

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Regional 3 Final - NC State vs Texas

Saturday, March 30, 2024

Portland, Oregon, USA

Moda Center

Texas Longhorns

Vic Schaefer

Aaliyah Moore

Shay Holle

Elite 8 Pregame Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: Joining us for press conferences, head coach Vic Schaefer. We'll open it up with a statement from Coach Schaefer.

VIC SCHAEFER: Good morning. I think it's still morning.

THE MODERATOR: It is.

VIC SCHAEFER: Appreciate you being here. Excited to be here, glad I'm here, and not the alternative.

I'm proud of my team. They, obviously, played very well last night and did a great job guarding a really good basketball team, a team that had won 32 games. Live to see another day.

Obviously, we've got to get ready for a really well-coached NC State team. I've known Wes a long time. Sat there last night and watched his team battle. Thought they made some great adjustments, especially at halftime.

I've always admired his teams from afar. It seems like I've watched his teams more of late. He just does a heck of a job with them. Obviously, we're going to have to play really well. He's got some really special kids that can do a lot of things on their end.

The quick turnaround with a 12:00 game tomorrow. You know, I'm still trying to figure it out. We're the 1 seed. We played the late game last night. We got the early practice today. Make it make sense.

But it is what it is. Again, this is why we have the edge at Texas. It seems like every time we turn around, it's



something.

So we just had our practice. We've had film this morning at breakfast. We'll have a little more film tonight, and then tomorrow will be an early morning and ready to play at 12:00 noon.

Obviously, he had some kids play really well last night. James, I think, had 18 just in the third quarter alone. Really had a big game for them. Again, I just think his inside people are so good, so well-coached and play a really physical game down there. You've got to be able to match that and work to defend that a little bit. At the same time, you'd better be able to go against an offense.

Our kids, they're in scout mode right now. They're in preparation mode. They did a great job in our practice, and we'll be ready to play tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: I think we're ready now.

Q. Vic, is there an update on Taylor?

VIC SCHAEFER: I haven't been back there since the practice today. She did practice today. So that's probably the update I've got. I haven't visited with anybody as a result of that practice.

Q. Coach, is there any team in your conference that reminds you of NC State and the way that they play?

VIC SCHAEFER: Not really. You know, they remind me of some of those teams I used to have to play in my old league. But in this league, you know, I think you can separate it a little bit in that they have a big, physical inside game, which we have to deal with a lot in the Big 12.

So maybe I need to re-circle the wagons there and say yes and no. Yes in that we've had to guard some really good inside players, and he certainly has that. They're so physical. But to attack you out on the perimeter like they can and score at all three levels, you know, we see that a little bit. But I don't know that we see three kids that can do it, you know, all at the same time on the floor like Wes has. I think that's a little bit of a different challenge for us.



You know, every night in our league is such a battle. Usually there's one or two out there. But don't know that there's anybody in our league that's got three that can really challenge you.

Q. Vic, you mentioned the other day to us that it's hard to play point guard for you. What specifically makes it, you know, a difficult job?

VIC SCHAEFER: Well, I think it's hard to play point guard in general for a coach that demands you to be good.

I think for me, again, it's not only running my team, being accountable for yourself, but you have to understand to be accountable for your teammates, you know.

I can remember toward the end of Rori's freshman year going through the growing pains with her. And by March, I'd blow the whistle, and before I could say anything, she'd say, I know, I know. It's my fault. I would be talking about maybe her teammates not being in the right place or doing the right thing, but she was being accountable.

That's the thing: playing point guard, you have to be accountable for your teammates. You can't go run something and everybody's not in the right place, you know? So part of being a good point guard is being accountable.

Then in Booker's case, it's really, you know, not only has she had to do all that and learn it on the fly, but I still need her to score. So that's the big challenge, I think, for her is she turns down shots. You know, I don't want her turning down.

Last night I thought she turned down some shots. So I have to tell her, Hey, don't turn that down. And so...

And then the other piece for me obviously I've had some really good defensive point guards, you know. So playing on that end of the floor is equally a value for our program and our team as anything you do on the offensive end.

When you've got point guards in history like, you know, Jazzy, Morgan William, Rori Harmon. You know, Joanne Allen-Taylor played a little bit for me at Texas. Those kids all played both ends of the floor really, really well, played really hard.

Q. You made mention last night of when you came to Texas, sort of embracing and taking on the standard that Jody set from her time there. I'm wondering if you can expand on that as to what, in your mind, is that standard and what she means to you?

