

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

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Moody Center

Drexel Dragons

Coach Amy Mallon

Media Conference



AMY MALLON: We were pre-season picked 7th and also finished 7th, but we tried to flip the switch on that and said it's the lucky No. 7. Even going into practices leading into the week every drill would be seven minutes. That was the focus point for us.

The 7 seed. To do what we were capable of doing as I mentioned right when I started, that we were a team right before March, 12 and 14 in the league overall conference, out of conferences, and then these kids believed in themselves.

You could see the switch kind of go. I think it was a moment in the locker room. We were on the road. We had all these battles this year. A lot of possession games we lost. I said to the team, you know -- I'm not going to reveal everything that happens in the locker room, but it was definitely a special moment that they'll remember, because it was constantly me telling them, hey, you can do this. You can do it. I could see them really tie into it.

Going into the tournament each game we kept it simple. Kept doing what we were capable of doing staying disciplined in our principles, and we would always finish with, you can, because you can.

And then obviously then it's, we did it. I think that's been a phrase that we been -- we've kept and will keep until our final game.

Just so proud of this group. So resilient in believing in each other. We know that's what it takes to have moments like this, to believe in each other as a team.

Q. So Amaris and Brooke bring lot. You can see that from the stat sheet. What are some things you can't see from the stat sheet that they bring to the team that's contributed to the team's success?

AMY MALLON: Amaris Baker?

Q. Yeah.

AMY MALLON: She is one of the players that shows up to practice and she doesn't show her card. She is always

AMY MALLON: Thank you. We're just so excited to be here. I know you probably hear that all the time, but for us, I think a team that not too long ago we were 12 and 14 kind of thinking about where we were going to be and how we were going to end. This team really showed -- we went on to win 7 straight and really showed what they're capable of doing. I think that's what teams do in March. For us, we're excited to be here and show what Drexel is all about.

Q. I'm curious, have you lost any sleep trying to figure out how you're going to guard Madison Booker?

AMY MALLON: Of course I have. I don't know if I've slept since Sunday when we won the championship. You know, just a phenomenal player. You watch what she does. You always know when you're admiring players on other teams and you see what they're capable of doing, you know that's just the type of player that it's going to be hard. It's going to be a battle.

There is a reason why Texas is where they are seeded No. 1, it's because of a player like Booker. So we're going to have to do our diligence. We are really just going to have to continue to make sure we continue to stay true to our defensive concepts, which we've done all year to a certain student.

They're going to have to be pretty on pointe to keep Booker from what she's capable of doing. As we always said, it's limiting what they do is what we try to do with players like that.

Q. Throughout the CAA tournament you guys kept saying we're lucky No. 7 and here because we could. Can you elaborate on those phrases and how they helped motivate your team throughout the tournament to get to this point?



focused and ready. We'll be laughing in the circle and she'll have this serious face. I'm like, Amaris, are you ready to go? She's like, oh, it's just my face.

She actually exude that had through the tournament. She showed up every day. Is she nervous? I would be watching her waiting for some response.

But what is so great about -- she's one of the hardest working players. She shows up. She is physically in the best shape. She is one of our Iron Dragons. She can play 40 minutes a game. Every game I'm like, do you need a break? Nope, I'm ready. It was that mentality that she was going to go and go and nothing fazed her.

I think it was a road to get there, because to see her shine in the tournament, I think we knew it was in there. All season long it was waiting. She reminds me so much of a special player that played for us Keishana Washington. Same year we won the championship, that year I was waiting for her to have these moments and she had them in the tournament and had back to back games that made the difference.

Amaris had more than back to back games and it's something we really needed. Her mentality and her approach to just continuing to work and nothing setting her back was a big piece of our finish.

But just a great, great kid, leader for us. She says every practice, what else do you need me to do? Who do you need me to talk to? Nothing. Just keep being you and keep doing what you're doing and we'll be in great shape.

Q. Similar question about Brooke. She brings in a ton of experience as well infusion of talent and production. What are some of the leadership qualities that she adds to the team as well?

AMY MALLON: Well, Brooke has that experience as a fifth year. She has been there and done things as a player. Maybe her role in those moments have been different, but for us, when she came in, I was like, all right, Brooke, I need you to facilitate, lead, play defense, handle the ball. I also need you to score. Can you do all those things? She never said no.

I can tell you, it wasn't easy. Every moment. But I think what she did in the tournament just was something we talked about all year. And changing roles from one thing to the other, it's not easy, even though that's what expected from a basketball player. Her leadership and her -- just with our young ones on the team and her experience I think just kept our team confident they could do it.

At the same time, I told the team, you got to give Brooke confidence, too. This is a new role for her. They all did that for each other, so in the moment it was great to see that all pull together. Just a great piece for you. Every time out she's like, all right, let's go. What do you need me to do?

Q. You have benefitted from somebody coming from one of the larger schools. Do you worry in today's climate about people stealing your players bigger schools?

AMY MALLON: I think that's -- any coach right now has moments like that. I think at every level. I think we've seen it happen. Unlike every coach, I'm navigating through this evolving college basketball scene. I think it's so different and obviously we benefitted -- we were in a position where we were in the same boat.

