

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: First Round - Villanova vs Texas Tech

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Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA

Pete Maravich Assembly Center

Texas Tech Red Raiders

Coach Krista Gerlich

Bailey Maupin

Snudda Collins

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Texas Tech players. Let's open it up for questions, please.

Q. You have a very international team. If both of you could discuss the growing pains that comes along with that. Why is that a positive for y'all?

BAILEY MAUPIN: We were actually fortunate enough to play in Germany this summer, where we were able to gel as a team. At the same time most of our international students were not able to be with us at that time. We did have a period of playing without them.

When they were able to rejoin the team, they just seemed to click. Sometimes you just know when you have good teams, when you have people who are experienced basketball players, that doesn't really seem to be an issue as much.

But moving forward through the season, everybody just continued to play really well together.

SNUDDA COLLINS: I will say the same. I didn't get to play with the team in Germany. I just think that all together, once I joined the team, once they came, we all just clicked.

Q. Snudda, tell me about your first name. That's interesting. Also what are y'all doing well? What have you done well to get to this point? What do you need to continue to do well?

SNUDDA COLLINS: First off, my first name is Silentianna.



I think what we have done well is we have stuck together, we have played really close. I think that also our defense, moving forward our defense needs to continue to improve and get better as the games continue.

I think as the season went on, our defense is what carried us through the season. That's what needs to continue.

BAILEY MAUPIN: Yeah, I think Snudda nailed it. We are a defensive-minded team. You know, the ball doesn't always go in the hole for you. At the end of the day if you can defend, you can win basketball games. That's kind of what we've hung our hats on and what we've been focused on for most of the season.

The other side we play fast in transition, try to get easy paint points, points in transition, kick the ball ahead, move the ball, make open shots. That's kind of the philosophy.

Q. Bailey, how long have you dreamed of being on this stage, seeing the signage?

BAILEY MAUPIN: Absolutely, this moment is something that I've dreamed of since I was a little kid. Something for the past four years of my college career what I've been working towards. This is exactly the way I want my career to end.

I'm not tired. I'm not done playing basketball yet. So hopefully get to play six more games and be in the national championship.

Q. Snudda, you've been on this stage before, but I'm wondering how different is it this time?

SNUDDA COLLINS: I would say it's different this time, and not to shade anybody else, but I think this year I've really enjoyed playing with these girls. I have a really close connection with them.

For me, like Bailey said, I wouldn't have wanted to end my career any better, with this group of girls, as amazing as they are.

Q. When it comes to this game, what are the keys for



y'all? Defense? What has to get done to get the win?

BAILEY MAUPIN: Villanova is an excellent basketball team. They move and share the ball well. They have a bunch of really good players.

For us, it's keeping everybody in front, containing your own, limiting their points in transition, limiting their three-point attempts and scoring around the rim, getting to the free-throw line.

Q. Snudda, you say you're from Brookhaven. How big a rooting section are you going to have? What made you pick Texas Tech?

SNUDDA COLLINS: First off, I have plenty of people coming. I have like 26 people on my lists that are coming.

Initially started with Coach Jada. Me and Coach Jada were both at Ole Miss. Once she got here, I congratulated her, whatever. She asked me to come finish my career here. The more I learned about Coach Gerlich, and the way I learned how much she cared about her players, that made me even more eager to come play for a coach like this.

I want to say Coach Gerlich, the way she cares, and obviously my relationship with Coach Jada.

Q. Bailey, what do you think has been the highlight for you this season?

BAILEY MAUPIN: That's a tough question because there's been lots of really exciting things that have happened.

But I think just overall big picture getting to play basketball with my best friends, play for Texas Tech University, be in this position today has been the highlight of my career.

Q. Do you enjoy coming off the bench?

SNUDDA COLLINS: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Q. What makes it so comfortable for you to come in like that off the bench?

SNUDDA COLLINS: I mean, at the end of the day we all want to win. Whatever it takes for us to get the win. If it takes me coming off the bench, I'm okay with it. Starting or coming off the bench, it really don't matter. I just want to impact the game the best way possible.

Q. Given how the season has ended the last four or five games, what do you need to do to turn it around to get the win tomorrow?

BAILEY MAUPIN: I think we need to finish games better. That's kind of been our Achilles' heel the fourth quarter of most games. Maybe not the entire fourth quarter, but the seven-minute mark on we've really struggled in that aspect.

