

American Athletic Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Monday, March 10, 2025

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Dickies Arena

East Carolina Pirates

Kim McNeill

Khia Miller

Postgame Press Conference



Q. When you guys got up there in the fourth quarter to two, they went on a little bit of a run after that. But I guess what did you see just being able to battle back after that third quarter and cut it to two?

KIM MCNEILL: Yeah, I thought we were able to get some stops and score some baskets. Obviously, the way they were able to expand the lead again was -- you know, it's been our Achilles Heel all year long, turning the ball over. We had some crucial turnovers that I think led to them to have two back-to-back threes that kind of stretched it open and got their confidence going, got them feeling really good about themselves.

So we've shown resiliency all year. I think that's been the frustrating part about this team, is that we've been so up and down. They will get your hopes up, you know, you feel like we've turned the corner, we'll continue to move forward, and then we'll have a game where we kind of go backwards.

So honestly, I talked to the team. I think we underachieved this season. I thought this was a season we could have went over 500 in the league, finishing 7th, obviously. Definitely thought we were better than that. Should have definitely been close to 20 wins. Thought we underachieved, but like I said, this team was kind of a tease, you know, play really good one game and then the next game kind of come and take two steps backwards.

Q. I guess what can you say about the player to your left, Khia? Obviously, she got into a starter's role this year and just a really good two-way player for you. What have you seen of her development?

KIM MCNEILL: Yeah, I thought it started last year at the end of the season when she really took some strides moving forward. Obviously, with the loss of Danae McNeal this year, we needed some guards to step up and score, and Khia has done that for us, whether it's from the mid-range getting downhill or shooting the three. But she was extremely vocal, very passionate, hates to lose and emotional when it comes to that. But she's definitely taken

North Texas - 69, East Carolina - 58

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

KIM MCNEILL: Yeah, every time we play North Texas it's always a tough one, extremely physical, back and forth, back and forth. I think we've almost played an extra game with six overtimes in the three games that we've played.

But kudos to them. The tougher team, the more disciplined team won tonight. I thought we showed spurts of grinding and, you know, really executing the game plan. I thought the second half defensively we stayed in the locker room. We are a much better defensive team than we showed in the second half.

But I am just proud of how far this program has come. In the last three years, we've really turned it around. Winning championships has become a part of our constant conversations. I'll tell you, when I first got here in 2019 that definitely wasn't the case. There's been some great players that have come along the way, you know, that have gotten East Carolina to where they are. Women's basketball is prevalent in Greenville. It wasn't like that when I first got here.

So obviously, this one hurts. We were hoping to make another one run in the tournament like we've done the last two years. But we'll go back to the drawing board and have a good off-season and continue to work and make sure we're back here next year but ending in a different way.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.



some huge strides and hopefully she will continue to take the strides so we're not here sitting in this place next year.

Q. Khia, you guys have played an extra game and a half against North Texas over the past couple years. Just from a player perspective, how prepared were you for what would be a physical-type basketball game?

KHIA MILLER: I think mentally we all knew that it was going to be a physical game. The one in the regular season, it was physical, it was a hard game, and we went back and forth. We had the lead, so we had the confidence that we could come in and win this game a hundred percent. We should have won the game in the regular season. It didn't fall that way. So we had the confidence that we could do it today. Unfortunately, we didn't do it, but we're never going to back down from a fight, so...

Q. Kind of going off that, in that fourth quarter when -- you guys give up the lead in the third, but from your guys' perspective, what was that fourth quarter like? Just still battling and knowing that the season could end, I guess, but you guys were still battling there for sure.

KHIA MILLER: Yeah, I think when we cut it down to two, we were really getting momentum and really feeling good, like everybody's pointed out, but those back-to-back threes hurt us, some transition points, and then our constant fouling, it didn't help us. So it was all like a perfect storm at the end that kind of hit and we couldn't overcome it.

Q. Lampkin for them, I know she got her double double, but you held her to 3-13 shooting. What did you try to do against her defensively?

KIM McNEILL: She was a huge focal point on the scouting report. We didn't want her to have one-on-one looks. I thought early she got kind of loose on the offensive boards, which is what she does very well, and then we kind of honed in and really focused on limiting her to one shot and making her shots tough. We've got size down there, so I thought she kind of struggled scoring over the top of us. But, you know, too many fouls. I think the majority of her points came from the free-throw line.

Q. You mentioned at the top, this program came a long way and you guys were absolutely a tough out in the tournament, making some serious runs the past few years. I guess what does this performance do to maybe fuel the fire to reload and get back at it?

KIM McNEILL: Yeah, we just got to look at some things that we need to do differently in the future. I think one

thing that we didn't buy into the whole year was just being practicing hard consistently. We were too up and down in practice. And I'm old school, and I believe in you got to train your minds and your bodies to do things a certain way, and when you train yourself to do something one way it just becomes natural. I didn't think as a team we bought into that practicing hard every single day. Practices should be harder than games and I felt like our games were harder than practice, and it should be the other way around. So we got to buy into that, we got to buy into practicing harder and doing the little things and really winning the last 30 minutes of practice. I think when you can win the last 30 minutes of practice that helps you win on the road, it makes you mentally stronger.

Q. Obviously this happens every year, you have exits and stuff, but just Jayla Hearp coming back after missing a season, Khia Miller stepping up. Devin Hagemann doing some things. What did you like about some of the younger players who stepped up and played some pretty good basketball in the post-season?

KIM McNEILL: Yeah, I think that kind of says a lot. You are starting two sophomore wings and a freshman point guard, and you could obviously tell that was the focal point of the scouting report, kind of pressure our guards and try to take the post away. I thought at times they really did a great job of stepping up to the challenge and not playing like sophomores and not playing like freshmen. The minutes that they got is just going to make 'em even better sophomores and even better juniors.

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