

Pac-12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 2, 2023

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Arizona Wildcats

Adia Barnes

Shaina Pellington

Lauren Fields

Postgame Press Conference



loose balls. What did you see from her about doing other things? You've talked about that.

ADIA BARNES: Yeah. I think she did a really good job of sticking with it and trying and giving effort. I think sometimes the ball just doesn't go in the basket, and that's the game of basketball.

I think the good thing is she did other things and she did rebound. She was our leading rebounder and she was pretty much the only one that rebounded. So I think that's just a senior, a fifth-year leader, that can do that. But for us to win, she has to score. We don't have an inside presence right now consistently. We don't have someone that we can throw the ball to on the block and score consistently. We don't have great post defense right now. That's really hurting us because we're getting really hurt inside.

So we just need people to step up at the right times. I think she did do other things to help us win. You saw her diving on the floor. I saw it maybe two, three times, but not enough. I saw a lot of balls bouncing and that's not pursuing them.

Q. Shaina, why don't you think that you guys have been able to capture the good feeling that you had after Colorado and Utah and take that into these final three games?

ADIA BARNES: That's a great question. I want to hear the answer.

SHAINA PELLINGTON: I don't know. Like if I'm being completely honest with you, I don't know. Just like when you have games like that, you kind of have to move on to the next, move on to the next. It's always a different opponent each week.

So I mean, it seems like we've just kind of lost touch with that kind of feeling these last couple of games. But hopefully with time and a week to prepare for the tournament that we'll figure it out.

LAUREN FIELDS: Yeah, like she said, I think we can't let

UCLA - 73, Arizona - 59

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to Arizona. We'll start with an opening statement from coach and then take some questions.

ADIA BARNES: I want to give credit to UCLA. They played a really good game. I think they clearly wanted it more than we did. They fought a little bit harder and just made some plays that just really hurt us.

But we knew coming into this game that UCLA was tremendous on the offensive rebounds and they are gritty and they fight and they're really good. They're the top in the country and No. 1 in the PAC 12. So that was our key to the game, the first, second, and third key to the game was box out and we couldn't do that. I think that was the biggest difference in the game.

But that's the mentality, a focus and a want. And we didn't match their, we didn't match their want and their desire to win. When you do that and you can't do that and then in March you lose. So we just had a learning lesson from that.

But we have to regroup and get better in order to win games. The positive thing for us is, why I'm a little bit optimistic, is we still have a chance to play from all the work we did earlier in the year. So we set ourselves up for success by winning games early, and the good thing is we have a chance to play again. We know we're in the tournament. So that's the bright side.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Questions?

Q. Cate didn't score from the field, but she was rebounding, fighting, getting down on the floor for



our highs get too high and our lows get too low. So we just got to find that mental toughness to come together as a team and move forward for the future.

Q. (No Microphone.)

ADIA BARNES: Trust me, I know.

Q. It was kind of like a score more for awhile and you couldn't keep up. What were they doing to kind of jump you at the beginning of both those quarters?

ADIA BARNES: So sometimes, I mean, this is a new environment for some people. They haven't been here with us on this stage. New for Lauren, Jade, and the freshmen. So I think sometimes at the beginning of games there is adrenaline and there is nerves. Being nervous is good, scared is bad.

So I kind of, I understand that, but I think to start off the game, missed assignments, full court transition baskets, that is not nerves. That is effort and a mentality and focus. So that was a tough way to start to have to call a timeout right away. That's not Arizona. So that tells me we're not ready to play, which is okay because it's a long game, so you can get things back defensively, and then you can, it's early in the game.

After that, I think the things that aren't, you know, you can't win games if this happens is to come out in the third quarter to a 7-0 run. That is not a, that is lack of energy and focus coming out. So if you take away the first three minutes in the first beginning of the game and you take away that run in the third quarter, we win the game.

But those are things that we don't understand. It's never the last shot. It's never the last few minutes. It is the mistakes to start the game, it's the lack of energy to start the third quarter that you lose games in. I think those were the difference-makers because they came out ready and determined. It showed with our hustle and muscle and their, you know, toughness, and our lack of that.

So I think we have to figure that out. In the third quarter, we shot 16.4 percent, 2-13, and then we couldn't get stops. So we tried defensive lineups. We couldn't get stops. So we tried offensive lineups. We couldn't score.

So those lulls you're not going to win games. We need people to step up and you got to step up this time of year. It's like it's what it is. It's when stars are made. Nobody remembers how you start. They remember you how you finish. And we're not doing that as a whole right now. So we can't win if we don't do that. These teams are too good, the PAC 12's too good, and UCLA was too good

today.

Q. Obviously Jade got off to the great start and it looked it like maybe she was pulling herself out of what's been ailing her the last seven games. She couldn't sustain it, though. How are you evaluating what's happening with her, how much is there an injury that might be involved in that that you can talk about?

ADIA BARNES: No, absolutely no injury from any players. There's no excuses. There's just stepping up and being consistent. I think that I was, it was great to see because she worked so hard and she's a great teammate and she does all the little things. So I was happy to see those shots go in because she's working every day on it. She was really sad about not making shots at Oregon and Oregon State. So that was good.