VIC SCHAEFER: Yeah, 34-0 to me is the standard, you know. And that's really hard chasing that. But that's what I'm chasing. We're chasing a national championship. That's our goal. It's always been my goal. It's the standard in every sport at Texas.

And so it's a miserable way to live, I can tell you because as you know, there's only one team left when the year's done. Coach Sark and I talk about it all the time, you know. There's lots of places. You're just trying to make a bowl game. You know, you've had a great year if you make a bowl game. You make the NCAA tournament. You've had a great year. That's the standard here at Texas. Not for him and not for me.

You know, if you chase that, if that's really the standard, there's a lot of heartache, you know. Or there can be.

But Coach Conradt, going to that, when we were walking yesterday out of the arena, she made a comment that really resonates with me. It's the answer: there's nothing like winning at this level.

Think about that. You can go a lot of places, Coach, win. But there's nothing like winning at this level. But it's hard. People think it's easy. It happens all the time.

Then maybe a coach leaves or something happens, and then all of a sudden they look up and go, You know what, maybe they weren't so bad.

It's not easy. Winning is hard. Our thought for the day on my practice plan. Winning requires you to be different, and 'different' scares people. It does. I run into it all the time in recruiting. It's easy to talk about, I want to do this, I want to do that. It's easy to talk the talk. It's hard to walk that walk, man.

And so Jody means -- Coach Conradt -- I don't want to call her Jody -- Coach Conradt means the world to me. It's what I envisioned when I took the job, her coming into the office and us drinking coffee the morning after the game and talking over the game. Like, how can you not value that expertise, that wisdom?

I may have been coaching for 39 years, y'all, but I'm smart enough to know I can't do it by myself. That's why I think I have the best staff in the country, and I don't think I know it all. So, yes...

Q. Vic, how important is it in a game like this to be able to play on offense different ways, kind of adjusting to the game? Shay and Shaylee last Sunday didn't shoot it great. You had other options last night.

Obviously, they were a big key. You never know how the game is going to kind of develop.

VIC SCHAEFER: Well, and I think that's been our team all year. You know, if somebody struggles one night, other people pick it up. And Book struggled a little bit last night. Shay, Shaylee, A-Mo did a great job and picked up the slack. You know, our team has done it all year. I wish I could say we've been really consistent in one thing or another.

Booker's been really consistent. Last night was just a deal. I don't know. But she's been really, really good all year, consistently good. In my mind, top five, top six, seven players in the country all year, done it all year.

So I think, again, the versatility of your team and how you can score and defend really helps. We can defend in some different ways. And I think we've had to do it throughout the course of the year. And tomorrow, you know, might be another night where we maybe have to do it a little different.

But this team's done it. They've done it that way.

Q. You've had teams at Texas that had made this stage of the Elite 8. Is there anything about this particular group that gives you that extra bit of hope that this is the team that can get you to the Final Four, anything that really separates them?

VIC SCHAEFER: You know, I think with this group, they've developed some consistency. They've developed an identity that they play with.

I think the heart of this team, not that those other teams didn't have it, but, you know, that first team that I had during COVID, I mean, you look back at that group, I think we were 17-13 when we went into the NCAA tournament. We ended up beating two top-ten teams. We had no business beating UCLA. We had them down 21 at half in the second round and ended up beating them. Then got to play Maryland, who had the number one offense in the country, averaged almost 100 points a game.

You know, Antonelli was saying, Vic, what's he going to sleep all week? What is he going to do? He's going to give up 100? We gave up number 60 and 61 points with, like, .3 seconds on the clock. That team really locked in and guarded. But that team, you know, really, I think, overachieved in so many ways.

And then the next team, we were pretty good. We had already, you know, we ended up having a knock-down, drag-out with Stanford out here somewhere. I can't even

remember where, but it was out this direction. It might have been Spokane, yeah. And so, you know, that team was pretty good, too.

But this team, they've just shown tremendous heart. They're gritty. I mean, it's really unlike anything I've ever seen, you know, with a team that's, you know, there's certain things we do really well, and they understand that. They don't try to step outside of themselves and do things they're not capable of. I give them a lot of credit for that.

They're smart. You know, they're really a smart basketball team. And so, you know, I do think we have tough matchups. I think that always separates you when you've got people on the floor that are difference players.

Obviously, we've had some kids here lately step up. And then we've had kids all year that have been difference player.

THE MODERATOR: This will need to be our last question.

Q. Vic, what drives you more, loving winning or hating losing?

VIC SCHAEFER: Man, I hate to lose. You know, to know me personally, I don't go fishing. I go catching, you know? I want to know what they're biting, what they're eating and what time of day.