We had some roster changes and we luckily were able to bring in Brooke Mullin and Amaris Baker who were great additions. The greatest thing for us culture has been such a standard at Drexel. I've been there 20 years and there is a reason why I've been there. It's a special place.

That said, our culture is why we've been able to sustain the success we've had. Even bringing players in you want the players that fit what you're about. I do think it's something that we benefitted from having Brooke Mullin in. I always said that one of the things I want to keep reminding people the grass isn't always greener. People think it's going to be when you leave, but I hope they can see I think our team this year is a perfect example of that not being the case.

I think we had not one player on all-conference team this year and somehow they came together and found a way to be that Cinderella team in March in our tournament. I think it's going to be an evolving thing for us as coaches, and I do think it's something you have to find a way to work with it.

I say things are constantly changing and you got to evolve with them. We will continue to do that. If we can bring in players like that, Brooke Mullin and Amaris Baker that came in and said, hey, what can we do for this program and not what are you going to do for us, that was the big piece for us, getting the right people.

Q. When Vic Schaefer was in here earlier he said one of things that stood out from Drexel from what he'd seen on film is the way you were playing defense. Is that the backbone for this team? Why has Drexel been so good on defense this year?

AMY MALLON: I think it's been a pillar for us. I would love

to compliment Coach Schaefer, because he's one of with the people I'm constantly watching and admiring.

The first time we met was on the sidelines in 2010. He was an assistant at Texas A&M. We were in a tournament in California. I was an assistant at Drexel. When we played them they won the national championship this year.

Since then I had been following -- we go to Final Fours, watching the drills they do. Every time I can watch them on the national TV I was watching them and just really watching their defense and what they did, the drills. We actually do some of the drills that we picked up.

So him complimenting us on defense makes me feel pretty good, because they're obviously one of the best teams in college basketball defensively.

So that said, that's something we take a lot of pride in. It is one of the reasons I think we've been able to be in games this year that were really tough for us against other teams out of conference that really challenged us.

I'm hopping we can use that as a piece just to limit some of the things. This is going to be a challenge for us, a heck of a challenge. I just hope as we head into it we make people proud. And if I'm getting compliment from Coach Schaefer about our defense, that's pretty impressive, because their defense is really impressive as well.

Q. First of all, so for the second year in a row only one Philly team in March Madness, and this year it's you guys. How does that feel? Second of all, what's it like representing Philly Hoops on this stage?

AMY MALLON: It's tremendous. I think one thing about Philadelphia and their sports teams, they just -- they cheer for each other. So to have that many teams -- I really didn't realize it until we were done. We won the championship and I was like waiting to see. Oh, my gosh we're the only team in from Philly.

One thing I know is we're going to be backed and teams cheer each other on. As we head into obviously this part of the season and being that team, I know we're going to make or alum, family, friends, city of Philadelphia proud with our fight.

Like I said, it's going to be a heck of a challenge, but I think we'll make the city proud. That's what we do, get behind each other and root. I know the other teams are rooting for us just as we root for them at this time of the year.

Q. How does the track record you've had of exceeding expectations this season affect how you're looking at

being a 16 seed playing a 1 seed?

AMY MALLON: You know, we have to make the lucky No. 7 the -- the 16 the new 7. For us that has to be the approach. That's always been our approach. I think when we show up every day in every game of the tournament, I said what are we going to do different than we did yesterday? They're like, nothing. Exactly. We're prepared for what we're going to see.

Obviously one thing that needs to happen maybe for us to win tomorrow, we need to make shots and we need Texas to miss shots. That's always the case. But I do think that underdog mentality has continued to make this team resilient. I'm sure that will be the case tomorrow as well.

Q. Obviously you're not going to grow overnight. How do you deal with the height difference?

AMY MALLON: You can always try to use any type of -- the bigger they are the harder they fall, those cliches. It's one of those things where we really just have to be disciplined in how we're guarding and really make sure whatever we can do to manage the presence on the boards, which one of those things is making shots.

When you can do that, it gives less rebounds, but for their end, limiting one shot for them is going to be a tough battle -- challenge for us. I think the height that they have with their team, the size is really going to be one of the pieces where I know Coach Schaefer has watched us, we play to try to keep people out of the paint.

If we can do that and limit the amount the possessions, that's going to put us in a better position. The only thing we can say is we're going to try to be as aggressive -- we always say as hard as we can be on the boards, we have to be -- whatever it takes to get the ball. Even if we can't come up with it, we are going to try to knock it out of bounds, just something to limit that second look.

But that's definitely going to be a challenge for us, and one thing we've always had -- I say a lot of times when Drexel steps on the floor, and we've been in positions through my time here, I think a lot of times people maybe underestimate what we have inside.

I think the heart goes a long way. Grace O'Neill, my point guard, our leading rebounder, if she walked on the floor next to anybody else you would never think she's our leading rebounder. That's kind of the team we are, and hoping we can demonstrate that tomorrow and really limit what they want to do.

Size-wise that's not going to change. Unless this water will

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grow some of them. We're up to the challenge and I'm excited for this group to be challenged tomorrow.

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