

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Utah vs Gonzaga

Tuesday, March 26, 2024

Spokane, Washington, USA

McCarthy Athletic Center

Utah Utes

Coach Lynne Roberts

Alissa Pili

Dasia Young

Media Conference

Gonzaga 77, Utah 66

LYNNE ROBERTS: Yeah, appreciate you guys being here. Congrats to Gonzaga. Thought they played great. You know, good job by them. I'm happy for Brynna.

I thought that, you know, they got hot from three in that second quarter. I thought we kind of -- it was a great first quarter back and forth, and then that second quarter just we just -- you know, it was the same thing on Saturday. We didn't have a great second quarter offensively.

Felt like we were a little rushed and our execution was poor on both ends and they got hot. They shot 70 -- yeah, they hit - they went 5-5 in that second quarter from three. We couldn't get to the free throw line for whatever reason. You know, 9 to 22 free throws. That's been kind of the story all year.

But I'm really proud of our team. Aside from this game, we had a great season and we hit so much adversity, you know, with injuries and the roster we had going into the season and only had for three games. These guys never flinched, and those that we had healthy didn't quit or feel sorry for themselves.

They showed a lot of toughness. You saw that tonight, too. They could have easily gone through the motions there, and we fought back and got it to 6 I think, and just kind of ran out of gas.

But I'm proud of our team. We have set standard. We raised the standard in our program that the NCAA tournament is what we do. That's the expectation. Pac-12



is over and now moving to the new conference, and our expectations don't change in the Big XII.

So, again, proud of my team. Congrats to Gonzaga. I also want to say how incredibly proud I am of our seniors, these two, Izzy Palmer also, senior, but just wasn't healthy this year. She did a lot for our program.

But these two mean so much to me. Obviously you can see their talent and toughness, but who they are. My definition of success is leaving something better than you found it. These two can -- and Izzy -- they can throw their shoulders back. They helped our program get to where now the NCAA tournament and advancing and not advancing is crushing. The bar has been raised and so much is because of these two.

Q. Alissa and Dasia, what are your emotions right now, finality of your career tonight, all that stuff?

ALISSA PILI: It definitely wasn't the ending to our season that we wanted, but like Coach said, hats off to Gonzaga. They played a really good game.

But, you know, it's just tough when you know that that's your last college game and it kind of just flew by. I'm just grateful for it all. I'm grateful I came to Utah and it kind of turned my whole life around. But I'm just grateful and ready to -- ready for the future.

DASIA YOUNG: Yeah, not the ending we wanted, but if I had to go out, glad that I went out with these people around me. We went down swinging, so I'm really -- I'll take the L, but I'll take it with pride because we didn't give up, we didn't roll over. At one point we were down by a pretty good margin but we kept fighting.

I think that just atones to what this team does. We just keep beating the odds, keep fighting, swinging, doesn't matter what's in front of us.

So I'm glad that I came here. Everybody knows that. I say that every time I get a chance. Yeah, wouldn't trade anything for the world.



Q. What went wrong in your mind of how the game kind of got lost?

DASIA YOUNG: I feel like we made a couple mental errors sometimes. We let them get hot from the three. Our game plan was to make them score more twos than threes. I feel like we made a couple mental errors there. They just shot lights out. They didn't miss. They made us pay.

I feel like the hustle and intensity part was there for the most part.

ALISSA PILI: Yeah, I agree, they just couldn't miss from three. And like Dasia said, that was our game plan, to take that away, but they're obviously a good offensive team, and I think there is only so much you can do when they're shooting that well.

But, yeah, I think that's really just what it was.

Q. Just when you look back in context of this entire season, the highs and the lows, the four wins over top 10 programs, game winner against Colorado, just what do you kind of take away from this season?

ALISSA PILI: I think just how tough this team and this program is. It's one of the reasons I decided to come to Utah, was just because of the culture and the identity that they had, so it's just a blessing to be a part of.

Know, like I said, my whole life changed when I came to Utah. I've taken so many lessons from it and learned so many things from Coach Lynne, my teammates, and the rest of the coaches. Just the whole university, like staff and everybody. They're great people.