That's the scouting report that I'm always going to get. Same with basketball. So I don't want to get skunked. I'm not out there drinking beer. I'm out there to catch.

I think for me, I do not like to lose. But I will say this, and especially this year, I've enjoyed watching these kids have success. It's really been fun.

To see them after games, to see them succeed, to see them beat teams night in, night out, some teams that people think maybe they shouldn't beat, winning on the road, whatever it's been, it's really been fun to watch them win. I have enjoyed that as much as anything this season.

So, again, we're all chasing that last one. At this point in my career, I've experienced a lot of different things, but I'm chasing the last one. And that's what motivates me.

I think I've got a team that's motivated by that. I think even past our team, I have a program that's motivated by that.

You know, I think the thing you have to understand in basketball is top 25, that number 12 through 25 usually is fluid. Even 15 to 25. Those teams are fluid. They're in and out, right, all year.

When you have established a program that's a top-5 program, a top-10 program, when those preseason rankings come out, your fans don't venture to 12 and 15 and 25. They're looking at you. Hey, where are we in the top 10? They're going right to that top 10. That's when you know you've got it where you want it when you've got a program that lives in that because that's a different neighborhood. In my mind, that's a way different neighborhood than 15 to 30. Because those teams are usually pretty fluid.

I think Wes has done that, you know, at NC State. I think they've, over the last couple, two, three years have really established themselves. And, you know, hopefully we have, too. And that's our goal year in and year out, so...

THE MODERATOR: We're out of time. Coach, thank you for your time. Best of luck tomorrow.

VIC SCHAEFER: All right. Appreciate y'all being here. Praise the Lord. Hook 'em, Horns.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Joining us in our practice press conference, student-athletes from the University of Texas, Shay Holle and Aaliyah Moore.

We'll at this time open it up for questions.

Q. Either Aaliyah or Shay, what lessons do you think you learned in 2022 about the Elite 8 that you think you can apply to tomorrow night?

SHAY HOLLE: Yeah. I think it's really you have to focus on preparation and taking every game to heart because, I mean, any team that's at this point you have to respect and you know that they have put a lot of work in, too.

But I think also just, like, knowing that we've worked to be in this moment, so you can't play all tied up, like, just have fun. It's supposed to be fun. This is why we do what we do.

So just go out and play.

AALIYAH MOORE: Yeah. Shay basically hit it. That was my freshman year. I remember taking it possession by possession and soaking it in because these moments are fleeting.

But we worked really hard to get here and it's also supposed to be fun, so just enjoy the ride. But winning's also fun. So playing well, but yeah.

Q. Coach has spoken a lot over the last two days

about the standard he holds himself to of trying to get your program to win national championships to get these deep March runs. Have you seen, your time first getting to know him or now just being in a program, how does he kind of embody that fight and just that chase of wanting to achieve the very best?

SHAY HOLLE: Yeah. This is year four with him, and I can say that no matter what game, what team he has, he's always going to coach, like, the best he can, the hardest he can. And he's going to hold you to a standard. And that standard doesn't change whether you're a freshman or a senior because he expects a lot out of us because he knows what we're capable of. So just being prepared for that day in, day out.

He's probably the most consistent person I know. You know what you're going to get from him every single day, and it's going to be his best.

AALIYAH MOORE: Something else that I think people might overlook is Coach Schaefer is good at stacking classes. You bring in such competitive, ranked, great players every year. McDonald's all-Americans. So every year it's, like, a competition. We're playing against the best of the best in our practices.

So I think he does a great job as a coach at just making everyone better, which is obviously his job. So he's really good at it.

Q. Going back to something Aaliyah just said, and, Shay, if you want to answer, too, that's fine. Are y'all having fun? Has this been fun for you, or is there stress related to all this?

AALIYAH MOORE: For me, man, I'm having a blast. Playing with these girls, I know they're going to show up. Every night I know Coach Schaefer will show up, everyone else.

Yeah, I'm having fun. Being in this moment, there's, what, how many teams left? Eight? Elite 8, duh. One of the eight is really exciting and just looking at the future, taking it game by game. Yeah, I'm really happy to be here.

SHAY HOLLE: Yeah, I'm having a lot of fun, too. I think we can speak for our whole team on that. I think we're really just enjoying it. And, obviously, there's hard moments. It's supposed to be hard. It's supposed to be tough. But we know the work we've put in, so I think we're really just enjoying it and having fun right now.

Q. Aside from the winning, what has made this season fun for you guys?

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AALIYAH MOORE: Yeah, I think the biggest thing is we get along. And I know a lot of teams really don't get along, I feel like. But genuinely there's really great people on this team, and we generally get along on the court and outside of the court.

So it's fun playing with girls that you trust, that you compete with every day. It's like a sisterhood. It honestly is. Every day I come to practice, I'm actually happy to come, see them, see Coach Schaefer, see the other staff. It makes the game more enjoyable.

SHAY HOLLE: Yeah, I think outside of basketball, they're all such good people, and they're people I would want to surround myself with, whether they were on my team or not. And so I think that's what's so fun. Winning with those types of people is a blessing for sure.

Q. After an off night for Madison last night, what sort of bounceback do you expect from her tomorrow?

AALIYAH MOORE: It's funny because last night me and Shay talked about it. We're, like, We just did that. Maddie didn't have a great game. So imagine if Maddie did have a great game and we played that way. She's a freshman. Ups and downs. It happens to the best of us.

One thing about Maddie is she will not have two in a row. She was so hard on herself after the game. We were, like, Maddie, you're fine. Keep shooting the ball. So she will be fine. She's going to calm down and play her game.

SHAY HOLLE: Sometimes I think we all forget that she's a freshman because she's actually not very up and down. And so that happens times. I know she'll learn from it. She knows all of us, none of us, our trust didn't waver, our confidence. We know she's going to have a great game tomorrow. She just needs to play her basketball, and she'll be good.

Q. One of the things that coach said separates this team compared to other ones he's coached is that you guys are really gritty, really smart. How do you guys embody that? Where do you feel like that comes from? Who sets that tone? I'm sure as leaders you are part of that. How would you describe that?

AALIYAH MOORE: I think it comes with most of the players being older and us being in the system for a while and so we can help the younger ones.

I would say we're a pretty veteran team, which is always good. You have the experience, the growth of the IQ. Me being able to sit out last year, I learned a lot to the sideline.

So being able to bring that knowledge onto the court this year...

SHAY HOLLE: I think it definitely helps. Essentially this is a very similar team to what we had last year. Like, people are sticking around, and they're bought in to what we're doing.

So just the experience, really. Just veterans, I think it helps. And it's been this team for a while. We were the young team for a little bit, so it's nice now being the older team.

AALIYAH MOORE: And what's even crazier is next year we're going to have 90% of the same people. So I'm really excited about that.

Q. Aaliyah, you referenced being on the sidelines last year. We saw the quote last week from Paige Bueckers about kind of how emotional she was during the tournament about not being able to be out there with her team and getting back to that moment. Was there any time you had like that a year ago as you were going through your rehab?

AALIYAH MOORE: I had a lot of ups and downs to be honest, a lot of days where I did cry. Watching my team out there, and not to sound selfish, I was, like, I really wanted to be out there especially if we had tie games. I was, like, Man, I wish I could help this team.

You have that sense of helplessness, like, I'm here, what can I do to help the team? I had to realize, as I was doing my rehab, that I can help the team in different ways than being on the court. Being a voice outside of the court. I'm doing my best in rehab every day, so they see me going hard. Maybe that will help somebody else on the court go hard.

So I totally understand where she's coming from. It's not easy at all. But I think looking back, those moments where I did feel down, like, I was able to push through, and it made me even stronger in a sense.

Q. The last 12 hours or whatever, what have y'all learned about NC State, and what do you expect from the Wolf Pack tomorrow?

SHAY HOLLE: They're super athletic, really talented, both at the guard spot and inside. So it's going to be a team effort, like always, on defense.

But, yeah, that's always our focus is starting things on the defensive end, and then we'll get the ball rolling on offense. But, yeah, they're super athletic and really talented. So

definitely need to have good days of prep.

AALIYAH MOORE: Shay basically hit it. We just need to execute and play our game.

Q. Aaliyah, it was pretty cool last night the way you shouted out your coach. What made you want to do that?

AALIYAH MOORE: I mean, it was a team thing. We talked about it, actually, before. It just so happens I was the one that was the one that said it. But I think it can go unnoticed. Like, we are the ones out there producing, but we learn all the things that we're doing out there from him. Like, the drills every day that build those habits, they're from Coach Schaefer. We're not the ones that practice, like, Let's do this drill. It's all from him.

And so he instills that in us, and it's our job to go out there and produce and be effective. And I think that we do that. So it's just a product of our environment, in a way. And kudos to him because he's a great coach. And I think he recruits great players.

We're pretty good, I would say, at executing. Just thought, like I said, give credit where credit's due.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you both for your time and best of luck tomorrow.

SHAY HOLLE: Thank you.