. What's it like to be in a tournament setting where you don't have to worry about availability for practices in between games; you can just get up and go? Is that a little easier now that we're in that kind of setting?

NYARA SABALLY: I mean, tournament settings are always fun. It's one-and-done. If you don't get it done you go home. So it's just a whole different mindset.

The adrenaline kind of takes over. So it doesn't really matter what kind of problems you have off the court. As soon as the ball goes up, it's go time. And then when the whistle ends then you can worry about your problems. But on the court it's just go time.

COACH GRAVES: I've seen some great performance by my players in this tournament, as you know. And this was as good as we've seen. I thought Nyara tonight, 15 and 15, hitting the two big free throws there late. That's getting it done, man.

And she played like an All-American when we really needed her the most.

And, Sedona, you were pretty damn close yourself, kid, right behind her, for sure. Really, really proud of these guys.

Q. I think it was in the third quarter, I'm not sure, but they had several -- a series where they got the ball to Thomas low. They were doing some nice passing down there, and she maybe made three layups in a row or something like that. Could you talk about how you guys cleaned that up? Was it stopping the passing? Was it doing something different to Thomas? And, Kelly, do you think this is enough to get you into a host position, winning this game?

SEDONA PRINCE: Yeah, that was really hurting us. We kind of got together. And our help side -- we were helping the helper but we were not really just rotating out of it. And so she got -- it was like three easy layups in a row.

And so we just decided, hey, like, we have to stop this. It's hurting us really bad. And I think we lost our lead as well. We just kept communicating, helping each other, that defensive effort we put to the game really helped us. And, yeah, it paid off.

COACH GRAVES: I'm not on the committee. But I felt going in that if we could get to the final, I think that would give us a really good case to be a host, which means we need at least one. We didn't come down here to just get

into the final. We want to win it.

I firmly believe if we can somehow win the conference tournament, that we're probably going to be a host site. We have great fan support. Obviously the Oregon name. There's a lot of reasons to select us, but I'm not in the room. All we can do is win the game tomorrow. That's it. And we'll let the rest take care of itself.

Q. Ladies, can you assess the short sleeves sweatshirt thing happening here. It's very Belichick, and I want to know what you think of this sweatshirt?

COACH GRAVES: It's all one. Can we get with the fashion? This is --

Q. I don't know, can we? I'm asking.

SEDONA PRINCE: We actually have team jackets that are like a gray short-sleeved hoodie with a long, almost like a super thin material that's black. And yeah, we need some changes.

COACH GRAVES: Michelle, I appreciate your question. If you looked like this, there's not a whole lot you can do. I mean, seriously. Unfortunately, this is what I've been given. And so if your focus is on this, then that's a good thing.

I'm not trying to go Bill Belichick. It's cold in that gym. I have the T-shirt, the team polo on, but it was cold so I had to go with this.

But I can see the game's going. I know we all want to go out and watch this. This is going to be a great game. I know I want to watch it. Thank you so much.

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