

American Athletic Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 8, 2023

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Dickies Arena

East Carolina Pirates

Kim McNeill

Danae McNeal

Micah Dennis

Postgame Press Conference

East Carolina - 69, Memphis - 60

THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome East Carolina to the interview room. Coach, we'll start with an opening statement and then take some questions.

KIM MCNEILL: Yeah. First of all, hats off to Memphis. That's a hard-nosed team with a great coach. They always come out hard, they always play to the end, and they just battle. They're just a really tough, hard-nosed team that really tested us all the way through. They made a run there in the third quarter and tied the game up and really going into the fourth quarter it was a new ball game, really, score 0-0.

But I credit my team for just dealing with adversity. We hit a lot of adversity today. We grew up. We grew up a lot. For us to take their punch and then come back and be able to finish the game off the way we did, doing what we do, which is defending, I can't, words can't express how proud I am of them, how happy I am for this program that we've been able to do what we've done this season.

I think everybody that counted us out, obviously picking us 11th, and look at us now, in the championship game of the American conference tournament.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions for coach and the student-athletes.

Q. You mentioned that you kind of did what you did to win this game, holding Memphis to 60 points. I think only two teams have gotten to 70 against you this year. Did this look like a typical East Carolina game as it played out and especially the kick in the fourth quarter



down the stretch to kind of put it away at the end?

KIM MCNEILL: We didn't turn 'em over as much as we normally do, but we got key stops, we got stops at the end.

The only thing that I wish we could have did better in this game is rebounding. We got to fix that tomorrow going into the Houston game. I know we gave up too many offensive rebounds. But that's a tough team and they're relentless on the offensive glass. So we got to learn from that. We got to have a really short memory and get back in here tomorrow and try to go win a championship.

Q. Danae, I saw you moved into the top 10 in career scoring tonight, ninth place now, able to give your team a little pad in the first half. Tell us about how it went out there for you.

DANAЕ MCNEAL: It went pretty good. At the end of the day it's about us and we won as a team. So it was great out there. It was fun. We had some fun tonight.

Q. What was kind of the attitude, what was kind of the motivation once they got it back even there at the end of the third?

DANAЕ MCNEAL: Just to continue to focus on us and do what we do defensively, always defending, nonstop.

Q. Micah, spotted up some big shots there in the fourth. It looks like you're feeling it out there.

MICAH DENNIS: Yeah, I was. It felt nice. I'm just doing what I need to do for my team.

Q. How does it feel, guys, to be playing for the championship tomorrow? What does that mean to you guys?

MICAH DENNIS: It feels great. I'm happy. Like coach said, we was picked last and now we're in the championship. Like, it's surreal.

DANAЕ MCNEAL: It feels great. We're just truly blessed to be in the situation that we're in right now.

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Q. Are we hoping we don't have another three-overtime game?

MICAH DENNIS: Please no.

DANAE MCNEAL: Please no.

KIM MCNEILL: I don't know if either team has the legs to go into triple overtime tomorrow. (Laughing.)

Q. I guess same question to you. You touched on it in your opening statement, but how does this feel after a few years of really, really hard work to have a shot at going to the big dance tomorrow?

KIM MCNEILL: Yeah, I don't even know if I have the words to explain it. These last three years have been pretty hard. People kind of giving up on us. Thinking we couldn't turn the program around. But me and my staff never quit. We never gave up hope. We kept believing. We came with the same approach in practice every single day. Even when we were going our 5-, 6-, 7-, 8-game losing streaks, we just continued to believe in this program. I knew coming into this season that we weren't going to be 11th. We had some talent coming in, we had some good kids returning and we had some kids that committed themselves to the gym. I got two of them right here. These young ladies live in the gym and there's no surprise that they're having success because hard work pays off.

THE MODERATOR: All right, thank you.

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