

# American Athletic Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Tuesday, March 8, 2022

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Dickies Arena

**UCF Knights**

**Coach Katie**

**Abrahamson-Henderson**

**Masseny Kaba**

**Brittney Smith**

Postgame Press Conference

UCF - 69, Tulsa - 54

MODERATOR: We have UCF Coach Katie Abrahamson-Henderson, Senior Masseny Kaba and Senior Brittney Smith. We will have the coach give her opening statement and then we'll open the questions inside the room. Anybody that's out on our Zoom call, if you want to raise your hand we will call on you one at a time.

Coach, if you want to start.

COACH KATIE ABRAHAMSON-HENDERSON: You know, we're just happy to be here in the second round. I thought we did a really good job of doing all the tough things, meaning outrebounding them by 30, that's really big. We were getting loose balls, hustle plays. They're a very tough team to guard, especially in our matchup. I thought we did a little better job this time playing against them in the press.

Look, I can see myself. Hi.

But I thought these two really did a good job. They were -- the first half, they were double-teaming them and so we just got better ball movement in the second half. Our team did a good job of getting them the ball when we needed to get them the ball because obviously you'll see that they're a little undersized compared to us. So we really wanted to get in the ball, so just kept them down in their zone the whole time and tried to reverse the ball, be very patient. Our team did a good job. We had 22 assists and most of those assists were from our guards getting involved with these two.



**Q. Coach, was the thinking kind of after they went on that 8-0 run to start the third quarter, we're just going to slow everything down and milk the inside? Like you said, the 15 to 20 rebounding edge and 25 offensive rebounds, you really just have to slow the game down after they went on that big run to start the third quarter.**

COACH KATIE ABRAHAMSON-HENDERSON: Start of the third quarter, I don't think we were really warmed up enough, to be honest. We weren't moving very fast, so I definitely needed to call a timeout and get us kind of refocused defensively because we get all of our energy from defense and we just really had to do a couple different things. I can't tell you what it is because we've got more games to play, but we just had to do a couple different things defensively to really stop them. I think No. 12, Mayberry, she's a phenomenal player, and that freshman, she does a really good job for them. We did a good job of getting her in foul trouble because she's dangerous, the freshman, No. 2.

**Q. Coach, we've come to see that defense be such a force that it has been in the paint especially, but what I thought was interesting is how Pointdexter and Mayberry both were in foul trouble at the same time from trying to help defend that press. Was that an instance of kind of the lower game affecting the game in the arc as well?**

COACH KATIE ABRAHAMSON-HENDERSON: I can't hear him. Something about Mayberry and somebody else.

MODERATOR: Kyle, if you don't mind asking it one more time.

**Q. So, Coach, obviously we had Temira Poindexter and Mayberry were a big factor there. They're more effective on the arc, but your post game was overwhelming. They were trying to double team and step in to help that and got into foul trouble. At some point at the same time in the third quarter they were both on the bench. How big was that?**

COACH KATIE ABRAHAMSON-HENDERSON: Yeah,



that's kind of what I was saying that. And 21, too. Destiny kind of started off in the game just getting offensive rebounds and put-backs and being strong with the ball. Destiny really drew some fouls to start with in the first quarter and getting them in trouble, and especially No. 2. We know that they're undersized and obviously the last game we played against them they were doubling Mass, they were doubling Britt and they were coming from the weak side and I told our post players just to make sure that they grab every ball really strong and bring it up instead of grabbing it and keeping it down because they were coming at it so hard. That was one of the game plans to get some people in foul trouble, so it worked.

**Q. Masseny, career-high 23 today. How big is that to pull that off in tournament play?**

MASSENY KABA: It's big for me. I'm never -- not saying never satisfied, but I'm never satisfied. I feel like when I come into the game I always have to help our team and that's what I did today. At first I was a little slow, I wasn't making shots, but I redeemed myself after halftime and I made my shots after.

