

# Pac-12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 2, 2023

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Utah Utes

Lynne Roberts

Gianna Kneepkens

Alissa Pili

Postgame Press Conference

Washington State - 66, Utah - 58.

THE MODERATOR: We Welcome Utah. We'll start with an opening statement from coach.

LYNNE ROBERTS: They played really, really well. I had a feeling they would. They're incredibly well coached and that's an NCAA Tournament team before this game. But I think they did a great job. They played fearless. They shot the ball great in the second half and we kept pushing. We didn't shoot to our normal ability, and you have to give their defense some credit on that.

It's hard to, they had a game under their belt and this was our first game. That's not an excuse, but I think that is a reality of getting that first round bye. I also think that the big takeaway is how stinking good this conference is. I mean, that's a good team, and they are the 7 seed. It just speaks to how good this conference is and how on any given night anyone can win.

So I congratulate them. I thought they played very, very well. I don't think we played particularly well. But again you have to credit them for disrupting us like that. But congratulations to them and I think they deserved to win today.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Questions?

**Q. 39 points, three seconds left, they get the ball back. There's a decision to let them dribble out rather than foul. Was that a consideration or was it talked about during the timeout?**

LYNNE ROBERTS: Yeah. At that point we knew we would get the ball back. I thought we did a great job defensively. She hit a shot with one second left on it. It



worked. It was effective. We had two or three timeouts at that time. We were going to grab the rebound and call timeout.

They were inbounding it and they were getting it to their free throw shooters. So, yeah, I mean, you can consider shorten the game, foul, but I trusted our defense and that she hit a great, offense beats great defense. She hit the game-winning shot and kudos to her. I trust my team and we've got five people on the floor that can shoot the 3 out of a timeout. So I just thought we would have a good shot there.

**Q. Last year you guys came into this tournament as the hunters. This year 2 seed, you're PAC 12 co-champions, the hunted. Did it feel different coming into this tournament and maybe that was part of why you didn't get off the same foot that you got off to last year because you were hungrier last year maybe than you were this year?**

GIANNA KNEEPKENS: I think we were still pretty hungry this year. But there's always a saying like it's hard to beat a good team three times. We all came in feeling a hundred percent that we were going to beat that team, but they just played better today. But our season's not over, so we'll learn from that.

**Q. Alissa, it looked like your ankle was bothering you.**

ALISSA PILI: No, not really. I just didn't really play well today.

**Q. You had a great season. You're going to do great. Where was Issy Palmer tonight?**

LYNNE ROBERTS: She was on the bench. She is nursing -- she was just, she's nursing a leg injury and wasn't cleared to go.

But I do want to say both these guys are upset, Gianna and Alissa, and they didn't have their best games in terms of what we've been used to seeing. But they have put us on their back all season. The amount of times they have come through is, I'm so proud of them and just the



competitive spirit that they have and just tonight wasn't our night.

But we win as a group and we lose as a group and we all take ownership in that. But I'm really proud of these two for the fight that they have shown and they have got broad shoulders and we've relied on them so much.

**Q. When you didn't have Palmer but then Johnson got in foul trouble, so how much did that disrupt kind of what you were trying to do with your guard rotation and then --**

LYNNE ROBERTS: A ton.

**Q. And then if you and Alissa could talk about Motuga's defense and what a factor that was.**

LYNNE ROBERTS: Yeah. The foul trouble, Jenna getting two fouls in a minute, that was awesome. And then Dasia Young, who plays a lot of minutes for us too, she got three fouls in that first half. That did foul us up and it fouled up our rhythm.

Not having Issy hurt us, just rhythm. Offensively, G had to run the point guard when Vieira was out. And she can do it, but that's not her natural position for us. So I think that we sputtered a little bit with that. But we've got to adjust. It was a physical game and I thought that Motuga did a great job on Alissa. But it's so physical and I think that was kind of the kryptonite to just bully Alissa down there. Not bully, but just push and shove and make it really, really hard. She never had one clean look. So they did a good job with her.

I've loved Motuga's game for -- I feel like she's 30. I'm hoping she's graduating soon. But she's a winner and a competitor. She hit a couple huge threes too in that third quarter, fourth quarter that gave 'em some space. But she had a great game and did a good job.

**Q. Your team in this tournament last year get all the way to the championship, riding that momentum to the NCAA tournament. Now you got to try to flip it and get ready and fix the mindset. How do you do that in the next 10 days and get your team ready for what I would expect to be a big tournament for you guys going forward as expecting a high seed and a chance to host and all those things how do yo flip off of this tough loss?**

LYNNE ROBERTS: I think we just have to do it. I think our goals coming into the season was to win a conference championship, which we did. And to host the first couple rounds of the NCAA tournament, which we're going to be

able to do. So our goals are still in front of us. Our athletic director, Mark Harlan, was just in the locker room and told the team that was just two hours of our season and it can't define who we are. And I think that's a great message of, it's just two hours. These guys are competitors and they're ticked off because we want to win. And I think competitive people let losses and let -- when you get knocked down, it's more fuel to the fire. So it's almost I think better. We'll have more time to practice. We got things we can get better at and I have no doubt that we'll be spitting nails by the time that first round, the ball gets thrown up for that first round game.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you.

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