

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Colorado vs Kansas State

Sunday, March 24, 2024

Manhattan, Kansas, USA

Bramlage Coliseum

Kansas State Wildcats

Jeff Mittie

Gabby Gregory

Ayoka Lee

Media Conference

Colorado 63, Kansas State 50

JEFF MITTIE: Disappointing to lose this one. Yeah, I think it's disappointing to lose when you don't play very well and you don't feel like that you did things as well as you could have. And there's always regret that comes with that. You feel like you could have, should have done this, and -- but at the end of the day, the game presents its challenges and there are moments that we didn't handle those things very well.

I thought our defense was good enough to win this game. We held them to 35 percent shooting but ultimately turnovers were a big problem for us. We did not get to the free throw line enough to balance that out where we get some points there. And we weren't shooting the ball well enough. It was really hard for us to put together consistent possessions and ultimately that's what end up getting us.

I thought defensively in the fourth, I thought we made some really tough stops and I thought we really dug in deep and I thought our effort was outstanding but we just couldn't convert enough at the offensive end to put enough pressure on them. Credit goes to Colorado. They did a lot of things, really, I think solid. I thought they gave us problems all day long. They were active on our guards and they were active on Yoke in there, so credit goes to them.

It's been a heck of a year but when you end it this way, there's -- this one is going to sting for a while.

Q. Is this one of the more physical games that you've been a part of in your career at K-State?



AYOKA LEE: No. I mean, we play in the Big 12. There's a lot of physical games. It was physical. Like Coach Mittie said they did a great job on defense but no, this is not the most physical game I've been a part of it.

Q. Seemed like they sold out trying to keep the ball away from you down there in the post. What did they do specifically to make it hard on you down there?

AYOKA LEE: Like Coach Mittie said, they are just active.

Q. Whenever the intentional foul happened, did you notice a shift in energy with you guys?

GABBY GREGORY: I guess slightly. Not enough.

Q. I know that obviously this is a really hard time but as you take some time to reflect on what K-State has meant to you, just where are your emotions with that and where you are right now?

GABBY GREGORY: Obviously this really sucks. Wasn't expecting to be done so early (through tears). But I think right now I'm just so upset that we are not moving on. By the magnitude of my basketball career being over in college, it really hasn't, I don't know, hit me yet. But I'm just so thankful for Coach Mittie for allowing me to come here. I couldn't have asked for a better experience the last two years. I mean, I just love this school. I love K-State. Thanks, Gene and Jill. I have just had a blast, and I've just absolutely loved my time here, and I wish I could stay longer.

Q. You advocated more than anybody to have a sold-out crowd and maybe that does culminate in all the hard work you guys put in this year, but what was your reaction to actually seeing the sold-out crowd and hearing it?

GABBY GREGORY: Yeah, it was pretty awesome. If that's my last game in Bramlage, that's a pretty good crowd to go out on. I'm just really thankful to the fans. Everyone has been amazing and so supportive of us this year. I really think that we have grown the game of women's basketball in Manhattan, Kansas, and I just can't wait to



see the support that they continue to get next year.

Q. What were the refs telling you on that flagrant and what did you see?

JEFF MITTIE: We saw the elbow come up on the drive. So I don't think that one was -- I mean, I don't get a great look at it. They don't let me near the TV. We saw it live. Testify just said the elbow came up by rule, contact, above the shoulder, it turns into a two-shot penalty and the ball out-of-bounds.

Q. When they open the fourth to go scoreless the first six minutes and you guys are only able to get four points up, how frustrating was that and what's your reaction to how that went down?

JEFF MITTIE: Well, that was the problem all day is that I thought our group dug in hard defensively. I thought they were doing some really good things. But we couldn't take care of the ball well enough at the other end and make good decisions. Obviously you are not going to shoot the ball well at times but we just couldn't consistently have any flow offensively.

And there was an opportunity there because we did do such a good job defensively in that stretch to make a much bigger run than the four points but that's why we'll look back at this and go, we -- the things that we controlled, we didn't do as well as we needed to.

Q. As far as the guard position, seemed like Colorado did a good job on blocking entry passes to Yoke and forcing you guys to turn the ball over. How do you go about trying to find a balance of guarding on the defensive end and maybe finding another way on the offense to provide a spark?

JEFF MITTIE: Yeah, that was probably what I struggled the most with. We couldn't spread them out and get enough ball movement and we couldn't go to a lot of things that we go to with Lee and have success. Our post entries weren't good enough. Their centers were really active, sliding around, attacking the ball in the air.

I think Vonleh is one of the stronger players in the country, but she combines athleticism that you don't always see. She challenges post entry well. Today, if you threw a pass a little bit to the inside, Vonleh was good enough to go get it.

Yeah, it was impressive to watch. She's strong. She's tough. It was a physical game. But they really made some really good plays.

Q. I wanted to go back to the intentional foul for just a moment. The officials didn't call it originally. The player came over. I think the official was standing next to you. She came over and alerted. Does that happen often where somebody, a coach or a player, can draw attention to that play?

JEFF MITTIE: You can draw attention to a play above. The interesting thing about that, and I don't want to get into that, but Gregory got hit in the face the play before. Now, it wasn't intentional. But neither was Serena's, right. None of them are intent -- very few are intentional. If they are intentional, you're kicked out of the game.

Anyways, that really -- look, we came out of that. We were ready to go. We just didn't control the ball well enough. We were ready to go. We came out of that, I told them in the huddle, I don't care which way this call goes. I go, we are going to come out of here and fight, and we did. We just couldn't pass it to our jersey enough. And ultimately, that's going to be hard. Because you look at the stat sheet, and you go, well, they got 16 fast break points. We only got two. I bet the points off turnovers are all fast break.

So we've got to do a better job there. So that call was, I think, fairly easy once they went to the monitor and saw that it was up above.

Sometimes I am amazed at what they don't see on the first time, though.

Q. I saw you make a point to hug Gabbie, Yoke, Serena, they came out of the game. What was that like, I guess, knowing you coached that group for the final time?

JEFF MITTIE: Yeah, we don't know on Lee, and I think Lee will make a decision down the road here in a week because she does have the ability to come back if she chooses but I'm not sure where that's going to be.

I think just my hug for both of them was just appreciation of what they have done all year. I just -- I've been -- I love this team, not every day, but most every day, and I love them as people every day. They have been really steady leaders of our basketball team, and they are great competitors.

So I felt like when the game was finished that they deserved -- the fans deserve to show their appreciation and they deserve to hear it, and so I just wanted to give them a hug and tell them thanks.

Q. In the era of the transfer portal, and one of the criticisms is that players can be more anonymous

jumping from school to school. Gabby has been maybe the exact opposite of that only being here for two years. What is the impact that she's left on this program?

JEFF MITTIE: You know, I think Gabby's personality allows people to draw to her, and people can see how hard she plays on the floor, and people can see the passion that she plays with, and she's not afraid to vocalize that. You know, she's not afraid to tell the fans, we need a sellout. She's not afraid to get out there and show people her personality and show people how much she loves to play basketball.

And I think just in general, in life, people are drawn to people like that. People are drawn to people that have fun. People are drawn to people that compete at the highest level, and I think, you know, players like Gabby can have an impact regardless of how long you're at a program because they are just those kind of people. And we could see it from the -- we could see it when she first walked in here. She loved to compete. Loved to play. Loved to practice. All those things.

So it's not surprising what she's done.

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