

# American Athletic Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Monday, March 6, 2023

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Dickies Arena

## UCF Knights

## Coach Sytia Messer

## Laila Jewett

## Sierra Godbolt

### Postgame Press Conference



UCF 69, Tulsa 53

**SYTIA MESSER:** Well, first of all, I'm proud of our team. This is the third time we've played Tulsa, and we feel like in the first two times that we outplayed them for 37 minutes, and the last three minutes we didn't finish the deal. We're so excited that our team was able to do that today.

We're super excited for our team, and Tulsa for a great game. We felt like we contained, and Bry, our freshman, defended Poindexter and did a great job, and collectively as a team with four players in double digits scoring, we were proud of our team.

**Q. What was it there coming out of the half in the third quarter, the jolt of energy that your ladies had, and did it feel as if they were getting frustrated with shots maybe not falling but then also you guys taking advantage of opportunities?**

**SYTIA MESSER:** At halftime, we talked to our team about in the past, we've outplayed Tulsa like we felt for 37 minutes, and at halftime I reminded them, we've got to come out. This team is a second-half team. They do very well in the second half. We have to execute our offense, get stops.

We never got frustrated as a team. I feel like our team was constantly, hey, let's go, Coach, we need to do this, we can do the pick-and-roll, we can do whatever we need to do.

I felt like we never got frustrated. We never could let our foot off the gas because they're such a good team. They shoot the three so well that at any point they could get back in the game, and as a coach staff we just reminded

the players of that, that it's never over until the buzzer sounds.

**Q. Laila, it seemed like you were really locked in from the start of this basketball game for 40 minutes. What was your mindset leading into this game, and then having such success that you did offensively and then even frustrating them coming into this game?**

**LAILA JEWETT:** My mindset, we have let go of some games, so I wanted to lock in and make sure we didn't let this one go. I tried to do whatever I could to put us in the best position to win, and I feel like I came in and did that today. So just staying the course. We've got more games, so we can't just focus on this one. It's on to the next one.

**Q. Sierra, 10 dimes here today. You've got four people scoring in double figures. You've been a steady presence with the basketball. They had you guys there in that three-quarter court, full-court trap. It didn't seem like that bothered you. Just the way that you were able to see the game here today and this season, as well cumulatively, and now you get to play another basketball game, what's that mean to you?**

**SIERRA GODBOLT:** It means a lot. Being a freshman point guard coming in under Coach Messer, who's a very experienced coach, I knew I had to come in and be a good point guard for her, mimic her on the court and run my team. Tulsa is going to make their runs. We wanted to make sure we stayed poised and under control and I wanted to get all my guards into it offensively, and that's what I did.

**SYTIA MESSER:** We've been talking as a team about giving out 10. 10 is your best, no matter what collectively. If that's you coming off the bench, starting, whatever. Sierra with 10 assists and how many turnovers, zero? One? Okay, Sierra with her assists and her turnovers, two turnovers, that's really good, a freshman going under the pressure that she was going under.

Laila coming off the bench having 20 points, proud of you guys, okay.

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We've got to enjoy this for two hours and get ready for Memphis.

**Q. Coach, I was hoping I'd get an opportunity to ask you this particular question, but as much as we talked about third quarter struggles, how awesome is it to come out on this stage and have an excellent third quarter? Ladies, please feel free to jump in on how good that feels to do that.**

SYTIA MESSER: Well, it felt well. Okay? So for us what we've always talked about as a staff we're building our foundation. Each loss we felt like we could learn from, and that's just been our course and our process here.

We feel like there were like four or five games the third quarter has been our Achilles, and tonight to see our young ladies come out and just work hard and pursue through that third quarter, we're proud of them, and you guys can add to that.

LAILA JEWETT: You guys know obviously statistically our third quarters haven't been our best, so I feel like we came out and played when it mattered, and it was great.

SIERRA GODBOLT: Third quarter was great. Definitely improved after all our past games and this was the game that counted. That's what we needed in that third quarter and we got the goal, so yeah.

**Q. Laila, last year you were at the tournament, you were a reserve player, you're a veteran from last year's group. How good does it feel to drop 20 with this group?**

LAILA JEWETT: I really can't explain this feeling. I'm just glad that I get the chance to be out there this year, and I'm glad that I stayed. I really am. I really love UCF. I love it here. So I'm really glad that Coach Messer gave me the chance to play?

**Q. Sierra, I have to ask you, I know you're a freshman and everything, but as a point guard you're the general out there. You kind of saw things move and develop. Do you feel like the backcourt was very productive offensively and that kind of set up even Destiny to have her 13th double-double, as well. And you all are facing a first-team all-conference forward who also got a double-double, as well. Did you see the flow go back and forth as the production came from all over the floor?**

SIERRA GODBOLT: Yeah, we've been working on our offensive execution, and I think this game we did very well in it. We were very poised, like I said, and I'm very proud

of Destiny and our team for doing good in this game.

**Q. You guys can be this No. 10 seed, but you were playing your better basketball in the month of February and know that you think you've got a shot to not just get one but get another one here as you guys move on and even beyond, the kind of scenario this tournament affords?**

SYTIA MESSER: Well, if you think about it, we wear these bands every day, and it says "won't stop," and we knew this as players and our staff that this was going to be a year of a process. With Ashton being back as an offensive threat, we've got Nay now who's back. We've had some key injuries, and we feel like our whole thing was just don't stop. Just keep going. What counts is March. It's the best time for us to click as a team and get it going, and that's what we've talked to our players about, and that's just been our theme.

I feel like this is the right time for us to click. We've got a lot of pieces that we had to bring together in a short amount of time to play our best basketball. And my goal as their coach was get them right and get them ready, through the injuries and through everything, and this is the right time for us to click.

We're just taking it one game at a time. Our thing, like I said, we'll let the players enjoy this for two hours, we're going straight to Memphis and scouting and reevaluating what we can do differently.

**Q. Looking ahead to the next game against Memphis, two-point overtime decision, what can you take from that game that can prepare you for tomorrow?**

SYTIA MESSER: So if I heard you correctly, overtime with Memphis, correct, and a two-point game.

We feel like that was a game, again, one of the games we've gone back, that we let slip. We were up with three or four minutes to go and it was a back-and-forth game and just didn't finish the deal. But our thing now, we know Memphis is a really good team. They ended up finishing second in our conference. They have great guard play and post play. They're a very well-coached team.

We've just got to go out and do what we do and defend, rebound, and do some offensive execution.

We're extremely excited to have a chance to go back and figure out what we can do differently to get Memphis again.

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