

American Athletic Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Monday, March 11, 2024

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Dickies Arena

Temple Owls

Diane Richardson

Rayne Tucker

Tiarra East

Postgame Press Conference

Temple - 76, Tulane - 72

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

DIANE RICHARDSON: I thought it was a very hard-fought game. We rose to the occasion, but I've got to say something about Lisa Stockton's team and Tulane. They played really, really hard, especially after coming into their third game in a row. So my hat's off to them.

But Temple prevailed, and our defense did it. We went into three overtimes, but we never gave up and we kept pushing and kept pushing. So I'm pleased that we got the win and we're going to move on.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you.

Questions?

Q. Tiarra, which were tougher, the free throws at the end of the second overtime where it was win or lose or the ones at the end of the third overtime?

TIARRA EAST: Say it again.

Q. Which of those were tougher, the free throws?

TIARRA EAST: I don't think none of 'em was tough. We practice free throws every day in practice. It's just natural. If you see it go in in practice, you see it go in in the game.

Q. It seemed like you guys kind of started a little slow rebounding there in that first half and then you settled



in the second half and especially in overtime. What was kind of the turnaround there for you guys rebounding down low?

RAYNE TUCKER: I would say that I know I didn't really rebound in the first half, so that was kind of something I was focusing on because I know that's what I bring to the team. I was just kind of focused on rebounding and I feel like once one person picks it up, we all kind of pick it up and help each other, whether it be tipping it out to somebody or just getting it.

Q. Tiarra, this season seems like it's been pretty special for you guys. You've been here the longest. You predate the ladies on either side of you. What is different about this year and what would you say your role in all of it has been?

TIARRA EAST: The difference between this year and the years before is that we're all together. We stay together no matter what. Wins, losses, ups and downs, we stay together no matter what. What I've brought is my leadership. Coach said I'm a captain and told me I was going to be a leader this year and I just stood on that and I have been helping keep the team together and trying to get wins and staying together and staying locked in.

Q. Would you say tonight's game exemplified everything that she just said?

DIANE RICHARDSON: I would say yes. I mean, we have battled all year and the reason why we are here today is because they all play together. They play for each other, and that's what's been different for us this year, is we played for each other. The culture is great. They played for themselves and they played for Temple University.

Q. You talked about at practice energy, energy, and getting it from the people around you. I'm sure you didn't imagine that was going to happen over three overtimes. What did it mean to see how hard they fought for so long after such a long break?

DIANE RICHARDSON: Yeah, to see them rise up and we go into overtime, we had a couple shots at the end that

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didn't go in, but they didn't get discouraged and they came back with the energy in the next overtime and the next overtime and the next overtime. So the energy and the togetherness got us where we are today.

Q. Throughout the game, the men's team was right there next to you guys in the stands cheering you on next to the bench. Just take me through what that meant to you guys as well, the Temple community.

DIANE RICHARDSON: Yes, absolutely. And our teams are so close. We go to their games. It was great to look up and see that they took an early flight to get here to be able to cheer for us. We heard them. We definitely heard them. They were standing on their feet. This Temple community is awesome. It's awesome.

Q. Tristen's performance today, she made that crazy buzzer beater in the first. It seemed like the game shifted from an energy perspective when she got the steal and the and one, and then you played her very big minutes tonight. Could you talk about that?

DIANE RICHARDSON: Tristen, again, I keep calling her the fearless freshman. She plays great on-ball defense, she works really hard, and we need her to be able to do that day-in and day-out and she got the assignment today because she pushes on defense.

Q. With Aleah, obviously you were going kind of back and forth with her and T Mac towards end of game. Were you waiting for one of them to hit a shot to keep them in the game for that period?

DIANE RICHARDSON: Yeah, we were looking for some openings for them to be able to get their shots off. Obviously they shoot the ball very well. Couldn't get shots off, but everybody else stepped up and we got rebounds and we got stops.

Q. T, I wanted to talk to you, you seemed to find your rhythm, especially in that overtime period. What was really going for you out there? Were you getting more comfortable as the game was going on?

