

Pac-12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Sunday, March 5, 2023

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

UCLA Bruins

Cori Close

Kiki Rice

Charisma Osborne

Postgame Press Conference

Washington State - 65, UCLA - 61

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

CORI CLOSE: Or open jump shots that are created out of our execution on offense, and ultimately that's my responsibility to get us ready and growing for that. Every March the amount of transition buckets go down, teams are really good, and they take that away. You have to be able to execute better in the half court, and my hope is that, and I really believe in this team, that we will have a new level of focus on our half-court execution and what we're trying to create and we just, we have to cut down errors. If we have enough mental errors or possession errors, it's really tough to recover from that, and we had too many today to come out with a victory.

So still really proud of our team and who we're becoming and how we continue to grow. And every single time we've hit adversity they have made really courageous choices of how to let that adversity teach their hearts and help make them different. And we always say that you have to choose the pain of regret or the pain of discipline and right now, we're going to have to learn from some of the pain of regret. But if it helps us get a little bit more disciplined, especially with our half-court execution and our defensive game plan, then my hope is that it will drive us to just that.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Questions?

Q. Kiki, what will you take away from today's experience, not necessarily the X's and O's of it, but what will you take away from this experience that you can use a couple weeks from now?

KIKI RICE: I think just knowing that the further you get on



in March, tournament time, you can't really take plays off. We had a few possessions in the beginning and just throughout the game that we didn't execute properly and we weren't on our A game, so I think just going forward, knowing that every team's going to be great and they're really be out there to execute, to really do what they do, so you just have to take away what they do.

Q. Cori, you guys, they kept answering every time you guys would push out a little bit. I don't know, you talked about your own execution, but what was the balance of what they were doing well with what you wished you guys were doing better as they continued to answer every time you guys made a push out in front?

CORI CLOSE: Well, it's a balance of I wish -- you know, they started getting deep touches to Bella inside, and then we had a couple of breakdowns on their stagger screen action, and they slipped behind us and got a curl layup on another. So you can't give up open layups.

And then with Bella, it ended up being an open layup just because she got such a deep touch. So those are some of the errors. And when we switched and how we switched, I think in hindsight, and ultimately, maybe if we could have, I thought, trapped maybe the ball screens a little sooner, in my mind or hindsight, it's 2020, we had to get them out of rhythm a little bit, which is really hard to do. They're just so disciplined and they, you can't be high risk, high reward too much. They adjust too well.

But I do think maybe we could have mixed that up sooner and those are all the things that I'll look back and go, oh, how could we have done that. But the execution part is just they got layups and they got open threes, and that's, you look at their shooting chart for the season and throughout the PAC 12, I mean, that's what they hunt for, and they're just so disciplined not to settle for anything less. We wanted to try to hit, make them shoot more mid-range jump shots, and we weren't able to make them hit enough of those.

Q. Washington State's offense, obviously, coach was saying finding their spots, but they also had the No. 1



scoring defense in the tournament. Coach talked about execution, but also what would they do to limit the space in terms of the defensive sort of suffocating? Was it something they were doing or could you have, do you feel you could have executed better? Because it just seemed as if they were frustrating you, Kiki, especially you in the first half.

CHARISMA OSBORNE: I think we definitely could have executed better setting new screens, play with pace, play with tempo. I think we played against them twice this season, so we have, like we've been able to score on them. I don't think that's necessarily the issue. I think it's more on us being able to execute our offense and we get the looks that we want to get.

CORI CLOSE: We talked a lot about how we wanted to handle their switches and get downhill, and I think we needed to do that more to get into two feet into the paint and try to get them to collapse so that we could get more open jump shots on kickouts, and we just didn't make quite the right reads of where the seams were to attack those, especially with as much as they were switching screens.

Then we didn't get quality enough seals and take advantage when we had a mismatch inside when they had some of those switches. Ultimately, that's my job in the next whatever, 11, 12 days is to get us ready to be better when we go into the NCAA tournament.

Q. Charisma, how do you think this experience in the PAC 12 tournament playing so many good teams in such a condensed time will that help you prepare for the NCAA tournament?

KIKI RICE: Yeah, I think it will help us a lot, especially because the PAC 12 there's so many different styles of play, and in the NCAA tournament you don't have that many days and you have to be able to prepare really quickly. So I think it will help us in that sense of just playing one game and then having to move on and execute the next scouting report.

Q. (No microphone.)

CORI CLOSE: Well, I don't consider her off the bench anymore when you look at how many pressurized minutes she's been playing. I think when I looked at it, I could be a little bit off, but she's averaging like 26 minutes a game over the last several games. I think she's really confident right now and they have done a really good job of developing her confidence along the way. I think they know their roles so well. I think that what she knows is she needs to get downhill and she needs to be a good pick-and-roll passer with Bella. Even the way she's playing

defense is a whole lot better than it was the first time that we saw her.

So credit to her and to them for developing that. She's a huge key for them, I think. It allows them to take Leger-Walker off the ball and bring her off of more off-ball screening actions.

Q. You've been in this conference a long time. Will you speak to what Kamie's done at Washington State?

CORI CLOSE: Yeah, I told her, I happened to ride down the elevator with her and her mom today, and then talked to her a little bit before the game. Just, you know, that is a really hard job. And what she has done and done it creatively with really committing to the international recruiting. And then just playing a style that really takes advantage of their high-IQ players. They play a real international style of play. They play with great discipline and pace. I think that her staff, her entire staff is just, they have gotten players that fit what they're trying to do. It reminds me somewhat of what she and Deb Patterson did at Kansas State. That's a tough place to recruit to and they don't do it like everybody else. They find their own niche and they really recruit to that niche and then they execute like crazy.

So credit to them. Kami's done a heck of a job and I have a ton of respect for not only the way they play, but for the reasons in which she coaches.

Q. On a team that finished 7th in the conference, what does that say about the talent in the PAC?

CORI CLOSE: Yeah, we were tied for 4th and they were 7th. And it was like, I mean -- and we didn't, it's not like we cruised on through. We had to upset people and go take wins. So I think that's probably the biggest story of this tournament is that everybody talks about how deep their conference is and how good their conference is. And, numerically, when you add the non-conference schedule in terms of our winning percentage, that bore out. We talk about net ratings, that bore out. But then you prove it again in the way that this tournament played out.

I just think that, you know, I think that's why Oregon should be in the tournament. That's why we should be hosting. That's why nobody wants to play Washington State in the NCAA tournament. Because this conference is so deep it prepares us so well because they're such varied styles, as Charisma referred to. But the conference is as good as it's ever been, in my mind. And that isn't -- I just think that this tournament is a narrative that proves it. It's not just coaches trying to campaign.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you.

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