

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Texas Tech vs LSU

Sunday, March 22, 2026

Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA

Pete Maravich Assembly Center

LSU Tigers

Coach Kim Mulkey

Flau' jae Johnson

Mikaylah Williams

Media Conference

LSU 101, Texas Tech 47

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by LSU head coach Kim Mulkey. In the middle is Flau' jae and to the left is Mikaylah Williams. We will start with questions to the players first.

Q. Flau'jae, your time at LSU, has this been everything you thought it would be when you signed here? You signed at a time when LSU wasn't great. Talk about your career and today, how it turned out.

FLAU'JAE JOHNSON: Yeah, it was more. I was talking to somebody, I forgot what I told them, but I was like when I came here, I just wanted to be SEC Freshman of the Year. That's all I was thinking about. Of course winning a national championship, that was crazy. Everything else that came with it has been just beyond my wildest dreams.

I didn't even know I could play college basketball when I was in high school. I didn't really get on the stage until -- I was unranked until my tenth grade year, I think. This is unbelievable to me.

Q. Flau'jae, leaving the court, the crowd, the standing ovation, the embrace with Coach Mulkey. What did it mean to you?

FLAU'JAE JOHNSON: Yeah, I lost it. I knew I was going to lose it, but I was holding strong. Then my teammates came and hugged me and it was like a roar I heard in that PMAC and it was like wow. And I gave everything I had and just let everything out. It was the most beautiful thing that I've been a part of. Something I'm going to remember



forever. Just so thankful for the fans. Thankful to Coach Mulkey. The whole program. It's just been unimaginable.

Q. The defensive effort, the scout that Bob gave you guys. 11 in the second, 7 in the third. How bought in were you guys defensively? What's different about this team defensively?

FLAU'JAE JOHNSON: Man, I think we had a players only meeting and we said what we need to do. I think me and Mikayla, we have just kind of taken on that leadership thing to the max and it starts in practice. We always communicate and we're always talking. Just that energy that we bring.

When you see Mikayla getting stops on defense, it's like I got to get stops on defense. Best scorers in the country can get on the floor and play defense. It's just contagious. I feel like this was our best defensive effort of the year, honestly, as a whole team. We do defensive player of the game but I think it's a team defence award today because everybody was everywhere. We were helping each other. I just thought it was amazing and it started in practice.

MIKAYLA WILLIAMS: She said it perfectly. I think maybe that's just buying in. That's just a testament to everybody buying in and locking in and knowing what we need to do to get far in this tournament run. Knowing that we needed to do this to get over that hump when we lose those games, we slack off defensively. We have mishaps, but I think locking in and buying in on the defensive end is what really, really got us here.

Q. Mikayla, you had a huge game tonight offensively. It seems like the more people try to guard you, the harder they try to guard you, the more you turn up. Talk about your game tonight and your shooting as well.

MIKAYLA WILLIAMS: I think that's just my teammates finding me and me being ready to knock down shots. Getting great screens set from Kate and MyMy and Z and Grace. That's just them getting me open and me executing and knocking down the shot.

Q. Flau'jae, Friday night you were not on the dais when Kim Mulkey said this. You may have heard it but she said you're one of those players that they're not going to even need your last name when they talk about you, talking about that you're going to go down in history as one of the greatest players in LSU history in any sport. How do you react to that? What does that mean to you when Coach Mulkey speaks about you in that way?

FLAU'JAE JOHNSON: It's an honor. She's been coaching like a hundred years (Laughter) -- I'm just kidding. Coach, I'm just playing. Not that long.

KIM MULKEY: You just lost your starting job, sister.

FLAU'JAE JOHNSON: No, but Coach Mulkey is a vet and she's been doing this a long time, so to hear her say things like that, it's amazing. But, you know, I do have that first name, like, Flau'jae and you got like Beyonce and you got like Drake, you know what I'm saying? So, you know, that's a complement. I'm just thankful. I learned so much from Coach Mulkey. She really molded me into the player I am today, honestly.

Me from my freshman year until now, my mental, that's all testament to Coach Mulkey. I tell her coach me hard, coach us hard. Everybody kind of bought in and this is this result you get.

KIM MULKEY: While she's here. She wasn't playing, she wasn't cutting up. The day I got emotional on the radio, for those of you locally who heard it, I just lit her up in practice. That was a true story. She was flopping all over the floor when we were trying to break a press and I just said get off the floor, the floor's going to hurt you.