Having these two weeks or 15 days of prep that we can work on just what we need to be better at has really helped us. That's something we're focused on, very aware of during games and during practices, is finish.

SNUDDA COLLINS: I piggyback off that. I'd say just being consistent throughout the course of the game. Whatever is working, stick to what's working, not defer away from that. So yeah, just finish.

Q. I have to think this time off has helped to get you rested and healed up to be able to finish.

BAILEY MAUPIN: Absolutely. This is basically the third part of the season. You have pre-season, conference, now post-season. Being able to have those 15 days, get our minds right, but also get our bodies right has been super influential. I think it's going to give us a leg up when it comes to playing these next six games.

Q. With most wins in 20 years in the Big 12 for you guys this year, what has been the excitement level on your campus with what your team has done this year?

BAILEY MAUPIN: It's been big. I mean, you go out, you go on campus, you go to the places around campus, everyone is congratulating you, everyone is telling you thank you, we're so proud of you.

At the same time the message is 'continue'. Nobody wants it to end, especially us.

SNUDDA COLLINS: Absolutely.

Q. Bailey, I think I'm right in saying you weren't picked very high in the Big 12. What does the media know (smiling). What do you think was the key for you to have a great season like you've had?

BAILEY MAUPIN: Like you said, we were picked 13th in the Big 12. We've used that number 13 so many times in so many meetings, so many pregame speeches, it became fuel for us. It became fuel because people didn't believe in us. We had to prove ourselves.

I don't know about the rest of the team, but I can speak for me and Snudda, we like being the underdogs. That gave us fuel to go out, show what we can do, prove everybody wrong. I think that streak especially continues in this



tournament.

Q. That moment when y'all heard y'all's name called, both of y'all turned to Krista and give her a huge hug. Reflect on that moment knowing the history.

BAILEY MAUPIN: That's a really hard question to put into words. Yeah, I've known Coach Gerlich pretty much my whole life. She was my first-ever scholarship offer when I was really young. I knew in the bottom of my heart I wanted to play at Texas Tech and for her. That was kind of a full-circle moment for both of us I feel like.

We both had dreams and visions of what we thought the program could be. Hearing your name called on Selection Sunday just kind of proves all this hard work, all the blood, sweat and tears are worth it, you're getting somewhere. That was a really cool moment. Something I'll remember for the rest of my life.

SNUDDA COLLINS: For me, that's obviously what I came here for. Hearing her story, it was motivating for me. I wanted to get her back to this point.

Hearing our name being called, it just meant a lot to me. I don't know the words to use. It meant a lot to get the program back to where it finally needs to be.

Q. Was it emotional for her when she saw your team's name come up?

BAILEY MAUPIN: Absolutely. I mean, you could just tell that it was kind of a surreal moment for everyone in the room, especially because Coach Sharp was there. For her to be able to plan it for Coach Sharp, work under Coach Sharp, now have that moment of, Look what I've gotten this team to, we're back to where we were. It was kind of a surreal moment.

Q. Bailey, listening to you guys talk about your team, it's similar to LSU, score in transition, have a star player come off the bench. Do you look at LSU at all as a potential matchup? Have you followed their season? What do you think about the Tigers?

BAILEY MAUPIN: I mean, they're a great basketball team. They're very well-coached. They have lots of superstar talent.

At the end of the day right now the focus is Villanova, going 1-0. When we get past Villanova, then we'll move on to the next team, then so on, so on, so on. But right now it's just having that 1-0 mentality, being where your feet are.

Q. Coming off the bench, what do you like about that

aspect of the game? Do you see similarities between y'all's game?

SNUDDA COLLINS: I mean, just to kind of piggyback off of what Bailey said, I haven't really just dove into LSU. I haven't really paid attention to them. I've just been taking it one game at a time. Right now I've been really focused on Villanova. I haven't dove into LSU, to be honest.

Q. When the game is starting, you're coming off the bench, are you particularly watching a certain thing of the other team as that first few minutes takes place?

SNUDDA COLLINS: Absolutely. Obviously Jalynn starts, so I'm trying to pay attention to how they're guarding her, what open looks she has, what can I take once I get into the game.

I obviously play close attention to those matchups.