I think the thing is then later on, we don't want to force shots and we miss it and I think everybody was doing that. I think the things that are hard is, you know, in transition kicking the ball up to get layups. I think sometimes we have a tendency of wanting to do it ourselves instead of using each other. You saw a lot of turnovers in transition, just over-dribbling, not advancing the ball like we were doing in the first half.

But I'm just happy for Jade that she hit some shots. But couldn't hit 'em later. Another thing that hurt us is Madi's been tremendous off the bench and I think today was a little bit hard her getting pulled in and out. But wasn't able to really make shots, had some turnovers, and that hurt us.

And I think just our lack of toughness inside, having to go four guards where we're not great offensively doing that. Then defensively guarding their size kind of hurt us. So I think that we need to collectively have more than one person like showing up. We can't have the guards show up and then the post not. We can't have the post show up and the guards not. So we have to figure out a way for everybody to step up and contribute this time of year. That's what March is. You have to step up and play basketball and do all the work that you've done all year and show it now, and we're not doing that as a whole right now. We're not going to win if we don't do that.

Q. Shaina, where do you feel your confidence is right now? It just seemed like you were a little bit hesitant to take shots today.

SHAINA PELLINGTON: I mean, I took the shots that I thought were open. It's hard. You see yourself not making a couple shots, you know, like you think you kind of have to re-evaluate. Okay, should I still keep taking these shots

because it results in the other team getting O boards, they're going in transition, that's their strength. So there's a lot of things to consider. So I took 'em when I could. It just didn't fall for me today.

ADIA BARNES: She's been working really hard and she's worked and earned the right to take those shots. We never want really quick shots early in the clock shot, but I think after reversals, if they're going under, she's been really successful at that. So those are shots we want her to take.

They were forcing her into those shots and she was hesitating a little bit. I think as a player that's hard sometimes. Some of the hardest shots to make are open shots, and the shots that where someone is playing you a certain way. I think she was hesitant a little bit just because the runs in the game.

But she works at it, we believe in her, and we want her to take those shots because people have to play her honest and she's been making those shots, so she shouldn't have been hesitant. It's okay.

Q. You've mentioned about this conference of lack of this, lack of that. With all of that embedded into how these last three games have gone for you, how much work is it going to take over this extended break before your next game in the NCAA Tournament to get this team feeling like they can get to the second weekend and perhaps make a major run at it on the national stage?

ADIA BARNES: Well, I think that it's, I think the stuff that I'm talking about isn't something I can teach. I can't make you go out and play hard. Like, I can tell you, I can prepare you, I can give you all the tools, but then if you go and you can't perform, that's like on you.

So as a coach, my job is to try to extract the best out of people, and it's to prepare our team, which we are. We have meticulous preparation. We are prepared for every single situation. We've always known that we've always shown that we're one of the best defensive teams in the country, and right now we're not.

So I can't make you dive for balls. I can tell you that you will lose and you're not going to win if you don't do those, but I can't go play for you, so that's hard as a coach. I can't control that. So what I can do is try to put different lineups in. I can change on-ball defense, but I can't make you box out.

So our learning lessons have been losses. So the mentality has to change. We have to have a tough mental and physical, we have to be tough mentally and physically, to do that and just accomplish the mission and figure it out.

But I can't teach that. So for me, it's finding the combinations, but I haven't been able to do that, so that's my fault, for sure.

But I think the getting out-hustled and not having toughness is not my fault. But I think if we don't do the little things, we will not win. We aren't good enough to do that. Right now we have been really out-muscled inside. So that's a toughness and that's a mentality. You have to play disciplined enough without fouling.

We've had these same inconsistent things all year. It's not new. It's not, it's been happening all year and we still won some games, but we've lost some games we should have won because of mentality. So I have to regroup and be more strategic about things and figure out a way to get us better, in a better mental space to do it. But for me as a coach, it's really hard for this team, to coach this team because I don't know what team's going to show up. I've seen the team that can beat anybody in the country and that's at home against Utah and Colorado. That's at Utah.

But then I've seen the team that doesn't fight and is not cohesive and that's Oregon, Oregon State, and today against UCLA. So I'm not the player anymore, my season is done, my eligibility ran out, I'm a coach. For them, they have to regroup and I can lead them to that, but they have to regroup and figure it out. You play hard or you go home.

So the positive thing is we do have a chance to play again. I think we do have a chance to regroup. We will get better in the next 10 days. But I think the disappointing thing for me, it's not about losing the game. Like, we can lose games, like, they can come out and play out of their minds. I think the difficult thing for me is the controllables. So a controllable for us is our energy. A controllable for us is our desire to play defense. A controllable for us is boxing out against the No. 1 offensive rebounding team in the PAC 12. Those are controllables, and we aren't executing the controllables.

So I think it's not about the tactics, because we have good tactics and we have good strategy and we're prepared. So I think it's just the execution or the start of the game, a play we worked on just three days in a row in shoot-around and they score off that the first time. That is a lack of focus and execution, and I can't, I can't make someone do that.

