

American Athletic Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Monday, March 7, 2022

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Dickies Arena

Houston Cougars

Ronald Hughey

Laila Blair

Tiara Young

Postgame Press Conference

Houston 67, Cincinnati 45

RONALD HUGHEY: First of all I'd just like to say Cincinnati, you know, again they are really, really good team. Just didn't play well today. And Michelle does a really great job. Just hats off to our crew today for just coming out and following the game plan and doing exactly what we needed to do.

Like I was saying earlier, the passion for not coming here and losing the first game showed up a few days ago in practice. Kind of got that feeling that, you know, they wasn't going to let their actions betray their words. So again, at the end of the day, I felt like we would come in and play well and let the chips fall where they may.

But, you know, the culture of this team is not reflected, you know, in our play. It's in our bench. It's in our everything because again the energy that we have to play with, when we're attacking and doing what we need to do and just being there for each other, we're a really really good team.

These two up here did an absolute great job today, but it was also set the tone by their teammates. You know, when their teammates start to believe in each other like they believe in each other, the sky is the limit, and that's one thing I'm so proud of them today is they came in today with a focused mindset to be able to take care of business and follow the game plan. The thing is they didn't want to let anyone down, didn't want to let their teammates down. They wanted to play for each other and wanted to get on this ride together and wouldn't want to be anywhere else but here.



Q. My question here is for Laila Blair where do you kind of get that confidence as just a sophomore to go out there and chase 17 shots, 4-from-8 from downtown and set the tone for your team from an offensive standpoint?

LAILA BLAIR: I would definitely say from my teammates and coaches, you know, it starts with them believing in you, and I feel like I'm a strong believer in when you have that belief in your teammates and coaches the sky is the limit and you can do really anything that you really set out to do. So it was just me going out there and actually doing it.

And like they say you miss 100 percent of the shots you don't take. I went out there and played my game and played free. I commend my teammates, my coaches because I know without their support and belief I wouldn't be able to do it. So hats off to them because they're the main reason why I'm able to do what I do. So, yeah.

Q. Coach, what was the key to such a really strong defensive performance? Holding Cincinnati to seven points in the first quarter enabled you to build that lead that you were able to play from ahead the rest of the way?

RONALD HUGHEY: Yeah. It started with the mindset. We put it on the board when we got in there and we said mindset, it separates you. So again, when you have that mindset and attitude just to take care of doing anything and everything you need to do defensively and it separates you, because we always talk about take care of the things that take care of winning. Don't worry about winning the basketball game. Take care of your assignment. Do your job. Again rebound the basketball, cover down like you're supposed to, get a ball screen call, rotate like you're supposed to, sprint hard. Don't worry making shots, those things will happen when you're playing the right way.

It started with our mindset. Once we implemented the game plan, we had a couple days to get prepared for it. We broke things down day by day, didn't try to do too much just because it's been a long season. We saved our offense for the last day because I wanted them to have that fresh when we got here, but we worked the defense for the

first three days, sort of playing some things, 2-3 zone we played maybe here and there all year. So we wanted to have a chance to really get out and show how we've improved with that.

The other thing was we know we can press and everybody is going to come in with five different press breakers, so we wanted to pull off of that a little bit. Again, make them think, take time off the clock and things like that.

Again, nothing that we planned wasn't executed because they were in the right mindset, and when you have the right mindset, anything that you do, you can get it done.

Q. This question can kind of be answered by anybody, following up on the defensive terminology of that question. Two of the leading scorers for the Bearcats this year, Akira Levy, No. 2, and Jillian Hayes, No. 20, were kind of held today. And I just want to ask how did you see that play out? Was there a specific game plan in holding those two as they are or have been the main scorers for the Bearcats, how did you see that play out today?

TIARA YOUNG: I would say like Coach said, we was just locked in on taking care of our assignment. Whoever we was set to guard, we was locked in on taking care of that.

RONALD HUGHEY: They did a really great job on personnel and scouting reports. How many LaSondra said we had? Eight 100s and all of the rest of them were high 90s because they get a scouting report test. When we get those, it's a direct reflection of what's going to happen on the floor.

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