

# American Athletic Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Tuesday, March 12, 2024

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Dickies Arena

**Rice Owls**

**Lindsay Edmonds**

**Malia Fisher**

**Destiny Jackson**

Postgame Press Conference

Rice - 60, Temple - 57

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

LINDSAY EDMONDS: Our team just showing how tough we really are. We had some adversity late in February that I don't think showcased exactly who we were as a basketball team. We've been on a little bit of a revenge tour here since we've been here. UAB got us at their place. We lost at home to North Texas and Temple. So we had a little bit more feel fuel to our fire a little bit behind all of the games that we were facing to make sure that we came out on top and we came out on top at the right time.

Our toughness has really prevailed, our togetherness has really shown, we have hung our hats on defense and just really, really proud of the efforts. Could have hung our heads a couple times tonight, but we found a way to get one more stop, to get one more rebound, to come out on the winning end, so really, really proud of the group.

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll start with questions from the room.

**Q. Bad joke. Was it destiny that you're in the finals tomorrow night? And also, follow-up, tell us how important it is to get hot, to catch fire right in time for the tournament?**

LINDSAY EDMONDS: Yeah, you want to be playing your best basketball in March. I feel like we're doing that. We talked about early on in the season some of our losses were going to teach us lessons and I think we're learning



through those lessons. We're learning how to win down the stretch, we're learning what it takes to get wins when it matters the most. I feel like we're playing like it could be our last and desperate to make sure that it's not.

**Q. Your team has played incredibly tough and great the past few days to get to this point. What was your message to the team going into the tournament, even going into tonight's game to help fuel this run?**

LINDSAY EDMONDS: Yeah, again, I kind of talked about it from the start. I feel like we were just not ourselves late February and I take that on me. It's my job to make sure that we're playing well, we're practicing well, we're getting off to good starts. So we weren't doing that and we felt like this was a new season. You have non-conference is one season, conference is another season, and then tournament play is your third season.

So we felt like we had another opportunity to start out 0-0 and do something special, and I think they have just really bought into doing that and, again, refusing to lose.

**Q. The numbers from the first matchup with Temple, like they probably made the defensive adjustment pretty easy for you to figure out. Like, with Gary and Taylor, was that the adjustment, you didn't even let 'em shoot?**

LINDSAY EDMONDS: Yeah, we played a lot of zone in our first game, which allowed them to get a lot of open threes. They shot 10-17. I think they average making 5 threes a game and they made 10 at our place, so they doubled up their average. So today we wanted to bring a little bit more intensity, a little bit more aggressiveness. We want to defend the three-point line with urgency and force contested twos, and I thought we did a really good job with our game plan defense.

**Q. I want to ask you a little bit about your strategy on offense. I noticed you didn't even attempt a three as a team until midway through the second quarter. It was all Fisher and Sussy inside.**

LINDSAY EDMONDS: Yeah, they're pretty dominant when



we get them going and get them going early. I feel like they're a pretty hard matchup. Whether Malia's facing up or playing back to the basket, I think that's a hard matchup. Then Sussy is just a force down there. So I think we knew we wanted to be aggressive, we knew we wanted to get the ball inside of the paint, whether that was getting the ball inside to them or our guards attacking. I thought DJ did a great job of attacking and setting the tone early and getting to the rim.

When Jazzy got in, she punched gaps and got to her pulls. So we were just talking about not settling for threes and talking about being aggressive, putting pressure on them, putting pressure on the paint, putting pressures on officials to make calls for us. So I really liked how they executed to start the game.

**Q. We've talked about the depth, but what does it say with the season on the line, you have Destiny make that shot on the iso play and Malia steal the ball, your two key players making the plays that won the game?**

LINDSAY EDMONDS: Yeah, that's why they're in the game, late game. I trust them, I count on them, they know what it's like. I said it yesterday, DJ knows what it's like to have the ball in her hands. This team and myself have full confidence in her to make the right play. And whether we're down and we need to score, we're going to go there. If we're up and we need to take time off the clock and try to score the last second, we're going to go to that as well.

So DJ's confident because she knows that she has everyone behind her believing in her, and Malia, she's tremendous when she's guarding the inbounder, and so she probably felt some type of way about missing two free throws and that gave her a little bit of driving force to get that steal. So that's really, really impressive. She could have hung her head about the free throws, but she didn't and we needed that stop in the biggest way and then came back and knocked down another free throw that we needed.

So they're tough, they're competitors, I trust them. When the game is on the line, I know they're going to do what it takes to make sure Rice comes out on top.

**Q. Malia, could you describe what you were defending on that and how you anticipated that inbound?**

MALIA FISHER: Yeah, so I would say I have a lot of experience guarding the inbounds. I think I'm, to say it, long and lanky. I'm a good person to have there and I think with my experience of just being able to read eyes and read body language and learning from their last possession that she's stepping all the way back, so if I'm all the way up

on her, I have no chance of deflecting that ball, and so really it's just me reading her and seeing what position I need to be in to get that steal.

**Q. Destiny, could you describe the last basket to go up four inside of the last 30 seconds?**

DESTINY JACKSON: Yeah, it was great, I really just threw it up there but I made it, I'm left handed, and I'm knew it was going to go in. But I was just being poised, run the shot clock out, we need a bucket, and I guess I'll get the bucket, so I got it. But it was great.

**Q. Coach talked a lot about that February lull. Y'all were in first place, tied for first place, lost five in a row, and then you come into the tournament. What's it like just this emotional roller coaster now being in the championship game?**

DESTINY JACKSON: Like coach said, we weren't ourselves in February, but I know March will bring us blessings, like Coach E always said, and I think we really dialed into who we are and who we want to be and being hungry for that championship.

MALIA FISHER: I'll add on to that, I don't think it's been an emotional roller coaster being here. I think we've come in with the mindset and we've stuck to that mindset and we've executed every single game, and that's exactly what we're looking to do tomorrow.

**Q. Latest on Dom Ennis, do you think you might have her tomorrow?**

LINDSAY EDMONDS: No, we will not.

**Q. You mentioned the revenge tour that you're on here. Looking ahead to tomorrow, a team you beat twice, but do you even need to have a motivational speech when there's a trophy awaiting the winner?**

LINDSAY EDMONDS: Yeah, you know, both of our games with East Carolina have been battles. We have to come in with the mindset of -- we have to have the same mindset that we've had, whether we beat them in the regular season or we lost to them in the regular season, we have to come in with the mindset of we're going to try to win a championship, and it doesn't matter who we're playing, who we're competing against, the name across the chest, we're trying to play the best basketball that Rice can play, and I think it's going to be a great game.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Coach, thank you very much.

