

American Athletic Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Tuesday, March 7, 2023

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Dickies Arena

East Carolina Pirates

Kim Mitchell

Micah Dennis

Amiya Joyner

Postgame Press Conference

East Carolina - 69, Tulane - 58

THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome East Carolina. We'll start with an opening statement from coach and then take questions.

KIM MCNEILL: I thought both teams fought really, really hard. Lisa is an unbelievable coach and she always comes in with a great game plan. It's very similar to the way they played us on Saturday, this previous Saturday. We knew they would try to take away Danae McNeal and then try to double Amiya. But I thought we did a much better job of really sharing the ball of really getting a lot of people involved. I'm so proud of players that came off the bench. I felt like everybody played a role in this win tonight. It was a total team collective win.

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with some questions.

Q. As you mentioned and maybe you can expand a little bit more on the depth you're talking about. It seems like when you look at the box score there's a different, whether it's scoring, whether it's rebounding, whether it's timely hoops, it's a different player contributing all across the board. How much of that was the difference in the game tonight?

KIM MCNEILL: I think that's huge. We worked -- obviously it was tough having our bye week right before the conference tournament because we haven't played since last Saturday. So we haven't played in, what is that, nine or ten days. So it's been hard, but we've been working really hard in practice just sharing the ball, understanding what they were going to do with Danae, understanding they were going to double Amiya.



We needed other people to step up. I thought Morgan Moseley hit some really big timely shots for us. I thought Micah just played like we know Micah can play, with a lot of confidence and just relying on her pullup.

But it's really big when we can go to the bench and I told 'em tonight, No matter if you get in for 30 seconds or you get in for 10, do something to help win the game, and I thought everybody had that mindset when they went in.

Q. You may not know this, but you have 19 rebounds. That's a tournament record for a game. How does that feel in your first career post-season game to come in and put up a performance like that?

AMIYA JOYNER: It felt great. I couldn't score the ball for my team, so I had to help with something else since I wasn't scoring. Sorry.

Q. Micah, on the offensive end, what was, in your all around contributions, how were you feeling tonight going into this one?

MICAH DENNIS: Like coach said, everyone that stepped on court had to play a role, and for me it was leading, being a point guard, facilitating, and scoring. So, yeah.

Q. Looking ahead to the next round -- well, let me rewind a little bit. It's been awhile since East Carolina has been in a position like this in the semi-finals of the conference championship. It's the first time since ECU's first year in the American. When did you have a sense during this season, before the season, whenever, that this could be a special year like this where you have a chance, a realistic chance at a championship?

KIM MCNEILL: It's been a lot of firsts for us this year. Obviously, we're still learning how to win. Nobody on this team has been in this position. Nobody on this team has ever experienced a winning season. Nobody has ever experienced being third, winning 20-plus games.

So we're still learning. We're still trying to understand the

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approach that we have to take every single day in practice, every single day we step out on the floor. But this is truly special.

At the beginning of the year when we got picked 11th that was a really hard pill to swallow, but I anticipated that with us losing our leading scorer, Taniyah Thompson, you know, of 20 points a game. I think the next person was five or six.

I anticipated us probably being picked close to last, but I knew we wouldn't be last because we had a really good freshmen class coming in. I was really excited about Micah Dennis coming in, taking over the point guard role for us. Danae McNeal didn't play but half the season last year, so nobody really got to see who she truly was.

So I knew we wouldn't finish last. I knew we had a chance to be special. It was just if we could get kids to believe in that because it's different at the bottom than being at the top. And after we played SMU at their SMU and had a chance to win the game in regulation and then lost it in overtime I saw a team in that locker room that really believed that we belong and that we could win in the American.

Q. I'm sure that you and the student-athletes are locked in on yourself, but have you had a chance to kind of look at what's happened in this tournament so far? Particularly I guess with South Florida being eliminated. It's the first time a No. 1 seed has lost a game in this. So do you consider this a wide-open field now or do you have a sense of how, basically how close you have a chance to do something special here in the next couple days?

KIM MCNEILL: Yeah, it's March. The best time of the year. March. So it's tournament time. I think everybody came in here with the thoughts of everybody's record is 0-0. And everybody had a chance to come in here and compete for a championship. Obviously seeing South Florida go down this afternoon got people even more excited and hungry to understand that we're going to have a new tournament champion here in the American this year and I think everybody feels like they have an opportunity to win it.

Q. A huge second half lead, but what did you say when they came back and they got it within a score and you had the timeout and all of a sudden you guys kind of got a recharge there in about mid fourth quarter?

KIM MCNEILL: Yeah, I never changed what I said in the timeouts, whether we were up or whether they were going

on their run. We talked about defending, rebounding and sharing the ball. If we do those three things we knew we could win. And I thought we did a really good job of that all game long. They made several runs. I thought we showed some growth with being able to handle those runs. But I think we kind of gotten the nickname of The Comeback Kids because we've been down in the fourth quarter before and been able to come back. But my message never changed, keep defending, keep rebounding, keep sharing the ball.

Q. 19 rebounds, they said it was a tournament record. What does that mean to you to set that mark?

AMIYA JOYNER: So it felt good knowing that's what I do for my team, rebound and score the ball.

THE MODERATOR: All right, thank you.

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