So the experiences will stick with me forever. I'm just really glad that I ended it with this group of people.

DASIA YOUNG: I mean, this team, we wear a shirt that says Divergent, and like resilient. We lost a really good player, G, Gianna Kneepkens. She was a really big part of us, and like Coach Rob said, we didn't bat an eye. We kept going, kept swinging. I think we're the only team to beat top 10 teams like four times.

So that just atones to what kind of team we are. Like 'Liss said, it is sad that we lost this way, but nobody can take away what we did this whole season. Whether they want to acknowledge us or not, we're a good team. They're going to continue to be a good team after this.

Q. Could you talk a little bit about that battle you had with Ejim? You guys may have left some bruises on each other out there tonight.

ALISSA PILI: It's always fun playing a really competitive game against a really good post player. She did a great job. One of our game plans was to kind of limit what she did on the court, and I think for the most part we did a good job.

But, yeah, it's always fun battling down there. It could be -- it could hurt a little sometimes, but that's the type of physicality that I like and that's a part of my game so it's fun for me.

Q. Lynne, non- game specific, but I understand you guys will to move hotels this week. Can you expound on what happened or what the situation was?

ReplaceName: Yeah. So Gonzaga is the host in Spokane, but our team hotel was in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, which is not very close. 35, 40 minutes, so that was a little strange.

Whatever.

And we had several instances of some kind of racial hate crimes towards our program, and incredibly upsetting for all of us. You know, you think in our world in athletics and university settings it's shocking in a -- like there is so much diversity on a college campus and so you're just not exposed to that very often.

And so when you are, it's like -- you know, you have people say, man, I can't believe that happened. But, you know, racism is real. It happens. It's awful.

So for our players, whether they are white, black, green, whatever, no one knew how to handle it. It was really upsetting.

For our players and staff to not feel safe in an NCAA tournament environment, it's messed up, and so we moved hotels. The NCAA and Gonzaga worked to get us in a new hotel and we appreciate that. Yeah, that's what happened. It was a distraction and upsetting and unfortunate.

This should be a positive for everybody involved. This should be a joyous time for our program. To have kind of a black eye on this experience is unfortunate. So, yeah, that's what happened.

Q. To follow up on that, that happened in? Like what days did they happen and when did you move hotels?

LYNNE ROBERTS: Yes, happened in Coeur d'Alene. We flew up Thursday, so happened Thursday night a few times. Then we left Friday. So it was really unfortunate,

disappointing. Upsetting, all the things, when this experience shouldn't be any of those things.

So the shock of like, wow, I can't believe that happened. Yeah, I think it happens a lot. It doesn't get talked about enough.

Q. After this I don't know that a game really matters. From your perspective, I mean, where was this game lost as a coach?

LYNNE ROBERTS: From my end?

Q. Not your job, like where was the game lost?

LYNNE ROBERTS: No, it's definitely my job. It's definitely on me. I think in that second quarter our execution was really poor. So you're in the tournament, second round, Gonzaga is good, all the things.

So it's not like, oh, my gosh they scored -- what did they score? 24 points. We faced that. Our execution was just poor, and I don't know why.

I mean, it's loud in there, but we play in places that have more people. Not that that's not a factor, but it's not like we haven't been there, done that. So I don't know what happened in that second quarter.

You know, I thought we had a good game plan and thought the players understood it. You know, I think we did a good job in the first quarter with that, and then for some reason we just kind of got punched in the mouth and didn't regroup until half time.

Q. Coming out of the half Gonzaga had a string of buckets that might have deflated some teams. Then you guys struck right back with a 7-0 run of your own. What kept you guys fighting so hard? In this specific game, what kept you fighting through the adversity?

LYNNE ROBERTS: I don't think it's any different than the rest of the season. That's who we are. These guys don't flinch and just keep swinging. The timeouts were positive and there wasn't -- that's just who we are.

You know, we cut it to six in the fourth quarter, and then just couldn't convert. Missed some shots that -- we were right there and just missed some -- missed an open three, missed around the rim a little bit.

But that's who -- I'm never going to back down to anything in a competitive way. I think our team is the same way.

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