THE MODERATOR: We will send the student-athletes back to the locker room.

We'll continue on with our Texas Tech media session. Coach Krista Gerlich joins us now. The Texas Tech team back into the NCAA championships this year. Just an opening comment about your season, the NCAA championships, then we'll open it up for questions.

KRISTA GERLICH: Awesome.

Yes, we're very excited to be back in The Dance, in March Madness. It's been a great year. It's been a long, hard road to get this program back to where it belongs. But we're glad to be here. Obviously really excited about the second season or the third season, whatever it might be as far as March Madness goes.

Yeah, this team has been super special this year. They've bought into everything that we've been selling from day one. Very senior-laden. I think they're playing with a lot of urgency and really grateful for the opportunity.

It's just an exciting time for Lady Raider basketball. You can see just the jubilation in our fan base of being back in The Dance, being able to compete in March because that's where this program is used to being.

Obviously we're excited about being in Baton Rouge. We have a really formidable opponent in Villanova, really good team that we're going to have to play well to be able to advance. That's what March Madness is all about.

We're excited about the opportunity.



THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions.

Q. You were not picked very high in pre-season.

KRISTA GERLICH: Correct.

Q. Maybe you thought more of yourself before the season. What do you think made you successful this year? Have you heard any congratulations from Patrick Mahomes?

KRISTA GERLICH: It's been a building process over my tenure here at Tech. Since I took the job, I knew it was going to take a while to get to where we needed to go.

Last year was really difficult in the Big 12. Overall in the way we finished the season, I think we really made some significant steps towards this season.

This summer, when we were putting our team together and going to the portal, getting some specific pieces, I think we did an excellent job in evaluating talent and character and the pieces that were missing.

Then we were able to play in the World University Games in July over in Germany. I think at that point when we got that extra time together and really got to see the chemistry with this team, just how many pieces we had, we realized that we could really do something special.

I mean, I'm not going to sit here and tell you that we were expecting to go out to a 19-0 start, things like that. I do think we were all a little challenged when we were picked 13th in the conference. But we also understood it's really hard, those coaches' polls and whatnot, the pre-season polls, because nobody knows what anybody's roster looks like nowadays with the transfer portal.

Yeah, I mean, I'm just excited about this team being able to come together and to really gel at the right time and to continue to elevate this program.

We did get a shout-out from Patrick I believe when we were 19-0, maybe when we beat TCU, I can't remember which time. He is so good about supporting us and just supporting Texas Tech in general. He really shouts out all the programs.

Q. What has it been like to see the signage and really feel like you're here?

KRISTA GERLICH: It's been a while, right? It's been a while. We were just in the locker room with our girls. I felt like it was Christmas morning for them, how excited they were to see just what it's about. You forget about the little

thing. I forget about the little things.

Walking into the locker room even and seeing the gifts, your nameplates, the signage and everything. It just gives you chills. It really does give you chills.

I got a little emotional in there because this is what we've been working for and want for these girls to experience. It's really hard to articulate that to them when you're trying to motivate them, make them buy into your vision.

You know as a coach and former player how exciting it is and how different it is than the regular season. So for them to start understanding it, even from just walking into that building, in that room, I think is really going to serve us well in this tournament.

It's just really I keep saying exciting, but satisfying to be able for this team to realize what we've been talking about and for them to experience it.

Q. How do you use both your experience as a player, assistant coach, a few of your players have been here before, to get them ready for this stage?

KRISTA GERLICH: Just share your experiences. Everybody has a story. We've asked Adlee to share, we've asked Snudda to share, Ketara Chapel, Coach Walters. Of course, I've shared. You just talk about your experiences, what you have seen and done in this tournament. You just continue to play Lady Raider basketball.

We've stressed that over the past five, six, seven days that we have to do what we've been doing all year long that got us here. We've got to do it at a really high level and continue to elevate, but we don't have to be somebody that we're not.

We're excited about that opportunity to come out and show what we've been doing for the past six, seven, eight months, really compete with the best of the best.

Q. What concerns you or impresses you about Villanova?

KRISTA GERLICH: Obviously I think they're really well-coached and they come from a really good league and they've played against really tough people.

Their offense is really efficient. They play a really nice style where they can read and react, they can run some motion stuff, where it's not patterned at all.

