

American Athletic Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 8, 2023

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Dickies Arena

Memphis Tigers Katrina Merriweather Jamirah Shutes

Postgame Press Conference

East Carolina - 69, Memphis - 60

THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Memphis to the interview room here. Coach, we'll start with an opening statement from you and then take questions.

KATRINA MERRIWEATHER: Obviously, today is really tough. We had a team that we felt like could compete for the championship, so falling short is hurtful. However, when you take a look at this box score and how hard these kids played, our effort was there. We just didn't make enough shots and get enough stops down the stretch.

Huge credit to ECU and the way that they played and the way that they prepared. But we're still very, very proud of our team.

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll take questions, please.

Q. How do you sum up what happened shooting the last two days?

KATRINA MERRIWEATHER: I'm sorry, can you repeat the last part again?

Q. How do you sum up what happened with the three-point shooting over the last two games?

KATRINA MERRIWEATHER: Oh, maybe I didn't hear it because I didn't want to. Yeah, it's tough because we get in the gym, we shoot, we get the ball moving, and sometimes it just doesn't go in. And I tell you, no one is more hurt right now about that than Madison Griggs, who takes pride in being the person that stretches people's defense, that makes the game a little easier for her



teammates. Sometimes you just don't make 'em. We've won when we haven't made 'em. And today we just didn't, again, get enough stops.

Q. I know there aren't anymore victories, but when you look at what you guys were able to do yesterday, being able to come back from a 10-point deficit today and looking at the regular season, just what has this part of the season meant to you to be able to watch this team grow the way they have?

KATRINA MERRIWEATHER: Yeah, it's everything. Of course, the wins and losses are important, but really it's the entire journey that makes being a college coach so amazing, watching them grow, develop, not just individually, but to watch a team come together the way that this team has, to watch them fight for each other, to watch them in huddles and listen to the way that they talk to each other and how effective the communication has become, for me not to have to call plays and for them to know exactly what to do.

I've told a lot of people over the last couple of weeks, it was really my job to get out of and stay out of their way because of how well they were playing. So, yeah, just very, very proud of them individually and collectively.

Q. We talked last night about poise, and your team showed a lot of poise again tonight. Coach, talk about the young lady sitting right next to you and how special she's been, not only the program this year, but the foundation and the program moving forward.

KATRINA MERRIWEATHER: That was the message in the locker room is, one, our season is not over. As I was walking down the hallway with Jamirah, I had told her the last time we took this walk our season was over, and this time it's not. And it's behind her leadership, it's behind her toughness, it's behind everything that she stands for, not just as a basketball player, but as a person.

To be able to come into this job and have a player like Jamirah Shutes, who just scored her 1,500th point, it makes the job just that much easier. Again, she's talented and all that's fine, but she exemplifies exactly what it takes



to build a championship program. She has laid that foundation all her years here and has continued to just get better and better every season.

Q. I know there are probably still games to be played and it's kind of tough to look at the big picture after a loss like this, but when do you think about the building block that this year has been so far and there's still more to the story that's to be written, just how do you sum up just how important this last two months has been to what you're trying to accomplish here?

KATRINA MERRIWEATHER: I mean, it's incredibly important. I've been very transparent about not knowing what this year was going to look like, you know, when we brought in six new pieces and how they would come together and how we took some awesome steps forward and then took a few backwards, and we really had to dig in, and at the core of this team found out that they believe. I think that that's the single most important thing, and not just in me and our staff, but they believe in each other.

That's the reason why, no matter what happens, the poise that you all keep referring to, which we greatly appreciate that compliment, it's something that we hope that they take into the world. And this is what we tell them, that once they pick the pieces up, because their hearts are broken, right, because the goal was to be in the championship game and to figure out how to win that game. And when they get themselves in the space where they can pull it back together, the reality is is that there's another championship to win, and that's what our conversation is.

Q. Jamirah, just talk a little bit about your head coach and what she means to you, not only as a basketball player, but as a young lady as well.

JAMIRAH SHUTES: She means a lot to me. Coming out of high school coming to Memphis it was hard. Then when the coaching changed, it really was a whole 360. It was a turnaround. I started to believe more in myself and started to trust the people around me. So it's been really fun and I'm very thankful for her and the people that brought her here and especially my teammates.

Q. Jamirah, I think we sat at this table in Connecticut in your first year with Memphis. Can you -- I know there's more basketball to be played here, but how proud are you hearing what coach said about you and how this program has come along, about the legacy that you've left here in this program. Very easy for someone to, at the first sign of adversity now, to transfer elsewhere and try to find a new home, but stayed the course and brought this program to where it is here today?

JAMIRAH SHUTES: I'm just happy that I was able to be a part of something that's going to be great after I leave. We was able to turn this program around, like, big. So knowing that like it's going to be, I left it better than I found it, it means a lot.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you both.

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