So she was telling the truth, but a month before that, she stood before her teammates and said Coach, coach us hard until the bitter end. So I reminded her of that. No one likes to be coached hard but if you keep reminding them, this is what you asked for. This is what we're going to -- did you see the press affect us one bit tonight? That's why you coach them hard, Flau'jae. She wasn't kidding.

Q. You broke a record today, most 100-point games in a single season. That now stands at 16. What does it mean to you as players to be part of something like that in N CAA history?

MIKAYLA WILLIAMS: Obviously as a basketball player and just as a little girl growing up watching basketball, it's everybody's dream to have their name in history books, so it's truly a good feeling and a blessing to even be able to do this and show our talents on the biggest stage.

FLAU'JAE JOHNSON: Super cool.

Q. It's one thing when you're dialed in and obviously scoring points and things of that nature. When you say Mikayla shooting the ball the way she's shooting it and it's just coming natural, what's that feeling like for you guys?

FLAU'JAE JOHNSON: To get her the ball. I was in fast break. I had two people on me. I could have taken a layup but I seen 12 in the corner, I'm like I'm throwing it. When she gets hot like that, put the ball in her hands. I just learned that. She's just a pro's pro. When she's hot, you got to find her. You got to run plays for her. That's just like winning plays. That's just a winning mentality.

Everybody's shot is not going to be on. One day it might be Lay. One day it might be me. One day it might be 12, but whoever got the hot hand, let's get it to her until she start missing. I don't know, that's just my mentality. Playing with her for a while, I know where she wants the ball. I know where she's going to shoot. It's just like get her the ball. She's a generational scorer. One of a kind. When she's hot, you got to feed her.

Q. Mikayla, when you first got here, you mentioned that Flau'jae was really involved in your recruiting process. What was it like to go through this last game knowing that this is your last timesharing the PMAC floor? And Flau'jae, same question for you. You're really involved. You've seen her grow as a player and turn into the shooter she is. What was it like being on the court tonight.

MIKAYLA WILLIAMS: I would say a bittersweet feeling, just knowing that we've been through so much together from the day I stepped on campus, from even before that. I think one of the biggest memories was when we scrimmaged that one time and we was going at it. We was going at it.

FLAU'JAE JOHNSON: She called me a rapper, y'all. She said I was a rapper.

MIKAYLA WILLIAMS: We were going at it. We were competing. It was just a I'm fixing to take your spot and it was just a I'm not letting you take me spot. We were going at it and at it and at it. Ever since, from that day forward, we had each other's respect because neither of us stepped down. Ever since that day, our bond has been stronger and stronger and stronger. The conversations we have off the court. The lessons she's taught me on and off the court, it's just unimaginable.

FLAU'JAE JOHNSON: Yeah, for real. I forgot about that. But I just want to see 12 win. 12 came when I was a freshman. I'm like oh my God, she's way better than when I was a freshman. She shoots the ball, she can score, she can get downhill. She can do whatever she wants at will. It was inspiring to me.

If you look at my freshman year, I did not have a midrange jumper but when 12 came, I was studying her shot. I was studying her shot and I was like how does she -- I'm going to do that and then I developed a mid. Then we played ones and she beat me for two weeks straight and then I started beating her and I never played her again. I didn't play her since sophomore year, and I won't. I'm going to take my Ws.

But she's an amazing talent and I just want to see her go. I just feel like y'all haven't seen the triple-double Mikayla yet and it's coming. I feel like everybody should be scared. I feel like she gets overlooked as one of the best players in the country, but that effort that she put tonight and that she put in Friday, that defensive and rebound, that's who she is. You're going to see for and more of it as the stage gets bigger. She doesn't show away from the moment. It's just important for me to keep building her confidence and she builds mine as well.

Q. How impactful was Kate Koval tonight and MyMy?

MIKAYLA WILLIAMS: They were big. They both had double-doubles. They were both -- I think the double-doubles is what y'all see but the little things like helping on those ball screens and showing long enough and switching with a high hand on shooters and they got a shot clock violation. Those are the things that we talk about that get us over the hump on those big stages down the stretch in the late game. I'm just extremely proud of them for locking in on those details that we need going down.

FLAU'JAE JOHNSON: MyMy's a baller. She will come on the floor and give you a double-double. Kate is just so mature for her age. She doesn't get sped up. She talks well. She's like a natural born leader and just having both of them. It's beautiful and we're going to need them to be big and I think them playing so well early is really good for their confidence knowing that they can play and defend anybody.

