

American Athletic Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Sunday, March 9, 2025

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Dickies Arena

Charlotte 49ers

Tomekia Reed

Hayleigh Breland

Keanna Rembert

Postgame Press Conference

Charlotte - 71, Tulsa - 66

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

TOMEKIA REED: You know, I am just so super proud of the players, how they played today. This has not been a year that has gone traditionally like we wanted to go in terms of wins, but this is a team that has refused to lose, a team that has refused to give up. We could have thrown the towel in a lot of times, but they hadn't, and I'm so proud of them, how they're playing right now.

And this is the part of the season that matters. This is the part of the season that, you know, you win, you keep going, you got a chance to go play, represent the conference in the NCAA tournament. So I'm just really proud of how hard they played, how they played together, and how they were master of details the entire game.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. (No audio.)

TOMEKIA REED: Yes, we knew that we had to match up with them because they were all shooters on the floor. The cuts that they had in their offense and the strategy that she has within her offense, we knew that we had to match up guard for guard. It was really important for us to expand the three-point line. When we played our bigger post players a lot the last two games, their post players were shooting the lights out from the three-point. So we had to go with a guard in that position. And they stepped up. All year long, we have not played like that, and tonight they



made it happen, so we did go to a four-guard front.

Q. Hayleigh, you got a cowboy hat on, Player of the Game, a lot of clutch shots tonight. How did it feel to come through for your team in the post-season?

HAYLEIGH BRELAND: They cheered me on a lot. I get down on myself, they keep me up, they keep me encouraged, tell me, Don't worry about that shot. You're going to make the next one. That's something that I just try to keep in my head going through the game, and that's what brought those clutch shots down, their trust and faith in me.

Q. Keanna, the same thing for you, clutch free throws at the end, coming through in the clutch moments.

KEANNA REMBERT: Yeah, exactly what she said. I missed the first two and then going back to the other two, especially Hayleigh and Lex and Kay Kay telling me, You got this. Don't even worry about those.

Q. What was your strategy against Delanie Crawford tonight and what differently were you trying to do with her than you may have done in the first two games?

TOMEKIA REED: Well, we defended in the gap a lot. Last two games, we helped a lot and left a lot of their players open. We also tried to run some zone defense that kind of had us scattered. We weren't matched up like we were supposed to. So the players, we had to go man-to-man and guard our man. That's something that we hadn't done all year, and they did a great job. Keeping them in front of us is what we had to do.

Tulsa does a great job in running backdoor cuts and creating you to have to switch, so you can get the three-point shot open for them. So I thought that we did a great job keeping them in front of us. That was the game plan. Don't overreach, don't overplay, just keep them in front and defend.

Q. Hayleigh, you followed Coach Reed here to Charlotte. What's it like getting to be in the

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tournament, making these -- winning these two games with Coach Reed?

HAYLEIGH BRELAND: We got chemistry together. She knows me. I can look at her in the game and know what to do. She can look at me in the game and I know what to do. So it helps us build more chemistry. Just being together and being with her and getting these two tournament wins, it's amazing. It's just a great feeling.

Q. Coming into this tournament and being the 12 seed out of 13 and seeing what you did in the first game and then coming in as the underdog in this and moving forward, just what it is about the team right now that you're rolling and you have an opportunity to tell a special story in the tournament.

TOMEKIA REED: Well, I will say that I've been waiting for this moment all year. The way my team is just clicking with myself, the way that they're clicking with each other and with the staff, it's a moment that I've been waiting for a very long time, and I'm just so happy that it's happening right now.

You could really see the chemistry with the full team. You can really see the love, the connection, wanting to work for each other. You can see that right now. We've been right there, we've been right there straddling the fence all year and building that chemistry and really playing for each other, but now I feel like it's throughout, from the top to the bottom. I think it's throughout and that's really important. That's what's needed. When you have a team full of 14 new players and new coaches, that click has to happen. And I have been playing and thinking about that click for a long time and now it's there.

And I shared that with them before the game started. I said, I finally feel like we are one, one voice, one sound, one mission. I finally feel like that. And I told them, I'm not ready to go home. So I felt like they came out, they played hard, and they didn't want to lose, and they showed that.

Q. The last regular season game, I asked you what it would take for this team to succeed in the tournament. You said the shots would have to fall. The team has shot a lot better. You got five threes made tonight. What did you see from the team stepping up to that need?

TOMEKIA REED: Well, we've made sure that they have proper recovery and proper rehab to make sure they have legs and arms to get these shots up. They just have been locked in and focused. We've allowed them to have extra time on the floor, just to get a feel for the rims and get a feel for the court. But most importantly, shooters can't

shoot bad all the time and at some point it's going to come alive for us. I think that's what's happening.

What impresses me the most is the fact that different players show up at different times. We had Jordan with a big three last night. We had Hayleigh today with some big-time scores and Ke with some big-time scores around the rim and away from the rim. So you just never know who is going to go off and that's what's so special about this team.

Q. To the student-athletes, with Coach talking about waiting for this moment, not wanting to go home, waiting for everybody to click and for it to all come together, why do you believe that it's happening right now? What is it about the culture of this team that you can get a sense of why special things are occurring these last couple days and hopefully to continue on?

HAYLEIGH BRELAND: I would say, like Coach said, we have been right there. We had a pastor come see us and speak to us, and it's something that stuck with me. Pastor Mike, he said, You're stuck in the almost. And that's something that really stuck with me. I just kept praying, you know, practicing real hard. I seen that we're practicing real hard, we're playing, we're kind of right there with these top teams, and I just knew, like she said, we were going to click. We were stuck in the almost and now we are here. It's time.

TOMEKIA REED: Yeah, I like that. It's awesome.

KEANNA REMBERT: Like she said, in the end of the regular season, we were right there at the end, and we were right there in those games, and we came to this tournament with a different mindset of we are at 0-0. This tournament defines all, and we've been right there and now it's time to take it a step further.

TOMEKIA REED: Yes.

Q. Hayleigh and Keanna, from the outside, we're not -- I'm not an athlete. But the extra game, do you feel like gave you and your teammates an advantage going into today? You had a game under your belt. I know it was a different arena yesterday. But getting a post-season win yesterday, coming into today, did you feel like that gave your team confidence and maybe an advantage over Tulsa, who maybe a little bit more rusty?

HAYLEIGH BRELAND: I would say yes. But not necessarily an advantage, but -- we just got to play. I'm with that. You just got to play no matter if you play the game resting. If we was resting, we was going to come out and play. So we just came out and played today and it



was a lot of things that went into that game than being rested, that we were down, we were up, we were right there. I mean, it was right there.

It's just execution and being smart, playing hard defense. It was who played the hardest. Coach told us whoever was going to play the hardest was going to win the game, and that was the thing that we took to heart.

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