

American Athletic Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Monday, March 6, 2023

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Dickies Arena

Temple Owls Coach Diane Richardson Aleah Nelson Tiarra East

Postgame Press Conference



Wichita State 71, Temple 61

DIANE RICHARDSON: It was a tough game. We got down early and fought back. Just didn't come out with the win. So here we are.

Q. Coach, it seemed Wichita State had some momentum out of the chute, the first quarter, third quarter, start of the fourth quarter. How hard was it to chase the game for most of it? What kind of impact did that have playing from behind?

DIANE RICHARDSON: Yeah, unfortunately we started the game really slow. They jumped out to a big lead in the first quarter. Second quarter we kind of got our wits back and fought back. Then the third quarter we were still in the game, still in the game, but Wichita State, they kept pounding and kept pounding, kept pounding. They went inside. They had shooters on the outside. They shot a tremendous percentage, and it was tough for us to get back in there.

We fought back, we got back in the game, but then in the end they just pulled away.

Q. What was the key down 17 in the third quarter and then almost instantly it was tied? What was the key to getting that going and how hard is it once you get there to continue to --

DIANE RICHARDSON: Well, our defense kicked in. Again, we're working with a short bench, but I've got to say, those eight kids battled, and that's how we got back in the game.

Then we battled down, like you said, down 17, come back and tie the game, and it seems like we ran out of gas a little bit.

Q. Aleah, I wonder if you could describe sort of the emotions of the run to get all the way back and then for the game to flip.

ALEAH NELSON: I was just kind of telling my team, regardless of the score, just to play hard. We came all down this way. We weren't going to go out soft. Kind of play hard. I think at one point it was like 45-30, and right before we were about to go on the foul line to shoot free throws, I told them no matter what, keep fighting. Forget the score, forget all that, just keep fighting. And then we brought it back, and I think within five minutes in the fourth quarter, we tied the game up.

You know, I don't think I was ever really too concerned about the score. I think I was more concerned like we all have to stay together and fight together, and I feel like that's how we came back.

My emotions are kind of everywhere. This is kind of the first time I've really played in the American for -- at Cincinnati I didn't play a lot, but this is the first time I've really played in the American tournament, so it was overall a great feeling, so the emotions were everywhere. During the game it was up and down.

Regardless we didn't come out with the outcome we wanted to, but when things got rough, it was just like stick together and stay positive, really positive.

Q. Aleah, are you watching the score as the comeback -- when it's a three-point game and you're shooting that three to tie it, are you aware?

ALEAH NELSON: No, I was just playing. That's kind of what I was trying to tell the team. At one point I was like forget the score, because if we focus on the score, we're focusing on us being down, so I was like just play. Then we consecutive stops. And then when we stopped focusing on how much we were down by and rallying and being together, that's when we came back.

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But when I hit the three to tie it up, I didn't really realize it until I looked up. But I think I was just telling the girls, just stay present, stay present and stay positive.

Q. Tiarra, Coach just said maybe you guys ran out of gas. Maybe you don't feel that way when it's happening, but after suddenly tying it and then it's eight or ten again, do you feel like, whoa? What is that feeling, and was it running out of gas, for lack of another term?

TIARRA EAST: I don't necessarily feel like we ran out of gas. It was just more of like we've got to keep pushing, got to keep getting stops. And not only get stops but we've got to convert when we get stops. Shots weren't falling, but again, we have to keep playing hard until the last minute.

Q. Diane, this was like a month of this, trying to figure out the magic answer to not having the depth to get through the fourth quarter. Is there no magic answer to that?

DIANE RICHARDSON: Well, there's no magic, but there's resiliency from our team. They knew what we were getting into, and they stepped up. If you look at all the games, we had seven, eight players, and we were still in every game.

My compliments to them for sticking in there and just jumping in there and doing whatever they had to do, sacrificing their bodies. We've got a kid with a broken nose, broken jaw, all of that, with eight players, and they still came to play every single game. It will not be like this next year, though.

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