Q. Just looking at the minutes, Z didn't play a ton, but kind of in the same vein, when she's in there, she's usually overmatched at the position that she's being asked to play. I'm assuming she didn't play a lot because Kim kind of knows what she can do but how big has she been for you guys as you guys move

forward? And what do you need from her going forward?

FLAU'JAE JOHNSON: Yeah, we were just on the bench and we were like dang, Z, you ain't been in in the whole fourth quarter. And I was like --

KIM MULKEY: Resting her.

FLAU'JAE JOHNSON: I was just like, Z, I just love your attitude. I just love your vibe. She's one of them players like she's going to work. She's really Baby Neese like for real for real and Neese never missed a practice. Neese was always present and Z's like that. Z is insane and her motor is insane and she's always where she needs to be. She's going to be big for us. She's one of the best freshmen in the country, no doubt about it. She's a real baller.

KIM MULKEY: Part of that thought was Grace, in my mind -- Grace got in foul trouble and in my mind, give them some minutes right here. I got this in control, so let them get back in the flow.

Q. Mikayla, I want to start off with you. You kind of touched on it but just following up seeing Flau'jae and the embrace she got, seeing how the fans embraced her, how did you feel about that? And Flau'jae you said this is the best defensive effort for somebody that's gone through this year after year in this arena. Moving forward having this type of effort and this type of performance still at this point in the tournament, how big is that?

FLAU'JAE JOHNSON: That's huge. You want to start playing your best basketball at this time. You want to start clicking. You want everything to look seamless and I feel like everybody is locked in so this is the best time.

MIKAYLA WILLIAMS: Flau'jae's a legend. She's a legend. I think I said it so many times. I think her jersey should go up and she should have a statue outside. She's given so much to this program on and off the court. The reaction that the crowd gave her is nothing more than what I expected. She's given her all to them and we love her.

THE MODERATOR: Mikayla, Flau'jae, thank you very much. Congratulations.

Let's open up the familiar now for questions for head Coach Kim Mulkey.

Q. Coach, the embrace with Flau'jae and what her career's been here at LSU.



KIM MULKEY: Just you want it to be like this when they play their last game. What a way to go out and for MyMy. I wanted to put Izzy in but she didn't have her uniform on. That's what you hope happens when they play their last game in their home arena. That's what I told her. I said what a way to go out.

She was bawling and I was trying not to cry. Just hug her. I can't say it enough, kids don't stay at institutions anymore. Everybody's looking for the next NIL deal. She stayed here and she's impacted so many people in this town that we don't even know about. She shares her wealth.

Q. Kim, Flau'jae just talked about it, playing about it, playing your best ball at the right time. You guys have ran away from two teams here in post-season already.

KIM MULKEY: There's a lot of good teams left. We did play well these two games, but the deeper you go in the tournament, the tougher it gets. I don't even know -- who do we play next? Is it over yet? Duke is winning? Playing Duke, if that's who we end up playing, it's hard to beat people twice. They're better, I'm sure, and I think we're better.

My moment right now is to make sure everybody in Baton Rouge and in this state understands and at LSU don't take this stuff for granted. Just five years ago you didn't get to come to a first and second round or six years ago. It's a reward for a job well done through the course of the season. I don't take them for granted. I don't take Sweet 16s, Elite Eights, I don't take any of that for granted.

My coaching career has been blessed to coach great players, have great staffs. Every time you win one more, you go wow, this is a blessing. The fans showed up today. I know the Catholics, they all went to mass yesterday, but I don't know what those Baptists did today. I guess they got out early, huh? It was a great day. It was a great day in the PMAC. You just wish you could bottle it up and take everybody in this arena with you to Sacramento, but unfortunately, a lot of people can't afford to go.

Q. I had the chance to interview Flau'jae during her freshman season. I want to ask you this question on her behalf. If you had to assess or think about your fondest moment of her through her four years from your perspective, what would it be? That's the first part of the question. Then the second part of the question is where would you put Mikayla Williams' game right now as you get ready to go to the Sweet 16?

KIM MULKEY: Well, my fondest memory of Flau'jae was

when she, like, sprinted when we won the national championship and almost knocked me to the floor and her just picking me up and celebrating and we still had seconds to go in that game and my assistant at the time, Johnny Derrick, was trying to get us off the floor from getting a technical and I said some choice words to hem. Let them T me up, I don't care. We just won a Natty. That picture will be forever and ever in the archives, and should be, at LSU.

