

Pac-12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 3, 2022

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Utah Utes

Coach Lynne Roberts

Brynna Maxwell

Jenna Johnson

Postgame Press Conference

Utah - 70, Washington State - 59

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by head coach Lynne Roberts, Brynna Maxwell and Jenna Johnson.

COACH ROBERTS: Again, thank you all for being here. It's a long day, late day. A lot of games. We appreciate your covering us and covering the tournament. And it matters.

And man, I have a lot of respect for Wazzu and their coaching staff. I think they run such creative, great stuff.

And I thought we defended it really well. But they're an NCAA Tournament team. They're no doubt. They're good. They finished third in the league. Just a really good team. I can't wait to see what they do in the tournament.

So I'm incredibly proud of our team. I thought our defense was fantastic. We certainly shot the ball great in the first half and kind of threw the first punch there offensively but then we hung in there defensively. And they made a run in the second half which we knew they would but we answered the bell and won it handily. So great day to be a Ute, as they say.

Q. Jenna or Coach, you had 19. Went 7-for-11 from the floor. This Washington State team is really good on defense; they a lot of momentum coming into the tournament. What were the looks you were getting that -- obviously you guys started really well. How did you guys open up the game so quickly and what were you seeing on that side of the ball?

JENNA JOHNSON: She's told us if we have an open shot let it fly, just giving us confidence and stuff like that. When we made eight 3s in the first quarter obviously that helps



your confidence. Early on I was just looking for my shot. If I was going to be open I was going to take it. If they closed too hard on me I was going to drive. So just taking what the defense gave me. And yes, it worked out.

COACH ROBERTS: I think the thing -- I mentioned this last night -- that Jenna, all of our freshman and our new players, they're just fearless and confident. I think the system we run is player-centered and it's not play-centered, like a set-centered.

So they certainly know they could tell you in detail what a great shot is, what a bad shot is. And so they have the green light, all of them, if they have a great shot for them they can take it. I think as a player it gives you a little more just kind of freedom and confidence. You're not thinking; you're just kind of playing.

Q. Lynne, you guys have played so well. You're so sharp offensively the last two games. Wondered you're a basketball junkie, how much fun are you having on the sideline just watching them play with so much precision and then hit those shots?

COACH ROBERTS: Yes, I'm a basketball junkie. You know that. It is fun. Like I've said several times, this is the most fun I've had in a long, long time with a team. And not just because of the way they're playing, but just kind of how they are as a group. They're just really fun. And totally bought in.

And yeah, it is fun. And it's also fun when you don't have to coach effort, and you don't have to coach attitude. And you don't have to coach anything like that. And you can just coach the game and get a little nerded out by it, which is what I love to do.

And they're bought in and they'll do what we ask, and it's really fun. And our depth is great. So everyone is getting a turn, too. It's not one person's show. And so I think everyone feels like they have a hand in it, which is fun, too.

Q. You guys are obviously no stranger to Pac-12 after dark and late start times. But what's it like now that you're deeper than you've ever been in a Pac-12



Tournament and you're doing 8:30, 8:30, 8:30, back and forth. How does that affect prep and what's that been like for you guys having to do the late starts and the late to sleep?

COACH ROBERTS: We're becoming nocturnal on some level. It's totally different than what we've been doing. We practice in the mornings, and we're on Mountain Time. So it's 9:30 in our head. But it is what it is.

We don't make a big deal out of things we can't control. And that's our bracket. I do think the players are enjoying the sleeping in. This is a new-found joy for them. So I'm glad to be playing 8:30 and not 6:30 or something. So we're getting a full 24 hours. So we'll be ready to roll.

Q. Coach and Brynna, your first Pac-12 semifinal appearance. Just what that means for you personally and for this program to be on the rise and be heading in places that you haven't been since you took over at Utah?

COACH ROBERTS: It's exciting. It really is. But it's not about me. These guys did it, deserve it, earned it. I just get the joy of coaching them.

But I'm happy for them. I'm happy for us. I'm happy for our program. My staff, they work their tails off. So it's nice to get places that you've never been. That's always what our goal is every year -- let's do something we've never done in the past. And this year we're going to check off some huge ones, which is exciting.

But, again, it's a tribute to leadership like Dru Gylten, and leaders like Brynna Maxwell who have been working so hard when no one was watching and then to be able to perform on the biggest stage for our conference, it's awesome.

BRYNNA MAXWELL: I think it's super fun to be part of a team from the staff to the players. I've never been part of a team where everyone is so genuinely happy for everyone's success and everyone's goal is the same. It's just to do things at Utah that haven't been done before.

So it's something new. I've never experienced that at Utah before. And this team's special. Coach always said it before, but anything can happen in March and I'm really excited to see what's going to happen.

Q. So you were able to hold Krystal and Charlissee Leger-Walker to pretty minimal scoring today. What can you say about your efforts on the defensive end to shut those two down and kind of keep your momentum going really well in this game?

COACH ROBERTS: Those two are legit. And they're scary when you're preparing for them. Krystal is so smart, savvy, crafty. She's a talent. She's really good as a point guard. She makes them go.

And Charlissee has the ability to drop 30 in a half when she gets going. So that's scary. We had a good game plan. And, again, these guys bought into it. I thought Kennady McQueen was again phenomenal defensively. She got the brunt of a lot of Charlissee. But everybody did a good job, you know?

And I think our depth helps, where those guys played 38, 37 minutes and our wings played 20 apiece. So I think that allows us to keep up the defensive focus because they run so many things.

There's so many screens happening. And fatigue can wear you down defensively, where you just slip. And great players make you pay. I think I our depth a role in that as well. But, man, those two are good.

Q. You just played a recent game with Oregon. Can you just talk a little bit about playing them again? And you would think on the surface it would be a high-scoring game but that didn't always play out that way. How do you go in? And we've been asking all coaches to comment on Charli Turner Thorne retiring. If you could do that too.

COACH ROBERTS: We get another crack at Oregon. Both games with them have been really close. They kind of punked us in the first half at our place -- what were we down, 13 or something, or 15, at halftime. Then we came back and cut it to one. I don't remember.

And then at their place, it went down to the last minute. So they're good. They're very talented and they're big. And when they go with that big lineup it's tough. But they've got to defend us. They've got to stop us. There's no fear from our group, but there's a lot of respect for their program and Kelly and how good they are.

But man what an opportunity for us, right? Like, I'm excited. It's, like, let's go. And just a great chance for us to put the shoes back on and on that floor and see what we can do. So I'm looking forward to it.

In terms of Charli, it's hard to imagine Arizona State basketball without her. Like, she is Arizona State women's basketball. She was a great colleague to me when I came in the league a few years ago.

She's wicked smart and incredibly feisty and competitive.



The thing that I always really respected about Charli's teams is they knew their identity and they played to it.

And they were incredible hard to beat because of that. And I've told her this, but I think that's probably her personality, too. Like incredibly competitive and feisty. Never quit. And we've had some games with them where they just battle.

So, so much respect for her. She's a legend. And we'll miss her. And it's going to be weird to not see her on the sideline. But I'm happy for her. She's earned it. And go enjoy your family and go play golf or something once in a while, right? Go have some fun.

Q. You were able to build a really big lead in the first half. You really jumped on the Cougars. What role do you think playing yesterday played into that whereas the Cougars did not. And if it were up to you, would you play on day one of the tournament and why?

BRYNNA MAXWELL: I think I'll start with the second question first. I think I always want to play basketball games, so I would root for playing more games. But I think if you look at it from a game-planning standpoint, it is kind of nice to have that extra day to kind of see how everything plays out.

I think it did help us, though, to have that game under our belt. But it's a credit to our depth. A lot of these teams don't have 10 players that can cycle in and out where the quality of play doesn't go down. And I think to have that depth, we use that to our advantage. So that first game didn't play into fatigue or anything. And it did kind of help us get the jitters out, get a feel for the court where Wazzu didn't have that. But I'm always up for playing more games.

COACH ROBERTS: I think playing on Wednesday helps you Thursday. I think playing on Wednesday could be challenging on Friday. Right? It could be a challenge on Friday. But, again, we've stayed consistent with our rotation and depth. No one averages more than, I don't know, I think 26 minutes a game or something for all season. So we'll be all right. But I do think -- I love the attitude, but I think a bye is always better. (Laughter).

JENNA JOHNSON: I agree with what they said. Obviously enjoy playing. A bye might be better tomorrow, who knows. We'll see, but at the same time, I felt like yesterday we saw those first games, there's definitely some teams with maybe with a little bit of nerves, it was hard for them to get going offensively.

I feel like because we played yesterday, coming into today

we were confident on offense, got things rolling right away. I think we can credit some of that to maybe playing yesterday, just giving us a leg up in that first quarter.

Q. Peyton McFarland went down today. Do you have any insight or update on how she's doing?

COACH ROBERTS: I don't really. It doesn't look good, to be completely honest. And I hurt for the kid. And it's a tough one.

And regardless of impact on our team or whatever, I just feel badly for her. She's such a great kid and a big part of our program regardless of production. She's just a huge member of our family.

So I ache for her. And I don't think we'll know probably until tomorrow when we get some imaging on it.

Q. Lynne, Tara, it feels like she's going to be at Stanford forever, but the next group of longest tenured female coaches is Cori and you now.

COACH ROBERTS: Wow, I'm old.

Q. That's not what I was trying to say.

COACH ROBERTS: Jenna said it. She told me that.

Q. When you talked about Charli kind of being this resource for you, for younger female coaches, how do you see now your role kind of being that and paying it forward towards the next generation of coaches that will likely come in when other coaches start to retire like she has?

COACH ROBERTS: That's a great question. And a good reminder, right? But I didn't realize I was tenured like that. It's gone by really fast. But I've just been so blessed with great coaches that have given me advice and mentoring and giving me the truth. I think a true mentor, true friend in the business tells you the truth. Tara tells the truth. She's been great with me on that.

And I think I want to be that, what those other coaches have been. And that would be something. That would be great.

Q. Jenna, you had a stellar regular season coming into the tournament, you dropped 18 to 19, what has this experience been like for you?

JENNA JOHNSON: It's been fun, I guess. Not so much that I've been scoring a lot of points, but just, like, being with the team again, doing things at Utah that haven't been

done before, I think that's more fun than anything. After today, just celebrating with each other, just seeing the looks on everyone's faces, like, we did that, that's really cool. If I scored five points or 25 points, like, we won the game, that's awesome. I'm just really happy for all of us.

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