

Pac-12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 1, 2023

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Arizona State Sun Devils

Natasha Adair

Tyi Skinner

Jaddan Simmons

Postgame Press Conference

UCLA - 81, Arizona State - 70

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement from coach and then take questions for the student athletes.

NATASHA ADAIR: First, thank you all for being here. It was a pretty sad locker room, but I was able to go in there and tell this special group of young ladies that I'm proud of them. I'm proud of their resilience. I'm proud of their fight for what they have shown this season in all different types of circumstances. I've seen them grow, I've seen them compete, and I've seen them get better.

Today was not the outcome that we wanted, but what we've shown and what we showed, who we are, we competed. We competed. And for this group, for these two, we talked about what's next and that we don't have to feel like this anymore.

We thanked our seniors because that's always hard for them, but I think for just their toughness and their grit. We'll look back and obviously a rebound here, a layup here, a shot here, a possession. But that's where we coach, that's where we teach, that's where we get better.

But I couldn't be prouder of just their fight. The ultimate outcome obviously is the win. But I watched our team grow.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, coach. Questions?

Q. You have previously talked about the first meeting that you had against UCLA and how that game got away in the second half. It looks like this game was trending towards that direction until the major comeback to get it to overtime. What was it about this



particular second half that really just felt different other than the resilience as you mentioned within this particular game?

NATASHA ADAIR: Well, we talked about it at halftime and we talked about it with this group. We had been here before. I felt the first half we lost, obviously their shooters, Emily just was open way too many times. We talked about that. We talked about second-chance opportunities and trying to limit those.

So this is a group that wants to win. This is a group that competes to win. So we talked about winning time, winning plays, and what we needed to do, not give them those second chance opportunities. We made some adjustments on how we were guarding their misdirection, their handoffs.

But at the end of the day, it was just fight, fight harder, work harder. And they did in the second half.

Q. What did you guys see change there sort of midway through the third quarter that you guys carried into that fourth quarter. You cut it to 10, and then fourth quarter you played some terrific defense, held 'em to just six points. Was there a turning point or you guys just found some energy there midway through the third and just really gave it to them the rest of the way into the end of regulation?

JADDAN SIMMONS: I think in halftime when coach told us that we were shooting the same percentage, we knew that we were shooting the same so we just had to be able to knock 'em in and get extra chance rebounds. I think we rebounded a little better in the second half. So I think that helped.

Then we just didn't want to go down without a fight. So this team just has grit, like she said, and we're going to fight until the end, and we did. Came up short, but we're going to live and we're going to learn.

Q. This is your first season and obviously things didn't go to plan. But what does it mean for you going forward as you move into the off-season and the next



season to know that even what could be considered a low point for this program you can still compete with a top-20 team at this stage?

NATASHA ADAIR: Well, I think you have to evaluate it. No matter who you are and no matter what you've accomplished, you always go in the off-season and you want to be better. I think that's what we want to do, no matter if we were the top or the bottom.

So I think for us just, one, to get healthy; and for, two, for us to just continue to get better as a team. But we have so many moments where we can refer to what we did well and then moments where we want to continue to grow. But just who we are and creating our culture and our identity coming out of year one I watched our team come together. You learn a lot about people in adversity. I learned a lot about these special young women on our team and to my right and to my left. This is what you see now, but this is not the future of ASU women's basketball.

Q. Tyi, when you hit the three-pointer to go ahead, coming back from 19 down, now you're ahead, what was going through your mind right then? Because it's pretty late in the fourth quarter. Do you feel like, we're going to actually get over the hump and do this? Then for Jaddan, can you talk about the last play of regulation and kind of that block down there by Rice at the end of regulation.

TYI SKINNER: Well, when I hit the three to the put us ahead, I was just trying to, at that point I think the mindset of the team was trying to progress the lead, trying to get bucket after bucket, stop after stop, just to gain more of a cushion.

JADDAN SIMMONS: For me, I'm just happy that my coach trusts me to take the last shot. It could have been me, Tyi, a lot of people on the team, and in that moment I had it and I went. It did go as planned, but I think it was good just going into overtime.

And like I said, just learning from that, learning how to get down hill, kind of putting more body into her, because, you know, it was a free game for both ends. So I think just knowing what the time and score is, how the refs are calling the game, it all comes into play.

NATASHA ADAIR: To that point, I know that question wasn't for me, but absolutely that was the right play. It was the right call. It could have gone any way. But it doesn't come down to that. That's where we grow as a team and talk about the rebounds before, the possessions before, the things that happened throughout the game.

So we never leave a game with anyone carrying that weight. That was absolutely the right shot.

Q. We talked way back at media day about how you've replaced a lot of big-name people when you become a head coach at a new place. At the end of your first season looking back, what are some of the things you feel like you learned the most in this first year at Arizona State and some of the things from this first year you can take into year two and things you can take from past experiences and just grow in this new year with this new team?

NATASHA ADAIR: Well, what I learned is I'm really excited that I get to coach in the PAC 12, that I get to be a part of the best conference in the country. I'm proud of our very young group and how we showed that we can compete with the best teams.

So for me, as I always look forward, the glass is always half full. A possession, a rebound, and everything changes. So for me, you roll your sleeves up, you get back to work. I think that's just the mindset. We saw it, we experienced it, we learned from it, and we grow together.

And for a very young group, a group with really one returner that has logged a lot of minutes, I'm just proud of how they have come together and how they have -- this is the foundation. We just laid it. Now it's brick by brick.

Q. JADDAN, your three for you, and it looks like you put everything out there on the line, running into the scorer's table, taking the big charge, rebounds, not the typical scoring we see from you, just what were the emotions out there in such a high-intensity game for you and what did you want to put out there on display?

JADDAN SIMMONS: I mean, in those games, you just have to have fight and energy, but you also have to have a level of calmness. So I think putting those two together, that was my mindset going into the game. I think we all did a good job of just keeping each other pretty calm, but also have that energy that we need to get the rebounds, get the steals, hype each other up, because we still need that energy to win games.

Q. These were the two that really carried you in this game, and two people that still have eligibility left. We don't know, obviously, what they will do, but what does it mean to have these two really centerpieces for next year for you?

JADDAN SIMMONS: I'm staying, I just want to make it clear.

NATASHA ADAIR: (Laughing.) Listen, we don't know what tomorrow's going to bring. Right now I just want to just move past today. This is a group, these two right here, from day one, that have given everything and then some. Two phenomenal players, but better people, better leaders. I'm excited for what the future holds for not just those two, but for our team.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you, everyone.

NATASHA ADAIR: And I want to thank you all for coverage this season, for telling the stories of our players and our program. I appreciate you all. Thank you.

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