Mikayla Williams, and I said this when we signed her, can go down in the history books at LSU as one of the greatest players too. I know today is about seniors and Flau'jae, but Mikayla's skill level is -- she's just tough. I think she's really worked this year on her defense and her leadership. She can post you up. She can shoot the midrange. She can shoot the three ball. She can play the four for me. She played point guard today when the other two had three fouls.

Her all-around game, and I said this two months ago. Her all-around game has just elevated to where she is putting -- she's a pro. She's put herself at a level now where she's going to be a high draft pick. I said that when we signed her. You haven't seen the best of her yet and I agree with Flau'jae's assessment. I just think she's so unselfish with her passing. She made a pass in the first quarter, if y'all saw it I went what in the -- she sees things two and three steps of most people and she can just flick a wrist and throw it and she thought one of those posts was just going to go backdoor there when they went to a zone and Flau'jae was open in the corner.

She's without an athlete. She can probably go over to the softball diamond after the season's and Beth Torina would say are you serious? Can I have her? Because she signed, I think, or committed in the seventh grade to play college softball. Thank God she chose basketball. But she's that kind of athlete.

Q. What do you think about being the coach of the first women's Division I team to score 100 16 times in one season and to set that mark against a team like Tech that hangs its hat on that pressing defense?

KIM MULKEY: I don't think one thing about it. That is not something when I'm in my rocking chair I'm going to tell the grandkids, you know what we did one year? I'll forget it. But I won't forget those national championships, those conference championships. I won't forget those kids that played for me.

I probably would forget this because really, what does it mean? What does it mean? It means I got to coach some talented teams. It means we played some sorry teams and

scored it. We played some good teams and scored it. That's just never a goal of ours.

Q. Despite the numbers on the stat sheet, Bella Hines was still very impactful in her play. Can you just kind of speak to the impact that she made?

KIM MULKEY: Well, Bella is doing exactly what you hope freshmen do. Man, she sat and sat and sat behind Mikayla and Flau'jae but she signed her knowing we had those older players in front of her, but, boy, every day in practice she wanted to guard them. Every day in practice, she's taking charges. Every day in practice, she's talking.

You started seeing it just get better during games and I told her when you start out as a freshman and you go in that game, the first thing you better not do is turn the ball over. Don't turn it over. Go in and quietly do your job. Don't be a liability. She's understood that and so her confidence has just grown to where -- we always knew she could shoot the three ball. That's what Bella does.

What you didn't know and you see happen, Bella will guard you. She's not afraid of contact. She's not afraid to guard the great players. It's good for our team because it's allowed Flau'jae and Mikayla and the rotation for them to get some rest all year and then she can score the ball. She's just playing -- she's playing very good right now.

Q. You were talking about Flau'jae staying for four years. I just wonder from an opposing coach's perspective, someone like Bailey Maupin at Texas Tech to do that through a rebuild as well.

KIM MULKEY: I'm all respect for players that stay four years. It's -- until we -- the NCAA, I should say, puts in a rule that you can only transfer so many times, that will help stop the wild west of outbidding everybody for NIL money. But for young people to do it before those rules are established, you're blessed to have them in your program. And certainly they get NIL money.

Flau'jae doesn't get money from LSU any more than anyone else but what Flau'jae and her mother have done is that, man, they jumped on what NIL was really supposed to be about, third-party and go out there and do all those things. That's the way it should be done. Not with what the school can give you. That's not where she makes her money.

But, yes, much respect for athletes that stay at institutions for four years.

Q. Coach, back-to-back 50-point wins, how big to you feel like the gap is between the top tier of women's

basketball and the rest?

KIM MULKEY: Well, if you would have asked me a day or two ago, watched some of the men's games, you're seeing the top tier get beat, right? I can't give you examples on the women's side of that happening, but I honestly do see the gap closing a little bit. NIL, the power four schools are getting what? Football money, right? Revenue share. That's going to make the rich get richer. I don't have the answers.

I think John Calipari has buckled down and tried to study it, but I just think there are more schools that can win a national championship today than there were 10 years ago, 20 years ago. The gap and the scores, I don't analyze it and break it down to tell you in detail, but just from my naked eye and having been around this game since I was, gosh, I won't tell you. Flau'jae said a hundred years, but I just think it's getting better. I do.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you for your time. Good luck out west.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports...