

American Athletic Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Monday, March 7, 2022

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Dickies Arena

Wichita State Shockers

Keitha Adams

Asia Strong

Postgame Press Conference

Tulsa - 88, Wichita State - 86

MODERATOR: We have Wichita State coach Keitha Adams and Wichita State athlete Asia Strong.

Coach, if you want to give an opening statement and we'll open it up to questions.

COACH KEITHA ADAMS: Well, I think for the first game of the tournament we definitely started out with a bang, and going into an overtime game, it was a very exciting, competitive college game.

You've got to give credit to Tulsa for hitting some big shots and making some plays. They've got a very good team. I thought we played hard, we competed. Probably the biggest thing that we fell short of on today's game was -- our goal was to have 13 or less turnovers. We felt like we needed to take really good care of the ball and with 27. So that -- we lost by two points. They shot 15 more shots than we did and we're right there in the game, even though we didn't take very good care of the ball. I feel like that was really the difference. If we would have taken better care of it, had more shots, I feel like we would have had a much greater chance of winning the game.

Proud of our team in terms of what kind of young ladies we had on the team this year. Really good group of young people that played hard all year. Gave me great effort. They were great teammates, they were great with one another. Very, very competitive and we played hard. We just came up short and didn't close out games as well as we would have liked to this year. You know, you're right there and having a 20-win season versus coming up short on five or six games and winning 14 or 15 games. But in terms of their effort, they always gave me great effort.



MODERATOR: We're going to open it up for questions to those in the room with us. For those of us joining on the Zoom, if you want to raise your hand, we'll be able to call on you in just a second.

Q. Keitha, what can you say about the last few minutes there of regulation just coming back from five down and battling and then just the incredible shot-making on both sides, I guess?

COACH KEITHA ADAMS: Well, I think that, you know, our resiliency, our competitiveness, I felt like we kept fighting, we kept competing. We just -- we needed to get a few more defensive stops today. This is what's the hardest thing about losing close games, because you can sit here and say, man, if we would have scored a couple more times, taken better care of the ball, gotten a couple more stops. There's so many little things that you could do different to change the outcome and that's what's so hard when you lose a close game like this.

Got to give Tulsa credit for making big plays. They've got a good team, and also I thought our kids battled.

Q. Coach, if you can, just talk about the last two minutes of regulation and then your first two minutes of the overtime.

COACH KEITHA ADAMS: Last two minutes of regulation, last two minutes of overtime?

Q. Yes, ma'am.

COACH KEITHA ADAMS: That's four minutes of a lot of activity.

You know, I think for me, the most glaring thing was that we just had some possessions on offense that we didn't execute what we wanted to and that really hurt us. Turnovers, you know, you've got to be really good about taking care of the ball and getting good shots. I thought there was some things we did today well, but for me in those closing minutes and as you go down the stretch, and really throughout what's really just going to be the thing



that I'm going to have a hard time is those 27 turnovers. That's the difference in this game today. Like we needed to take better care of the ball. That's what cost us this game today is us not taking care of it. You know, we had some moments we executed, we did, got good looks and then we had our moments that we didn't. You know, we got -- I was -- I'll have to go back and watch the film, but give credit, Tulsa, their offense is very active, they move a lot. At halftime I told our team they're moving more than we're talking because there was times that we were not matched up and there was somebody that was getting loose. Part of that, their offense is so active, like you've got to really, really communicate because they're setting a lot of screens, they're cutting, they're moving and it's constant, and our communication needed to be better.

Q. Coach, what can you say about Asia Strong and what she's been able to do these last two games, she kind of took things up to the next level for you?

COACH KEITHA ADAMS: Yeah, Asia hit some big shots. One of the things that I've always -- when we -- first time I watched Asia play, I thought she was very talented and I believed in her and I saw something in her that her game really fired me up. From day one I knew that I wanted to coach this girl. She has had some moments where she's hit some big shots for us and done some things to help us win games. I have enjoyed coaching her 99.5 percent of the time, but I thought she kept battling today. Put her on the front of your half court trap and that can really jump start your team and just her competitiveness. I think that she's got a great future ahead of her and I told all of our seniors that I want nothing but success for these guys. They're a great group of gals and I'm always going to be here for them. I'm always going to be here for Asia and I really enjoyed having her in my program.

Q. And then for Asia, Coach kind of mentioned it, but what do you think about the improvements this year maybe despite what the records would say, that you guys were competitive and a lot of close games, especially late?

ASIA STRONG: I definitely felt we worked hard. We've just got to keep executing offensive and you know playing defense. Like Coach said, we had a lot of turnovers, so just taking care of the ball. We just gave them the ball 27 times, so it's not like they outworked us because we definitely was working with them. We was competing, we was rebounding, we was trying to get all the stops we could. It was a close game throughout the whole game. That's why we went to overtime. So It really was a good game. I'm really proud of my teammates.

This is basically my last game playing as a senior, so it's

like bittersweet. It was a close game. We fought, but we didn't get the results we wanted. During last season or this season, we would be like very close overtime. Like Coach said, we've got to kick the door down. We just got to keep kicking and keep kicking it, just getting better and better every day.

Q. Coach, these losses obviously are always emotional and it stings. This group, though, it feels like you guys have been through even more together after everything last year and you finally get healthy and the close losses this year. Just give you an opportunity here to talk about this group a little bit and what they mean to you and the emotions of this loss.

COACH KEITHA ADAMS: You know, it's tough. You're building a program and you're going to go through things to get there and that's what's happened. We had to figure out how to play ball and get through a pandemic. Last year was like no other experience for any of us.

I think that the other thing I shared with them in the locker room was that there's not anything that I would change about this group, not one thing. There's only one thing that I would have liked more for them and for us is for us to win these close games and to win more games. That's the only thing that I would like to change for us and that's been hard. But I know that when we get our program where we want, we're going to look back on this group and they're going to have a legacy and they're playing a part in us building this program and us being so competitive and playing hard. It's a process to get where you want to go and they've been a part of that. I want for us to just keep working on what our goals are and that these guys one day do see us where we want to be and know they played a part on helping us get there. That's hard right now to kind of envision probably for them because there's so much emotion. Like she said, their last college game.

But we're going to be connected forever, you know. We're going to be connected all over the world. We're going to have these kids go back home and we're going to be following what they're doing back home, and our connections are very real and our relationships are very real. The culture of our program, I think, is very good. It's been very healthy for our kids and us coaches. We just want to win more games and win some championships, so we've got to keep working to get better to do that. But our kids have been really good in so many areas and I'm proud of them and I'm proud of us, but we want more.

MODERATOR: Any other questions? All right. Coach. Thank you all. That's a wrap.

COACH KEITHA ADAMS: Thank you, guys.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

