

Pac-12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 3, 2023

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Colorado Buffaloes

JR Payne

Jaylyn Sherrod

Aaronette Vonleh

Postgame Press Conference



JR PAYNE: I thought they did a great job of just defending offensive action. Lanes were relatively clogged. I thought they did a great job of playing personnel. When you play a team three times you know each other pretty well and strengths and weakness and things like that. I thought they did a great job of identifying that and making it difficult for us.

Washington State - 61, Colorado - 49

THE MODERATOR: We welcome Colorado. Coach, we'll start with an opening statement and then take questions.

JR PAYNE: Yeah, I guess I would just start with saying congratulations to Washington State who played an incredible game tonight. Really well coached, really tough, gritty team. I thought they executed game plan and as always really well coached team. So congratulations to them.

Proud of our team for our fight that I think was clearly on display for a large part of the second half. Disappointed with the outcome. Disappointed with some things that we could have executed more effectively and things that we really felt like we needed to do to win the game. But this time of year every team can beat every team, and I think we know that and unfortunately learned it firsthand today. But proud of the season we've had so far and very excited for the season that will continue to happen.

Q. What's your perspective on this game tonight?

JAYLYN SHERROD: I feel like you just learn from it. There's nothing we can do to change the outcome right now. All we can do is learn from it, learn from our mistakes, see how we can be better, and move on. There's always an opportunity in any game you play. So it sucks, the outcome, but we just got to learn from it.

Q. Coach, aside from the third quarter it seemed like it was really an uphill battle for you guys offensively. What either did they do on defense or what did you guys not do on offense did you think that made that so difficult throughout night?

I also thought we got pretty good looks early in the game and they just weren't falling, shots that normally fall, whether it's layups or open threes by shooters. When that happens early sometimes you don't want to, but sometimes you get a little bit tighter or you force a little bit more. I thought that we stalled a little bit offensively in that we weren't moving the ball. There wasn't enough just consistent pace and movement of the basketball. We needed to be able to do that, especially when shots that typically fall aren't falling. That was an adjustment that we'll have to do more effectively next time.

Q. Aaronette, the play where you blocked Bella, but it goes straight to Motuga and she hits the three and go up by 10. It felt like that sort of that proverbial dagger moment where that's a tough spot for you to be in because you guys are trying to make a push and you make a big play and then it just goes badly the other way. How important did you feel like that was and how emotionally difficult was that point in the game?

AARONETTE VONLEH: Yeah, moments like that are momentum shifters, just when you're expecting the play to go one way and it goes a different way. But in games like this you don't really have time to dwell on any mistake, so it's really just focusing on the next play.

JR PAYNE: Yeah, I appreciate her mindset. You do have to move on. It's hard to do sometimes. You expend a lot of energy to come back.

I thought two separate times they hit threes at the buzzer almost at the end of the shot clock and that's tough. But credit to them for continuing to move the ball until they found a great shot. So being able to finish plays or finish possessions.



I thought there was a lot of possessions that loose balls went to them. A lot of critical O boards in the fourth quarter that ended up in points for them that cost us.

Q. Quay in both games in this tournament really struggled tonight, couldn't find her shot, had a lot of turnovers. When you don't have her sort of getting in a rhythm as you're leading scorer how tough does that make it? And what do you think you need to do to get her turned around come NCAA tournament time?

JR PAYNE: She's proven herself over 30 games that she's one of the best players in this conference, which speaks to her consistency. Definitely had a tough weekend, but I appreciate she kept talking, kept encouraging, kept playing hard. She was on the glass. I think she had five rebounds tonight. So I wouldn't expect this to continue to last, but definitely want to get her feeling well and be ready to rock by tournament time.

Q. They go by 16 early in the third, their big lead, and it really seemed at that point that you guys could have been buried, but you guys all of a sudden respond with a big run. First off, talk about what shifted the mindset for you guys at that point, and then I have a second question for you after that.

JAYLYN SHERROD: I just think no matter what we're not going to quit. I think there was a lot of times in that game we could have just laid down and quit, but we just stayed together, talked about not going on our islands and just staying together as a team. That's something we've been working on all season.

So I think that run really came from us just being connected and not really worried about what the score was and just do what we do.

Q. Even with that, when you guys tie it at 41 in the fourth and then you missed that free throw but then you guys get the rebound. There was a chance to take the lead, but you didn't and they go down and hit a three and then Bella gets a layup. So when they get that 5-0 run did that take some air out of you guys at that point with all that energy to get the lead and then all of a sudden they're up by five, seven?

JAYLYN SHERROD: Yeah, I don't really remember that, if I'm being honest with you. But I mean, it didn't make a difference, I feel like. Down five is nothing. Like you just said, we were down 16 and came back. So I think, I don't think that necessarily put us in a position to where we felt as if we were still in the game.

Q. Can you tell me a little bit about your decision to

come to Colorado and, you're not from the West Coast, and just if, the conference is so deep and especially competitive this year from top to bottom, and I don't know, did that have anything to do with your decision of wanting to play in this conference?

JAYLYN SHERROD: I think my decision just came from being in a place where the coaching staff really believed in me. My senior year of high school I only played eight games due to injury and a lot of people fell off with me because of that, but Coach J and the staff still really believed in me, still kept their offer on the table, and I just found an opportunity to play with people who believed in me and that's all I needed was a chance and they gave that to me, so that's why I came.

Q. You went pretty small for a good chunk of that fourth quarter with Tameiya and Kindyll in for Quay and Tay. What did you see that prompted that change and what were you hoping to get out of that?

JR PAYNE: Yeah, I think our entire run was sparked by that group that was just looking to be more aggressive off the bounce. We were just trying to create opportunities where we could put the ball on the floor and be more aggressive with one post player and to sort of clean up anything near the basket and keep on the glass.

But just trying to create more with some tenacious players that defend and can put the ball on the floor to create.

Q. None of the four teams with the bye made it to the championship game. What does it say about the talent and depth of the conference?

JR PAYNE: It speaks to exactly that, everyone knows, everyone that's associated with the PAC 12 women's basketball knows that it's the deepest conference in the country, and every team that played, which is all 12 teams, are really good and really deep and really capable of competing deeper into March.

So, yeah, I mean, it's certainly disappointing for us to not make it to the championship game, but proud of us getting to the semi-finals and finishing with our highest conference finish in, I don't know, ever, maybe? I don't know. But a long time.

But, yeah, it's a great conference. There's eight legitimate teams in the PAC 12 that should be in the NCAA tournament. I think we have seen that over the last few days.

Q. There's been two seeding upsets every day. Now 5 and a 7 seed in the final. So just to expand on that a

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

little bit more, does it basically tell you anyone, anything could have happened when teams got here and it pretty much has?

JR PAYNE: Yeah. No, I think that's a great way to put it. We're going to see a 5 and a 7 in the final on Sunday and both of those teams deserve to be there. Like, that's how good they are. So it's not just, whoa, one team played out of their mind and upset somebody. Like they were the two best teams this weekend in a conference that has how many ranked teams do we have right now, 6? And that is pretty remarkable for a conference.

Q. Ula Motuga is sort of this weird matchup because she's really physical, but not very big. What makes her so difficult as a defender? Because she can be physical and move her feet because she's not a super tall post player. It seemed like she was sort of the main one on Quay that sort of took her out of the game.

JR PAYNE: I love Ula, there's always a player on every team I'll say to the team during scout, Man, I love that kid. And I think she's phenomenal. She does everything for them. She can guard, she can score, she can rebound, she can knock down timely shots. She's an incredible passer. I think she's definitely an X factor for them.

Q. Obviously this weekend you're playing for a conference tournament title. But a lot of teams here are playing for NCAA tournament positioning, things like that. With you guys sort of being from that 4, 5 area on projections do you worry about what this might have done as far as being able to host or is that something you'll worry about later?

JR PAYNE: We'll worry about that later. I am more worried about, worried is not right word but I'm more just, we always focus on the moment. Like every single day we want to be great. There were times today that we were great. Like really proud of our fight. Third quarter was incredible toughness to come back from down 16. But mostly we just want to be great. When we practice, when we play, when we compete. So that will be the goal. Like, rest, recover and then get back to playing really great basketball each and every day.

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