Our kids are going to have to really communicate and apply our defensive principles that we've put into place for

the past three or four years. At the same time they're really going to have to defend at a high level, in my opinion.

I think their point guard is one of the best in the country. I think she does some really good things. When they don't get what they want out of their offense, they put the ball in her hands and she creates. She's really good at that.

Offensively I think we need to share the ball like we have been, not put pressure on any one person to get it done. We have to be able to score against them to be able to set our defense, for sure.

Q. Has this two weeks off given your team some fresh legs, feel confident going into this tournament?

KRISTA GERLICH: I think it's hard. It's a double-edged sword, if you will. I think you want to stay in a rhythm, you want to stay feeling really good about the way you're playing. At the same time we got to be able -- we were able to get our legs back under us. We were able to work on ourselves for several practices, then focus on Villanova.

I think that it's been great for us. I think our kids are hungry to continue to play. I think they are really ecstatic about having another opportunity at the level we're going to play at after the Big 12 tournament and our early exit there.

Q. There's obviously an international component to your team. I'm assuming it's an intentional component. What are the challenges and benefits that come along with that?

KRISTA GERLICH: It definitely is intentional. In our recruiting over the past couple of years, I think that we opted to try to go towards the international space to get some high-level talent that maybe wasn't as sought after of some of the Americans where because of our program was. It was hard to get in the territory with the level of talent that we needed. We definitely have been intentional about that.

I think the positives of that is that international players are so extremely grateful for the opportunity to play in America and to play in the NCAA, Division I, at a university like Texas Tech because they want to get a degree, they want to play American basketball, they respect it at such a high level.

The negative pieces of it, I'm not really sure there are, except sometimes there might be a little bit of a language barrier, there might be some culture issues here or there.

I actually have really enjoyed our international players at a really high level. We just love watching them just flourish,

be excited about their experience in America.

Q. You guys have had a little bit of struggle in the fourth quarter recently. Have you done anything to fix that?

KRISTA GERLICH: We definitely discussed it. We've definitely watched film and done some things in practice to close out games. We certainly have had a couple of fourth quarters that have not gone our way. We've lost some games because of it.

Definitely have addressed it. Obviously we'll see how we do at finishing. But we have to close out games, especially when we have the lead in the fourth quarter.

Q. How do you think the players reacted to the loss in the Big 12 tournament?

KRISTA GERLICH: They were hurt. They were very hurt. They were disappointed, as we all were. They know they let one slip away, if you will. They didn't finish playing their best basketball.

I think they've responded great. They've responded really well all year when we've had some adversity, strike, I think because of their maturity, I think because of just how old they are. They know this is their last go-around. They've listened to us as coaches, let us regroup them. They've taken a lot of accountability for it. I think that's huge.

Q. Talking international component, have Miriam and Sare had fun with all the French in Louisiana?

KRISTA GERLICH: I'm not sure they've seen it all yet or around it yet. They are very excited that Ramadan is ending so that they can enjoy some of the Louisiana food for sure in the daylight hours.

I think they will definitely let us know about the French aspect of it as it comes about.

Q. You talked about the food. Y'all had some fun last night. Cajun food, crawfish.

KRISTA GERLICH: It was a great experience. It was a great place that we went to. The people were fantastic. The food was delicious. I had no idea we had so many crawfish lovers. I'm a huge seafood lover myself, not so much crawfish, but love all the others.

They were diving in. Love they got that experience. That's part of this, too. Not necessarily just in March and in the NCAA tournament, but just the travel experiences that the game gives you, the opportunity to expose them to so

many different cuisines, cultures, whatnot. That's what I love about basketball and about college basketball, is just the experiences it gives them.

Q. Back to the moment when y'all heard y'all's name called, you turned to Bailey, had a huge hug, turned to Snudda, what does it mean to you knowing that this team is the team that's continuously bought in?

KRISTA GERLICH: Well, my relationship with Bailey is really special because obviously she's the first four-year player that we've had in I'm not sure how long. I think 2016 actually. I think that speaks to itself.

I also think that Bailey has just wanted this since she got here. She and I are from Hansford County. We went to two different high schools, the only two high schools in Hansford County. It's about 15 miles apart. Obviously I'm much older than her, but our roots are deep there.

For her to trust me and to come to Texas Tech, which was a childhood dream of hers, to come to Tech, for us to be able to do this together has just been super special, something I'll cherish forever.

For her to stick with it and to stick with me, for us to be able to have this moment together, it was just really special the other night. Very emotional. This is what she's wanted the entire time. For her to leave her name in the record books at Texas Tech I think is really incredible, as well.

Then with Snudda, too, she thought her basketball career was over. It clearly didn't end the way she wanted it to. For her to be able to come to Texas Tech and have the year she's having, have the relationships that she has built within the Texas Tech system, Lubbock, the community of Lubbock, I think just goes to show you what this sport can do and what the right fit can do for you, as well.

Really incredible moment. What we told them at that moment, as well, is this was not our destination. This is certainly an achievement, certainly a step in what we wanted to do. We by no means are satisfied being here, being in the tournament. We definitely want to advance in the tournament, play as long as we can. We have eyes focused on that.

Q. I think only 14 programs have ever won the national championship.

KRISTA GERLICH: That's correct.

Q. Only 12 of them are in this year's tournament. To get back for the first time in 13 years, UConn or South Carolina or LSU is taken for granted, what has the

meant to get Texas Tech back to this stage?

KRISTA GERLICH: This is the thing. We had a big selection show celebration. It might have been the best in the country. I would give kudos to our department for doing that for us.

But it's because you cannot take those moments for granted. Texas Tech Lady Raider basketball used to be in the tournament every year. It was a mainstay. It was definitely a team to watch. It wasn't a team that you just mentioned. It was a team to watch to win it all.

I will say, Coach Sharp is with us. When she retired, it did not take long at all for it to go the other direction. I think people don't understand how hard it is to not only get in the tournament but to maintain a tournament team and program.

It has been incredibly hard to get it back here. Very rewarding for us to do that. But I would say to your point, 14 teams out of 336, I'm not even sure what the exact number is, of Division I programs, only 14 have won a national championship in the women's game. That makes Texas Tech elite in that category, right?

At the same time it's been 13 years since we've been back, so we're very grateful to be here. We do not take that for granted at all. We will always celebrate hearing our name. We certainly are on a mission to continue this annually and to obviously for people to get Texas Tech back in the conversation on a daily basis.

Q. Do you have any interesting Kim stories? What are you doing well right now? The girls said defense. As a coach that always makes you proud. Same question to you then.

KRISTA GERLICH: I definitely think that defense has gotten us here because even in our tough times we've been able to defend people at a high level. That always gives you a chance to stay in a game when maybe your offense isn't clicking.

I love that they said that because that's what we want to hang our hat on, that's what we want our identity to be. We feel like that's something that we can specialize in. Hopefully that's what we will do tomorrow, is really defend at a high level and give ourselves a chance to win a basketball game every time we toss it up.

As far as Kim goes, I had so much respect for her as not only a coach but as a player. I watched her back in the day do her thing as the point guard for La Tech. One of my best friends went there and followed her as the point guard

there. We talk about Kim a lot.

I remember talking to Kim when I was an assistant at Tech, ran into her a couple of times on a plane. She won't remember at all. I was always kind of in awe of her, would always speak to her. She was always very, this is going to be surprising, but meek and kind of quiet. As an assistant, she just did her job.

I never thought of her as the big personality that she is now. She was always very kind to me. She always was like, Keep working. She knew where I had been, who I worked for. She loved Coach Sharp very much. She just was very encouraging.

Then as a head coach she's done the same thing. This is my biggest Kim Mulkey story, is that my first game in the Big 12 when I was at Texas Tech was against Baylor at Baylor. When I saw the conference schedule, I went, Okay, this is how they welcome new coaches to the league, that's fantastic. It's when they won the national championship that year, I believe. They were really, really good. I think they 40-pieced us. My point guard ended up quitting the next day. That was fun, too. I believe she transferred to Baylor, by the way. That was incredible.

Kim was very encouraging, very supportive. She always is. I think she's actually extra supportive with coaches that are moms because she knows obviously firsthand the sacrifices that go. Also I coach my own daughter, too.

I remember asking her how do you do it. She was like, Family is always first, family is always first, be there for your kid first. I love that because that's super important. That humanizes Kim Mulkey. I know a lot of people wonder about that sometimes. She's such a fantastic coach. She's a really good human and a really good mother, as well, so yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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