So, yeah, that's what's hard. To me, it's not about winning and losing. If we played our asses off and we fought and we dove and we did all the little things and we lose a game, I can accept that. I can't accept the mentality of not fighting and not a desire to win.

Q. For the players, coach talked about what you need

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

to do, the controllables, the little things. Big thing in March is momentum. On a three-game losing streak, are you worried at all about a lack of momentum going into the tournament and what can you do from a mentality standpoint to stay focused and not think about those losses?

SHAINA PELLINGTON: We didn't have momentum going into the National Championship year. We lost quite a few games before, just before we went to the tournament. We didn't have momentum, but we figured it out when it mattered the most. I think that's what it's going to come down to.

It's going to come down to looking in the mirror and figuring out how we're going to win these few games and not let our season end this way because we worked hard throughout this entire season. We've sacrificed. We've done a lot of different things to get to this point. Thank God we did a lot of those things early.

But none of that matters if you don't execute right in this moment where these games are just one and done. So I mean, that's what it's going to come down to is just figuring it out, digging deep, and looking yourself in the mirror and just doing the things we need to do to win games.

LAUREN FIELDS: I don't think it's anything about us being worried. I think it's a want to. You either, at this point in the season you either go home or you win and keep playing. So that's our motivation for the most part.

ADIA BARNES: The great thing is like we have that chance. So we're not on the bubble. Like, our program has got to the level of we're in it. So we just had an opportunity, we had a big opportunity last weekend to be able to host. We didn't do that. That's okay. So we're not going to host. Just like we won on the road a couple years ago. We have to go get wins.

So we're going to get better in the next 10 days and we're going to have a chance, but we have to go out and you have to play every second in the tournament like it's your last. You can't leave stuff on the floor because it's not the first offensive rebounding to give you up, it is accumulation of all those things. It's not the last one to lose games.

So we're going to get better and we're going to fight and that's my job to figure out the pieces of the puzzle. So if this group isn't fighting, finding another group that fights and figuring it out. But the great thing is, the thing about March is you just got to get hot and have the right, you have to have a little bit of luck, get hot at the right time, and it will all change.

I can tell you just from my short seven years is that this is a difficult moment for all of them because it is a moment where, I mean, they're kids, they're like 17 to 22 year olds, so this is a moment where there's a little bit of pressure, there's a little bit of stress, there is midterms next week. It is a moment where teams implode. It's a moment where they are like tired. They've played basketball since October. And it's been a long season. This is the breaking point for teams.

So you either step up and you get hot and you fight or you go home the first round. So we have to regroup just like we did that Final Four year. We were actually playing bad basketball the last three years. This is when fifth years are stressed out because they're thinking about going pro, they're thinking about like their stock. This is like a normal thing. Even if they're not talking about it, they're thinking about it.

Shaina is their fifth year. They're thinking about what's next. There's all this uncertainty so there's a tremendous amount of mental stress. So our job is to regroup for the week, enjoy it, be happy about playing. Again, we have another opportunity to do something. So you don't have a lot of second chances in life. And then find a way to get hot and regroup, otherwise we're going to play one game and go home.

LAUREN FIELDS: That's what makes it exciting.

Q. Shaina, along the same lines, you've experienced this before. In this moment, you felt that, you've gone home early from this tournament. A couple of years ago you guys regrouped and in that moment it was the Aari Macdonalds and the Trinity Baptises who sort of got everybody together. As a fifth year senior, how are you going to guide, along with Cate, how are you going to guide this team so that you can make a run?

SHAINA PELLINGTON: I mean, we just got to figure it out. Like with me and Cate, we've been here before, like you said, so it's going to come down to, like I said before, just digging deep and figuring out what the root cause of everything is. I mean, the National Championship year we did the same thing. Just before going into the tournament we had to dig deep and figure it out. Luckily we figured it out at the right time. We just all collectively made the decision that we don't want to lose anymore. We don't want our season to end this way.

Me and Cate, like you said being there before, I mean hopefully we can figure out a way to help motivate ourselves and this team because it's not over yet. We do have many more opportunities ahead of us, but it's going to take us being present in the moment with one another, not

thinking about the future, not thinking about the past, and just getting the job done by any means necessary.

ADIA BARNES: And our approach is not going to be this is the end of the world. This is not like a stressful negative thing. We lost a couple games. Okay, it is what it is. Like you move on and you get better and you take one game at a time and you can get hot at the right time. And it's a little bit of luck and a lot of fight and want. And it's not like, I don't want to approach this like we have pressure to do this, we have pressure to host, we have pressure to make it to the Final Four. That is not the pressure. We have to do our job and have fun and it wasn't fun today and I see the weight. It doesn't need to be like that. You go out and have fun and you do your best. Your best may be 0-13. Your best may be a double double. But you do your best and you try and you can control that and then things happen the way they're supposed to.

If we're supposed to go to the Final Four, we are. If we're supposed to lose in the first round, but we do everything in our power to control what we can and then the outcome will be what it will be. But not that we don't do that, then you sit in the mirror and you're sad and you're regretting things and we're not going to be a team with regrets.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports