

American Athletic Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Monday, March 11, 2024

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Dickies Arena

North Texas Mean Green

Jason Burton

Dyani Robinson

Tommisha Lampkin

Postgame Press Conference

Rice - 61, North Texas - 59

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

JASON BURTON: Yeah, I think both teams played incredibly hard, and then you look at the tournament and how this tournament's being played, look at conference play and the parity in the conference, this conference race has been extremely close and this tournament wasn't going to be any different, and we went down to Rice.

Nine days ago there was a similar type of game where we kind of got down early, and Rice controlled the lead most of the game, and then we tried to make a run late. And big credit to Rice and how they played, how physical they played. We were looking for calls a lot of times instead of just being the ones to initiate the contact.

But nonetheless, I'm extremely proud of our team, how we played, how we fought. Man, we made plays down the stretch that allowed us to have an opportunity to win the game. Uncharacteristically, we missed free throws, 5-12 from the free-throw line, and that's been a common trait in our losses this year, is that we shoot below 50 percent in our losses from the free-throw line.

So you got to step up, you got to knock down free throws, but to get that five-second call down the stretch right there to have the opportunity to go and take the lead and then have good looks, and we got good looks at the basket and that last one right there. I mean, we have seen Jaauck knock that shot down all the time, and I said, we'll take that type of look all day, every day.



But I'm really proud of this team, and these two to my left right here played their tails off and I wouldn't expect anything less of them. Misha's been doing it all year with double doubles. She's been a double double machine. Dyani got the Sixth Woman of the Year award for a reason. She's been incredible off the bench for us, and how efficient they played today, we just -- last thing I'll say is that the games, you watch enough college basketball, there's a run by one team that normally is the difference in the game. Normally, it's us and I thought that second quarter the way we guarded, the way we played defense, I thought that was going to be that quarter for us, that we make the run. We held 'em to seven points and normally when we're holding somebody to seven points, we're scoring and we didn't. We never quite had that run. It was Rice who had the third-quarter run. They had an 11-point run in the third quarter and that was the difference in the game right there and so hat's off to Rice.

Q. It seemed like it came down to the end. You guys have been good about making plays down the stretch late in games. Were you guys just not able to get either the looks or just make the ones that you got when it came down to the time to win and lose?

JASON BURTON: You saw that look that Jaauck got, you saw the attack that we had. We had two free throws, we had a great transition play, I mean, Dyani gets a steal, she makes the right play in transition, we get fouled, we don't make the free throws. We got looks down the stretch, but it wasn't down the stretch that lost us the game. We didn't take care of the basketball. 19 turnovers in the post-season is not going to get it done. We got to be more efficient than that. That was something that we talked about all game.

The two main things that we talked about prior to the game were we got to keep 'em off the glass. You look at the last time we played Rice and yesterday what they did against UAB, they crashed the offensive rebounds. They had 20 rebounds, offensive rebounds, yesterday. They had six -- or no, they had a bunch in the first half and that was another difference. Like, they just shot more shots than we shot, and 11 offensive rebounds wasn't as bad as it was

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the first time we played 'em, but they got more possessions than us this game because they forced turnovers and they crashed the boards hard.

Q. You mentioned it there, the 35 turnovers for both teams combined. Just playing in such an open game, just how much does that change the complexion of the contest?

JASON BURTON: We didn't take advantage of them allowing us to play as loose as they allowed us to play. There was a lot of contact that just didn't get called and it was too little too late. At the end of the game, that's when we made our run. We started playing a little bit more aggressive. And, you know, credit to some of our team, though, because we've had plenty of games where Mish or Sham or DK have been in foul trouble, and so they did a great job of staying out of foul trouble this game, but I thought from a guard's standpoint, we probably waited too late in the game to really get up and pressure up with how they were allowing us to play the game, and that allowed them to get 13 steals, not just turnovers, but they were getting steals and some of the bumps and things that were happening created steals and we didn't do a good enough job of adjusting to how the game was played.

Q. I know that those two free throws that DK missed late in the game were crucial, but I loved how everyone responded on the team to go up to her when she was losing a little bit of composure there. Dyani and Misha, you two are very close to DK. How important was it to get her back into the field and say, hey, we're still in this, because I think the fight that you guys gave after those two missed free throws really showed what this team is all about? Can you talk a little bit about that?

DYANI ROBINSON: I just know how bad she beat herself up about it, so I told her when they went down, when she got subbed out, D, believe in us, and what we do the next play, we got a stop. So everybody had her back at that moment, and I just feel like that's what, that explains our team and how together we are.

TOMMISHA LAMPKIN: That's actually when I walked up to her and I said, we got your back. Like, we know you will make those any other time. So I guess it was just too much pressure. Not saying that she can't knock 'em down under pressure because she normally does, but I just wanted to let her know that we had her back, and we did.

Q. I know you talk about how the variety in this conference, it could be any given day, right, and you emphasized that before the tournament all season long. You saw the results early on in this tournament. Did you say before the game, it's now more than ever

how unpredictable this tournament can be?

JASON BURTON: Yeah.

Q. You mentioned that look that Jahcelyn got at the end there. Was that just exactly what you were looking for or were you looking more for the tie?

JASON BURTON: We ran a play that had several options and it was on Dyani to make the read of who is open. And if we had Mish would have dived to the basket if it was open. We had Sham coming to the ball side corner, which we have seen her knock down corner threes all year. She knocked down a corner three a few possessions prior to that. We would have taken either one of those looks. That's a play we practice. We practiced it two days ago and we seen Jock knock it down. And we'll take that shot wide open uncontested from her all day, every day, and take the win in regulation.

Q. Tommisha, you had that bucket to go up one there late, did you guys feel pretty good about where you were at, up one, down the stretch there?

TOMMISHA LAMPKIN: Yeah, I think that kind of gave us some fire.

Q. For either of you guys, this isn't the end for you, you guys have won 23 games, there's two post-season tournaments out there besides the NCAA Tournament. How do you guys regroup going into the next part of your season now?

DYANI ROBINSON: Just having the mindset of it's not over yet, we're not done. Keep your head up, we're going to keep playing, we're not done.

Q. What does a season like this, one of the best in program history, do for the program moving forward?

JASON BURTON: Well, first and foremost, I hope the 13 young women in the locker room realize what they have done this year, what they created, because they put in a lot of work. They had a lot of things that they went through this year to get to this point. So, what I told 'em, a year ago today, this wouldn't hurt, because nobody thought they were going to the NCAA Tournament, or had a chance to go to the NCAA Tournament. But the work that this group has put in this year, we put ourselves in position for that to be a reality, that we have a chance to play in the NCAA Tournament. I think this team is an NCAA tournament team, I really do. Our body of work and how we played and the team that we are, I think that we can compete with anybody. But I think this season definitely moves the needle forward and sets the standard for what North Texas



women's basketball is going to be moving forward.

We got a great core of young women that are coming back, but I don't want to start talking about next year right now, because we're still going to be playing in something.

I told them a couple days ago, our athletic trainer, Cole, on two different instances, we went over to Louisiana Lafayette, we played on the road over there, and she found one single piece of confetti, and we won that road game. And then we went over to South Florida, and she found one single piece of confetti, and we won that road game. And she put both those pieces in her athletic bag. And we cut down nets in Denton, Texas a week ago. We're going to cut down nets again. We hoped it was going to be in this tournament, but it will be in the next tournament that we play.

THE MODERATOR: All right, thank you.

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