**Q. Coach, you mentioned the other day talking about your press and how, you know, it's kind of like survival of the fittest, but when you're in the conference tournament and playing back to back to back days, that's the plan you hope, is you advance. Now you have a matchup tomorrow at 5:00. What comes with the challenge of running your press on back-to-back days like that?**

COACH KATIE ABRAHAMSON-HENDERSON: I don't think it's a challenge for us, to be honest. We're in really good shape. It's back to back-to-back games for a lot of different teams and playing against our presses, that's hard. You can see Tulsa got a little tired because they had to play a game yesterday and now we're pressing them and Mayberry, she had to break the press by herself and so did 21. That's a lot, that's a lot to do. So I think for us, it's just really trying to wear the other teams' point guards out. I think we're one of the fittest teams in the country right now and it's because every time we press, we're actually exercising more and staying in great shape.

**Q. First for the student-athletes. To both of you, just talk about your teammates passing the ball in the post, because they fed you in perfect spots there with perfect passing to set you both up. Talk about that, your teammates passing there in the post.**

BRITTNEY SMITH: So defending on the game, they're either going to guard the post or they're going to guard the guards, and we learned that really quickly in the first

quarter, and today they decided to go to the guards. So the guards knew pass it in and do what we can to get stuff and, you know, win the game.

**Q. Mass, talk about the rebound. You dominated the boards, you and Britt. Was that like something -- being physical with them, was that part of it there, to have that mindset, being physical and just grab any rebound?**

MASSENY KABA: Yeah, they were undersized, so we should grab every rebound. That's always the goal with me, Britt and Destiny with these players and that's what we did today.

**Q. Question for Coach. Coach, first game in the conference tournament. Did you sense any kind of nerves there? It's always weird when you play that first game in the tournament. I know you've talked about that in the past. Did you sense any of that from your team today?**

COACH KATIE ABRAHAMSON-HENDERSON: I just think it's very weird for any team to play the first game, especially when you don't get a shoot on the floor. We couldn't because it was at 5:00 a.m., like really not going to shoot on the floor at 5:00 a.m. I just think we had to get a good feel and the balls are different too. I think everybody that plays in the conference tournament, everything's just new and it's just a different environment, but after you play your first game you kind of get used to it a little bit more. And now we'll have some time tomorrow to get even more comfortable with the floor.

And honestly, playing the first game is just awesome because now we're done, we know we can advance and now we can kind of watch the other teams play.

**Q. What are some of the things you want to work on for tomorrow there, especially defensively there? Tulsa hit 12 threes. Was that them making good shots or was that some missed assignments offensively?**

COACH KATIE ABRAHAMSON-HENDERSON: Dude, they are going to go five out, dribble drive you and they're really tough to guard. They're just hard to guard. So that's just prepared us for all the other teams in front of us to come, I mean.

So I think that she's doing a really good job her first year with this team. They play super hard, super tough. Now they've got their system down, we all know what they're going to do for the next year. Obviously in this conference, they're going to be a 3-point shooting team. The last time we played them, they took 26 threes and made 11, tonight

they took 34 threes and made 12 of them. So they really didn't have any post play.

**Q. Coach, you mentioned that the team wasn't necessarily ready to play the start of the third quarter. What lesson do you think you can draw from that?**

COACH KATIE ABRAHAMSON-HENDERSON: I didn't say they weren't ready to play. I said they weren't warmed up.

**Q. My apologies there.**

COACH KATIE ABRAHAMSON-HENDERSON: We've just got to get out of the halftime a little quicker and get them moving. Playing Tulsa, they're just high energy team, which is great. She's doing a great job with them. We just came out a little flat. Obviously every coach in the country's got to call a timeout and just get everybody refocused, because we had a lead and then they tied it up. That's just something we've got to make sure that we don't let people do when we've got a lead. And they had two threes, I think.

MODERATOR: That's a wrap. Thank you all.

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