

Pac-12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 6, 2024

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Oregon Ducks

Coach Kelly Graves

Grace VanSlooten

Chance Gray

Postgame Press Conference

Colorado - 79, Oregon - 30

THE MODERATOR: Welcome, Coach and the Oregon Ducks. Coach Kelly Graves, excuse me, Chance Gray and Grace VanSlooten. We'll have you open, and media, please make sure and identify yourself and use players' names when you are directing your questions for our online audience.

KELLY GRAVES: First of all, I want to congratulate JR and her team. They played really well. When we played them about a month ago, I thought they were the most complete team in the conference at that point. I know they kind of struggled down the stretch, but they played tonight like a team that we thought they were. I think you all know how much I love JR and respect her. I'm happy for them.

In terms of us, we just picked a tough night to really have a tough night. I mean, we weren't good really in any phase of the game. Certainly shooting the basketball was a struggle. But it's been a struggle all year. We've had a hard time scoring.

But I do want to tell my team that I'm really proud of them. And certainly these two, they've done their absolute best all year long.

We've just had one of those years. Not a lot has worked. Not a lot has gone well, but my team -- the one thing I complimented them on in the locker room was they've stuck together. They continue to practice hard and play hard and get along and do the things that they're supposed to do as a student-athlete at the University of Oregon. I'm proud of them for that.

It's just tough to watch today's performance, unfortunately. You know, we've got some work to do, and we hope to get



back to where we've kind of been -- not in this conference anymore, but back to the program that I am confident that we can be.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

Q. Seemed like you guys got in some good looks early that just didn't fall. Did you feel that way? When they weren't falling, did you feel like it kind of snowballed from there a little bit?

KELLY GRAVES: Yeah, and it's happened. That's been a theme throughout the season. We just kind of struggled to put the ball in the basket.

Yeah, I thought we had a couple of good looks. I've got to compliment their defense. I think the ones that we did get were a little rushed and then that got us off our game.

Once you miss a few, sometimes the confidence becomes a factor. Then when we did get better looks, they didn't go either. I would compliment Colorado on their job defensively.

Q. You've been pretty optimistic about getting this program turned around. Why are you so optimistic about that? What leads you to believe you can get this turned around?

KELLY GRAVES: Well, look at my track record. Look at my career. Look at the championships that we've won and the program that we've had. I can't really pinpoint one reason why it's kind of fallen off. But how am I supposed to be?

I'm a positive person by nature, and I feel that we can get it back. In this day and age with a lot of player movement I think there's help to be found as well.

We've got some really good young pieces. You're looking at two of them right here. And we've just got to continue to get some more to go with it.

But I'm not discouraged. I feel bad now, and I feel bad for the season, but I'm not going to let that affect me next year



by any stretch.

Q. Obviously, I know from you personally, covering you for years, that this is not the way you guys wanted to end this conference. What are some of the emotions that are going through your mind knowing that this is the last Pac-12 game that you guys will be a part of as you guys transition to the Big Ten next season?

KELLY GRAVES: I've had several months to process that, so I'm not melancholy on any of that stuff. I'm concerned about the game today. I'm not looking big picture.

It is disappointing that I don't get to play against or coach against JR. Her staff has all either played for me or coached with me. So that part is tough. But I left that melancholy stuff a long time ago.

It's a shame that we're at this point, both our program where we're at and the Pac-12. I'm really disappointed that this will be the last Pac-12 tournament. That's a shame.

Q. For either one of the players, Kelly nodded at you as two players that he could build around for the future. Have you considered your future? Do you want to come back here?

GRACE VANSLOOTEN: I mean, yeah. I don't see why not. Obviously I don't think anybody would be thinking about that during the season. I would hope not. Yeah, I don't see why not.

Q. For Kelly and both the girls, you can apply for a waiver to play in the WNIT. KG, you've said for weeks you have practiced hard. You feel like the kids haven't quit on you or anything. Do you want to play in the WNIT if you can? Are you ready to just move on and get ready for next year?

KELLY GRAVES: Well, I'll take that. I've always been one that if somebody asks us to play, we want to play. The circumstances this year might change that. I don't know if we're going to be realistic. I think we meet a couple of the measurements.

This has been a tough year. We didn't get any -- we're young to begin with. I mean, you're looking at two young sophomores here. We've had injuries right from the start. We've played the toughest schedule in the country. I mean, 12 of our 18 games in conference play were against teams in the top 20. We just weren't equipped to beat those teams at this time.

But I think under all those circumstances I'm not sure that

we want to continue to play, but I'm going to do -- I'm going to talk to these two. These are the two I've relied on all year. If it's something they want to do, doggone it, who am I to say no, you know? I don't know. How do you guys -- Chance?

CHANCE GRAY: I just think, as a team, we haven't really thought about it, like the question before. We've just kind of been focused one game at a time, taking everything by day. Whatever the team wants to do on a whole, I think we can all agree on.

Q. Specifically for Grace and Chance, obviously a tough year, but what are the positives you can take away? It wasn't all terrible. You had great moments as a team and as individuals. What are the things you're excited about?

GRACE VANSLOOTEN: I think over the season we all got really close. We're all a really tight group. Hang out on and off the court. We all really get along well. We've had some really fun times together. I would say that's definitely one of the positives.

CHANCE GRAY: Yeah, I agree. I think through all of this we've stayed together, relied on each other, came into practice every day for the most part with a positive attitudes and just kind of seized the day and was ready to get better every day no matter the circumstances or the numbers or the record or where we were at.

We built a strong tight-knit group, and we'll have relationships we can have forever.

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