

American Athletic Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Tuesday, March 7, 2023

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Dickies Arena

Wichita State Shockers Coach Keitha Adams Curtessia Dean Jane Asinde

Postgame Press Conference



Wichita State 65, South Florida 53.

KEITHA ADAMS: First off, I want to recognize South Florida and José. Their program is so, so incredibly good. We've had a lot of dog fights and close games with them, hard-fought games, and we've been on the other end of this going up against them.

We just have a lot of respect for their program and their team.

Today I thought our team just played extremely hard, and all of our kids played with a lot of passion. We were on the floor for every loose ball, and I've been telling them when we take good care of the basketball and we rebound, I like our team. I think our team is really good when we do those two things. Thought we did a good job with that.

We just played hard. We played hard, and we played with a lot of passion, and it's March time.

Q. Coach Adams, obviously Sammie Puisis scored 26 in the game at Wichita against you guys. Today, just two points, 0 of 10 from the field and 0 of 6 from three-point. What was the difference in this one in guarding her because that was a huge difference.

KEITHA ADAMS: We talked about that. She's a great shooter. She shot a lot of free throws at our place. I think one of the things that was really important is that we didn't foul South Florida. They're such a good free-throw shooting team.

I think she was 8 for 9 from the free-throw line at our place and had 26 points.

I'll be honest, I just told our team with No. 3, her song is 3-6-9, and we need her to be 2-4-8. You need to get her off the three-point line, you need her shooting twos and not threes because she's so good at it.

The thing I kept telling our team, whoever is guarding No. 3, which we ear tagged who that was going to be, she needs to be able to smell what you ate for breakfast this morning. You need to be up on her because she's such a great shooter. I just kept talking about she needs to be able to smell your breath and know what you had for breakfast. I know that's probably an interesting way to make a teaching point, but that was the teaching point. She needs to smell what you had for breakfast because she's such a good player.

Q. Before you came in today you had not scored a single point at the Division I level in a conference tournament, didn't score yesterday. How important was it for you to get on the board and obviously have the huge afternoon that you did and what does it mean to you to do so?

CURTESSIA DEAN: I mean, it means a lot knowing I'm a big part of the offense, so this game I knew I had to step up in order to get to where I want to go after I get done playing, knowing it's my last conference game and stuff.

KEITHA ADAMS: I'll just add that Nunu -- what you saw today, that's Nunu. Yep, we believe in her. We believe in her. Today she hit some big shots. I kept going back to her. I kept dialing her up, and she did exactly what I've seen her do when we recruited her.

Today was Nunu.

Q. Coach, we talked about this yesterday, you got off to an 8-0 start to start the game yesterday. Same thing today. How important was getting out to that start, and then your thoughts on basically taking a wire to wire win here against a top seed?

KEITHA ADAMS: Well, I didn't ever feel that way. I mean, in terms -- they've got such good shooters and great



scorers that this thing can change really quick when you've got the kind of players that they have.

But I just thought we kept our focus, and the main thing is we played hard. We played so hard.

The first three minutes of the third quarter, they came out, and you knew that at some point they were going to make a run. I burned a time-out pretty quick in that. I wanted to stop that run. I didn't want to let them get really rolling.

Then out of that time-out, I thought we responded well, and we went back and made our run.

But our players just responded when we needed to.

Q. Jane, 20 points and eight rebounds. What can you say about the matchup you had down low going against the Player of the Year in the conference and yourself, a high-level all-conference player?

JANE ASINDE: Well, I had No. 55 on me, and I felt like I could take the ball to her or post her up, and my teammates kept on helping me out that she couldn't gotten me. I just did what I had to do.

Q. Coach, if you could just look ahead, you have obviously the next game coming up. Any thoughts on advancing in the tournament and what you're looking ahead to here with the next opponent?

KEITHA ADAMS: Well, we'll watch this game, and I think the biggest thing is in the locker room, our season has been -- we've had some moments. We've played some great basketball, and then we've had some setbacks.

This thing is a marathon, and our conference is so good, and it's very talented.

I'm just really trying to remind our players about being angry, being mad. Coming out of the locker room and flipping that switch and being intense.

We need to go win a game tomorrow. So in the locker room, yep, we were happy about what happened, but we walk out the door, it's time to turn the page because now we've got -- this season now is 40 minutes. It's a 40-minute season. We're going to flip the switch and focus on who we play tomorrow.

Q. Coach, for you personally, it's been a long time building up. Does this feel for you personally pretty satisfying to see Wichita State women's basketball in the semifinals of this tournament?

KEITHA ADAMS: I think I'm just really happy for our team and our two seniors in Trajata and Nunu. I've been telling our players, when you play hard, good things happen.

For me, we've had some really dog fights with South Florida. If you go back and look at last year, we lost by four. We lost by one. We've had some really, really battles with them.

It feels good to be on the other end of it because we've been on the other end of it going against them. They've got a great program.

But hey, it's March Madness, and it's great to get this win, and now it's time to focus on playing tomorrow.

Q. Coach, you touched on it there, but the No. 1 seed in this tournament had been 27-0 all time, had never lost a game. Did you take a second to appreciate that going in, or are you already locked in on tomorrow?

KEITHA ADAMS: No, I'll be honest with you, I just have been trying to focus on who we're playing and taking the same approach with this game. You don't really start thinking about all those other things. It's true, we have a 40-minute window. We've got a 40-minute game that we need to focus on winning, and at this time of year, it's win or go home.

Today we took care of business, and now we've got to focus on our next 40 minutes.

Maybe when it's all over and said, I'll reflect on some of that, but right now, no, it's just who we've got to play and get ready for the next game.

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