

American Athletic Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Saturday, March 9, 2024

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Dickies Arena

Wichita State Shockers

Terry Nooner

Daniela Abies

Postgame Press Conference



Wichita State - 64, Florida Atlantic - 50

THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and get started with an opening statement from Coach and then take questions for the student-athletes.

TERRY NOONER: I'm just so proud of my team. We worked so hard. We've been so close in so many games throughout the season and we've been just wanting to try to just figure out how we can just kind of crack that ceiling and get wins. So I'm just happy for the players. They work so hard every single day. We do a lot of running and conditioning and shooting and it's a lot of time spent for us to be able to come out there and put the kind of product that we put on the floor today.

So I'm just so happy for them, the way they played together as a team. It wasn't pretty the whole time, but I thought just our energy and effort throughout the contest was amazing. I thought our four-quarter defense was probably some of the best defense we played for this whole season.

And for Dani, just to see her, like, she wasn't really hitting her shots like she normally does in the first half, but just a testament to her being a great player. You have to find something else that you can do, some other way that you can add value to the team when you're not scoring, and she was really rebounding the ball a lot the first half and then once those shots got going, you're able to see these kind of stat lines with 22 points and 22 rebounds.

It's something I threw at her as jokes a few times, telling her that I need 20 points and 20 rebounds, so I'm just so happy for her and the performance that she had and it's a testament to her hard work.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

Q. Dani, how does it feel -- you got to be able to put that name, Wichita State, moving forward. How does it feel being able to make that step? There's been a lot of ups and downs this season. How does it feel moving forward?

DANIELA ABIES: I feel like our main goal was to get it done. We played them twice and the first time we lost and it was really important for us to make sure -- because the second time we won, so it was really important for us to -- this last time it was our last chance, so like it was now or never. So we were focused on making sure that we needed to win this game. I feel like everybody played really hard today. We were really crashing the boards and we were also helping each other. I don't know, like, the chemistry that we had today, it was really important, so, yeah.

Q. This was a back-and-forth game throughout, and then suddenly you close with a 12-0 run over the final two and a half minutes. What was the difference with your finishing kick today?

TERRY NOONER: For us, I think our defense really locked in. Early on we were giving them a lot of second-chance points and offensive rebounds, particularly in the first half. We felt like if we could clean that up, if we could hold 'em to one shot, we felt like we can try to stretch the lead a little bit. And that was the case for us. We were able to get stops and we were able to try to attack 'em in transition because they changed defenses a lot and they put a lot of pressure on Dani, so we wanted to see if we could get some points without them getting their defense set.

Then, once they got their defense set, we just tried to milk her as much as we can. We know a lot of teams like to double-team her and she's a great passer, so we just really fed the hot hand, which was Dani, and we made some threes in the second half too.

Q. For both of you, you don't just fall out of bed and get a 22/22 line, Coach. What do you attribute that to?



And Dani, if you could talk about how you felt putting up those numbers.

TERRY NOONER: She's a gym rat, she's a perfectionist almost to a fault, she thinks she should shoot a hundred percent, she should make every shot, she should never miss, she should never have the turnovers, she should have these numbers every single game, but it's just not like that. So she really puts in the work to get these kind of performances. So to see somebody like her who works this hard and is able to come out here and put a performance like this in post-season I think is awesome.

Q. Your thoughts on that as well?

DANIELA ABIES: It was just one of the goals that he was telling me from the beginning of the season, to get 20/20, so for me having that like today was really important because I was really helping the team. We also won, so it was really nice, yeah.

Q. This is your first year at Wichita State, but this is the second year in a row now that Wichita has won its first game in the tournament and then has a date with South Florida. They got last year's -- beat the Bulls last year to go on to the quarterfinals. Will you take anything away from that? Will you even look at that game? Will you rely on your players who were here?

TERRY NOONER: I think we can rely on 'em. We have six seniors who got a lot of experience, so you kind of rely on that. The teams are a little bit different. So I think just our mindset is just make sure we're focusing on playing hard, playing as a team. We're going to look at the tape from the first time they played us because we really didn't give our best effort in that game, so hopefully we can come back with a better performance. We've shown throughout the season that the second time that we play teams, we play a little bit better than we do the first time.

We are hoping we're able to repeat that again. It's going to be a tough effort. Jose is one of the stalwarts and one of the greatest coaches that we have in our game in the country, so it's going to be a tough effort. He's going to have a great game plan and they have a great team over there, so we're just going to try to do our best and get our players prepared throughout the night and hopefully we can come with a better game plan than we had last time.

Q. General thoughts on the conference this year. It looked like -- I don't know if parity was the right word to use -- but there's not a lot of separation between the top and bottom teams of the league. It's a pretty close race throughout. How does that -- is that a mindset that you have going into this tournament and as you

advance in it?

TERRY NOONER: Yeah, I felt like throughout the season, I mean, you saw games where some people from outside the league would consider upsets, but I think it was a lot of parity in this league. We have a lot of great coaches and we had new teams that we added to the league. But when you have this level of coaching and this level of talent of players in the league, I think you will create parity. So hopefully that helps us in the long run, too.

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