

# American Athletic Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Tuesday, March 12, 2024

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Dickies Arena

## UTSA Roadrunners

## Karen Aston

## Jordyn Jenkins

### Postgame Press Conference

East Carolina - 55, UTSA - 54

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

KAREN ASTON: It's always, I think, hard to describe what that type of loss feels like for your team. You feel as a coach responsible, first of all, and heartbroken for them. I thought they played really, really good. In particular, the first half, I thought our defense was spectacular, and then I thought they settled in, inside. I thought they started to get a presence in the paint in the second half and we struggled with that.

Then it just boils down to a five-minute game that we made a couple of turnovers, and then we just didn't get stops when we needed to. I didn't think either team was great offensively. We just couldn't get the stops that we needed at the end of the game. Again, heartbreaking.

I'm super proud of our team. I'm proud of the year that we've had. I don't want this loss to diminish for them how hard they have worked since June and how bad they wanted to get to the championship game, and I'm heartbroken for them, but there's lessons to learn and, hopefully, there's still more games to play for our team.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, coach.

Questions?

**Q. I was thinking about your old days in the Southwest Conference. Remember that many years ago. But talk a little bit about -- you mentioned the team's improvement over the last year or two and how**



you can build on that.

KAREN ASTON: Oh, yeah, I mean, this loss doesn't change how I felt about our team last night after we won. I mean, I am so proud of the progress that we've made and I'm heartbroken for the seniors because we were right there. I mean, we were a play or two away from playing in a championship game, and that's what they set out to do this year. So it's hard to, I guess, describe how you feel right now from a standpoint, in particular for the seniors.

But as far as where we are, we had nine freshmen and sophomores out there, and they have grown a lot, they have matured, we've grown as a basketball program, and we'll intend to grow more, for sure.

**Q. In hindsight, are there any specific adjustments or decisions you wish you could have made differently during the fourth quarter?**

KAREN ASTON: Yeah, there's always going to be that as a coach. I had a timeout and we got the five-second call, and I called it a half a second too late, probably. Yeah, I thought they made plays. I didn't think that we -- I mean, the score didn't indicate that they did much different. They just got a little bit more determined, I think, to score in the paint in the second half.

And the rebounding doesn't really indicate how many critical rebounds we gave up. I think if I could say one thing about our team, it's they have been really, really good on the boards, but I thought we gave up some real critical rebounds at times when we could have maybe lengthened the lead a little bit. But, yeah, I'm going to clearly second-guess not calling a timeout and getting a five count.

**Q. As one of the leaders of the team, how are you processing the emotions of such a tough loss?**

JORDYN JENKINS: It's hard. We had plans to play tomorrow, and we were all playing for our seniors and playing for ourselves, and it's a tough outcome and it's just one of those things that we can't get back. It's probably going to stick with us. I know it's going to stick with me for



a little bit, but I'm proud of the team and I'm proud of everybody.

**Q. I know it's hard to reflect in the moment, but how close are you to getting this program where you want it to be?**

KAREN ASTON: Yeah, we're real close. We're, quite honestly, ahead of schedule, and that has a lot to do with the senior class and their commitment, you know, Jordyn making a commitment to come here and all those players that came back last year to try to build on what we did last year. We are probably a little bit ahead of schedule, especially changing leagues in the midst of the rebuild, and I'm excited. I mean, I'm excited about hopefully playing in post-season. I hope this is not our last game of the year. I think we should have a chance to play in some -- in a post-season tournament, and that will be the first time that's happened in a lot of years. If it doesn't, then we'll learn lessons and we'll be better from this next year.

But it's been awhile since we've had a winning season and it's been awhile since you guys have probably cared about covering us and I hope that we get covered more. I think the city of San Antonio should be really proud of our product. We have increased the fan base. I'm excited about the future.

**Q. Kind of along those lines, you guys, this was your second trip to a conference semifinal, albeit in two different conferences. What do you think it will take for you guys to kind of break through that door and reach a championship game?**

KAREN ASTON: Well, it's going to take another year. Hopefully, we'll take the next step. I think that one thing that the players, I hope, can reflect on is that last year in the semis I didn't think we handled them very well at all. We were not in the game after the first quarter, really, to be honest with you, because of how we approached the game. We were so excited to be in the game, we weren't very mature about being in the game, and this team knew exactly what they wanted to do today. We just came up a few plays short and, unfortunately, that's how sports is. It's disappointing and it's heartbreaking, but I think you saw -- I mean, I saw a huge difference in our approach to this game as opposed to being in the semis last year and probably just being happy to be there. We intended on winning today.

**Q. Can the game be simplified down to 18 turnovers?**

KAREN ASTON: Yeah, I mean, I say it is. I mean, they were critical, obviously, the timing of them were critical. But also, I go back to so many second-chance points for

them, us not being able to get to the free-throw line as much as they did. Those have been two categories that we have struggled with all year, and so it kind of came back to bite us a little bit again, is not enough trips to the free throw line as opposed to our opponent or just not enough in general.

But, I mean, yeah, some of the turnovers were critical, but there's a lot of plays that we'll look back on. I thought we kind of got away from getting back in transition in the second half. There's just a lot we can obviously at some point look back on and try to learn from.

**Q. When will you know about any potential post-season game and just what's your message to all the fans that have supported you throughout the last three years here?**

KAREN ASTON: My message to the fans is that we're excited about the future. I mean, we've signed some really great kids, two local players that I think will help us in some areas that maybe we struggled with this year. They were signed for a reason. You always hope that people that you retain, I think that's a huge piece, and I hope that the people in San Antonio appreciate our product and know how much we appreciate their support. It's been a big deal for us to increase our fan base. I think a lot of it has to do with one sitting next to me and the local products that people have wanted to come out and watch.

I think the city's excited about the future and, yeah, I really appreciate the support. We had a great crowd here today.

And then I think the other question was just when we'll find out. It should be Sunday.

**Q. As a leader and mentor to the players, what do you hope they take away from tonight's game?**

KAREN ASTON: Again, the step of the approach to our season, I mean, it's a body of work. It's not just one game, it's a body of work. What did you do in June, what did you do all the way until March. There are so many moments that I thought we grew from. Again, we had nine freshmen and sophomores, and when we started, they didn't really know much about the approach that you should take on a daily basis to practice. I thought they grew from that. I mean, it was a lot to ask of Jordyn to come in at the time that she came in, I thought she handled it well, I thought our team handled it well, and you could tell that their intention was to win or they wouldn't have handled it well. So it's just, I mean, what do I learn from it? I mean, I learn that we're still taking steps. We matured this year. We matured in the semifinal. Again, we got our doors blown off last year. We played a really, really good team that

beat us 30 on their home court in January. We're going to walk away from this feeling like we should have won. Credit to East Carolina, they made the plays that they had to make down the stretch, but that's a pretty big turn around from January 3rd or whatever that was, getting blown out, to where we are now. You see a lot of growth from that situation.

THE MODERATOR: All right, thank you, coach.

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