TIARRA EAST: I was taking it step by step, not trying to force anything, just finding when I'm able to be open. People on the sidelines were telling me, my coaches, the staff were telling me, you got it, you got it, keep your head up, you got it, you a dog, you a dog, so I just listened to them and kept it going through the game.

Q. With so many veterans on this team, how important is it to also have that freshman there learning and having a key role to be the next generation of

leadership?

DIANE RICHARDSON: She's done a great job all year. Our leaders and our seniors have really brought her along and gave her confidence. She's fitting in really, really well. She's like a sponge. She sucks everything up and we're happy to have her and she makes a difference when she's on the floor.

Q. Did she have a bit of family here?

DIANE RICHARDSON: Yeah, she had family. Didn't you hear that yelling? Yes. (Laughing.) So she's from Texas and she's from a storied program and she had lots of fans in the stands. She comes from a program where she has to step up, and she's fitting in well, again, with them just bringing her along and giving her confidence.

Q. Back to the game for a second. That's a team that obviously they're pretty darn good. They played y'all real tough today. That's a team y'all beat by an average of 17 and a half points in the regular season. What was different about tonight?

DIANE RICHARDSON: It's March Madness and everybody brings their A game to March Madness, and to see them with a lower seed and win two games back-to-back that says something about them. They came in here with the intention of winning three in a row and it was a tough battle, but we are here to win three in a row too, so.

Q. What do you think made it so hard to figure out that zone and get things against it?

DIANE RICHARDSON: They played that zone against us the two previous times. I think maybe our shots weren't falling early on, and so we just stepped back a little bit. But as the game went on, we knew we had to step up and they made shots.

Q. I can't remember which overtime it was, but curious about the one play where you got the timeout where Aleah was just making that move. I don't know if you had been calling it earlier, but it looked like there was a little conversation.

DIANE RICHARDSON: Yeah, I was calling it earlier. They had a tough time hearing me and maybe if I scream and yell a little bit more, maybe they will hear me. But it was a tough time. They were on the other side and I was yelling, but they didn't hear me. It happened a couple times. So I'm going to have to let Myles yell for me.

Q. You played 46 minutes, T, you played 49. Now you

got to turn around and play tomorrow. Is that kind of rest and recovery going to be difficult or what's it going to take to be your freshest self tomorrow?

TIARRA EAST: Just getting in with our trainer and doing whatever we need to do to get our bodies back right and getting the rest. We don't play until 8 o'clock tomorrow, so we're going to take that time to rest up and get ready for tomorrow.

Q. She didn't have her jump shot, but every other outlet of Demi's game she was on point. She was all around the ball, her willingness to rebound was really impressive. Her jump shot and free throw wasn't there, but it felt like everything else was there for her tonight.

DIANE RICHARDSON: She battled hard. Her defense was on point. She battled really hard in there, and you're right, her shot wasn't necessarily on today, but she did a lot of things other than scoring. She defended well, she scrapped really well, and we look forward to her doing that again tomorrow.

Q. Circling back to that sense of togetherness that has been evident through the game and you guys' comments here, what has caused that? Is it just playing together for so many years? Is it Coach Rich's sayings? Is it some inside jokes? Can you talk about that a little bit.

RAYNE TUCKER: I would say that our team wasn't as together last year, so I think us older people really put an emphasis on that starting over the summer. So we have a nice bond going in off the court. I think that off-the-court bond helps us on the court, we, like, know where each other is at and things like that. So I think that was really important for us.

Q. I wanted to ask you about Aleah. I think it was the second overtime she kind of tweaked her knee a little bit there and from there she played limited minutes. I know she came back in, but did you talk to her after the game and see how she was feeling?

DIANE RICHARDSON: I didn't have a chance because I came out to see y'all. She did tweak it a little bit and I thought it would be best to rest her a little to see how she responded to that.

Q. As a senior, does it creep in the back of your mind at all that this could be your last game? Does that motivate you at all like on the court going into it?

RAYNE TUCKER: It definitely does. I actually, in one of

our breakdowns before game, I would tell everybody, like, this could be your last game. Like, for me, it could have been my last game in a Temple uniform, it could have been my last game all together. So with that in mind, I try to get everybody to have that mindset. Like, you never know what's going to happen in life, so just play hard. This is all we have right now. It's tournament time.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you.

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