

American Athletic Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Tuesday, March 8, 2022

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Dickies Arena

SMU Mustangs Coach Toyelle Wilson Jasmine Smith Savannah Wilkinson

Postgame Press Conference

SMU - 63, Temple - 55.

MODERATOR: We have SMU Coach Toyelle Wilson, Senior Jasmine Smith, Senior Savannah Wilkinson. We will have Coach give an opening statement first and then we'll open it up to our guests in the room. And then we have some guests with our Zoom call as well.

Coach, if you want to start with your opening statement.

COACH TOYELLE WILSON: First of all, hats off to Temple. They're a really good team. Mia Davis and that crew, y'all didn't think y'all were going to have a three-game series with us in the season and it was a battle. I'm so proud of our girls and how they battled through this game, the last three games. We did really good in executing offensively, what we talked about a lot for this game, and I think we defended Mia Davis really well. Just proud of our girls and able to live another day.

Q. Coach, you led for, I think, all but 66 seconds of the game. That doesn't mean it was easy for you guys, but how big was it that every time they made a push, you didn't just answer but it was an immediate answer?

COACH TOYELLE WILSON: I think our girls responded. They didn't fold like we did at home. You know, we were prepared for the next play, next play, next play. I think the big thing was that we kind of got them out their rhythm, we rebounded them, did the one shot. But we also got some offensive rebounds, and so they got in the flow a little bit more. But we were getting deflections, tips. We were aggressive that first quarter getting in the passing lanes and that dictated our energy. And so we told the girls



defensively that's going to dictate our energy for the offense. Just kudos, I was just proud of our girls.

Co: listen to that

Q. Coach, Mia Davis leads the conference in points per game and free-throw percentage. Your defense limited her to 12 points and 4-14 shooting. What does that kind of say about how you guys were able to lock that down?

COACH TOYELLE WILSON: Locked in. Our girls were locked into the game plan. I think Keyanna Warthen did an amazing job on her. I think we got in her space a little more on the perimeter and that was the difference. We kind of had to be physical, we had to wall up, make everything -- make her earn it. She's a great player. She was first team All-Conference, Preseason Player of the Year. I call her a baby Naz. She's like Naz Hillmon to me. She can affect the game in so many different ways. She doesn't just post up. She can shoot the jumper. She can take the ball down the floor and transition. She's a great player, but we have great players on our team too and I thought we stepped up to the challenge.

Q. Second question, how long have you been watching film on Temple and how does it feel to finally get --

COACH TOYELLE WILSON: Another team, right. It seems like forever, but since February whatever it was, 24th. So like again, it's like a WNBA series. It was a three-game series, best of three. We split it and we had to come today and put in the work and execute our game plan.

Q. Jasmine, you had a shot at the end of the first quarter and then I think another one at the end of halftime. How big was that to kind of set the tone going into those breaks and to kind of help push that lead to kind of have the final say of the quarters?

JASMINE SMITH: It was huge. It was just kind of like a reminder that we're still in this game, to remain aggressive throughout four quarters and that's what we did.



Q. And Savannah, just fighting inside, just what was it? What was the feeling like today knowing that you had split those last two and they had the last win coming into this one?

SAVANNAH WILKINSON: Yeah, I mean, we kind of put that behind us. We came in today, it was a fresh game and we acted like we never played them before. We knew what Mia Davis could do. We knew what their guards could do. We just had to execute the game plan, we knew that we could win the game, so yeah.

Q. Jasmine, your teammate from Rice, Sydne Wiggins scored her 1,000th career point. It was a 3-pointer on an assist from you. Do you remember that play and how big of a boost was it to kind of quell a Temple run with that big three?

COACH TOYELLE WILSON: It was nice. It was kind of satisfying in a way just to know that I can always trust her to hit a shot for me. And it's exciting that that was her 1,000th point. Does she know that yet? Yeah, that was good. It was nice to see that.

Q. Coach, it's Wilkinson's 13th double-double of the season. Can you just tell me about that energy she brings every single game on to the court?

COACH TOYELLE WILSON: She's full strength now and we were missing it the last four games. Another person that can score on the floor. She got every defensive rebound that we could down there, but she's a force to be reckoned with and she led our conference in double-doubles, she was fourth in scoring. I think she should have been first in All-Conference, but like I told the girls you've got to earn respect, nobody's going to give you respect. And so that's what we said before the game. It wasn't anything about Temple, it was about us proving to everybody that was watching us, that we know we need that respect too and she's got to go out there and earn it. So Sav's important to what we do. She's our energy player, she is our glue. She's another piece to our puzzle and we didn't have her. You know, that's what we were looking for, that other piece. So Jazz was holding it down while she was done gone, but now we have another piece back and we're complete again.

Q. Coach, is there a way to put into words what this means for this program? I think it's almost a year to the date that the coaching search began and there were some issues that had to be resolved, but to now be here a year later doing what you guys did and now being in the tournament semi-finals?

COACH TOYELLE WILSON: This is why everyone came here, this is why everyone came back, to make history and I think they haven't gone to a semi-final in a few years. We just take it game by game, though. We worry about this team right here, this 21-22 season team. We don't worry about the past. All we can do is control the controllables and do what we do. And so I just worry about these girls having the experience. I've been here before, but these girls haven't. I'm just proud of them and we just got to keep our head down and keep working.

Q. I believe this is the first -- the program's first semi-finals appearance since they've been in the AAC. What does that mean, especially going up against a team like UCF that you guys haven't played in two years?

COACH TOYELLE WILSON: UCF, they're a great team. Our game got canceled because we were on a pause, so I only got to see them for a few minutes before this game, I was just focused on our game against Temple. I'm going to go watch some film, be up and try and figure out how we can score, how we can defend, how we can compete in the game. They have a great team. They have Coach of the year, Player of the Year, Sixth Man of the Year, who knows, everything of the year. But again, this tour we're on is all about respect and we're not going in that battle, we're not going to fold. But I'm excited to play a team we haven't played yet. but We both get one chance, an opportunity to create more history and that's all. It's going to focus more on us, not everybody else.

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