

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

Friday, March 22, 2024

Austin, Texas, USA

Moody Center

**Texas Longhorns**

**Vic Schaefer**

**DeYona Gaston**

**Madison Booker**

**Shaylee Gonzales**

Media Conference

Texas-82, Drexel-42

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement from Coach and then take questions for the student-athletes.

VIC SCHAEFER: Well, first, I just want to congratulate Drexel. I thought those kids really played hard tonight. They came out with a lot of energy and focus and they obviously have had a great year. Won seven in row. Coach has done a great job with 'em. I thought they were really good tonight. Really, for three quarters. We had a really good third quarter and that's probably kind of the difference in the game, to be honest with you.

Booker having 14 assists -- is that what that says? I can't see it. Yeah, I mean, again, really unselfish. It speaks volumes about the kid, who she is, how she sees the floor. Maybe not her best night shooting the ball, but she hadn't had a night like that all season and yet she still finds a way to help us win. That's what an All-American does.

Gaston, you guys don't even know this. She can't even be at shoot around today. She's sick. Got sick last night in the hotel and she doesn't come to shoot around. She wasn't going to play and I went in and saw her and she doesn't have any fever or anything. She just felt really lousy. She ends up getting up off the deck and playing really, really well. I'm really proud of her for gutting it out tonight. Played 17 minutes and had 10 rebounds and 11 points, so she has a double double and there was a time today when she wasn't even going to play. So I'm glad she



played.

And obviously Shaylee shot it really well. She got hot and we ran some good stuff. We set some good screens for her, and she really did a nice job. I thought she did a good job defensively. She has three steals and we had 12 for the game, and so again, we'll take it. I thought we had a lot of rust. It's been almost two weeks. I don't like that, but it's how it is in these conference tournaments. The league we're going to is the same way. You end on a Sunday and you don't play until the following two weeks from either Friday or Saturday.

So I thought we had a lot of rust tonight to start, but second quarter was a little better than the first and then third quarter was really, really good. So, again, want to thank our fans. We had 7,400-plus tonight. It made for an unbelievable atmosphere for both teams. Great experience for both Drexel and us and just want to say thank you to them and, again, thanks to Coach Huf for his generosity in providing the tickets for the students. What an incredible gesture on his part.

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions for the student-athletes.

**Q. DeYona, can you take us through your day and why did you decide to play instead of just kind of taking the day off?**

DEYONA GASTON: Yeah, I wasn't feeling good at all today. Yesterday night I didn't get any rest at all, probably at least like two hours of sleep, and so I woke up pretty bad. Today I didn't do any shoot around. I just kind of rested. Also, didn't really warm-up a lot. Coach came in here and just kind of told me, if you wanted to take this opportunity, then you need to take it instead of not playing, so I just kind of thought about it and I was like, maybe I should gut it out a little bit and I did, so...

**Q. Shaylee, all that work inside that all the others did, is that partly at least what enabled you to get open for all those three-point shots?**

SHAYLEE GONZALES: Yeah, I was wide open. They



didn't guard the wing very well. But obviously when we pass it inside, they collapse and double on their post players and then the guards are open on the outside.

**Q. Shaylee, what was kind of going through your mind in that quarter? Because I think you had like 15 points.**

SHAYLEE GONZALES: The first quarter I wasn't shooting very well and then the second quarter I just had a different mentality. I just told myself to keep shooting it and letting it fly.

**Q. Madison, talk about how you were able to make things happen, even, as coach said, with the shots not going down, the 14 assists, which is a record.**

MADISON BOOKER: I mean, yeah, as you can see, my shot wasn't falling. I was 4-11 today. Yeah, so just next thing was get my teammates involved, do something else other than try to find my shot, really just now looking for them and putting them in places so they can score and we can all just look good.

**Q. Madison, you looked really happy in the third quarter feeding Shaylee, seeing her get hot. Do you enjoy playmaking or scoring more?**

MADISON BOOKER: I think I like the assists better than me scoring. It brings me so much joy just to see Shaylee, for one, get confidence like that and really just keep shooting and keep finding her shot and, you know, when she does that and she's on fire, I'm going to give her the ball every time and smile at her when she make it. I really love to pass more than to score.

**Q. Shaylee, when you first got here last season, how was it adjusting to Coach Schaefer's style of defense and how different was that from the system that you were in at BYU?**

SHAYLEE GONZALES: A lot different. Coming from the WCC to the Big-12 is a lot different and for playing for Vic Schaefer's, but it's just been a blessing and honor to be here, getting better as a player. Working on my defense, which is what Texas is all about, just makes me a better player and I'm super grateful for that.

**Q. Shaylee, did it feel a little bit like old times at BYU when you lit it up consistently?**

SHAYLEE GONZALES: It did. Yes, it did.

**Q. How does this role satisfy you with what you're having to play this year versus last year?**

SHAYLEE GONZALES: Obviously I've had to find my role in different ways and all I want to do is to keep winning as a team. That's all I care about. As long as we keep winning, that's what we want to do. Obviously, our goal is to get to the Final Four and play for that National Championship, so, yeah.

**Q. Madison, throughout the game today it felt like an open gym at times, going up and down the court. As a playmaker, how fun is that to be able to move the rock fast and going up and down like that?**

MADISON BOOKER: Oh, really, just enjoying finding my teammates open, just enjoying basically just transition. Second half was -- we scored a lot of points third quarter, so I think that was when it started looking like very fun out there. We were getting stops and then going down for transition offense, we're finding Shaylee in the corner or finding a post posting up, we're finding Shay Holle on the other side. So I mean, it's fun, just pass 'em the ball. It was very much an enjoyment out there with my teammates.

**Q. Shaylee, I'm curious, your head coach going with a bold burnt orange pants fit today, if you had any thoughts on the look.**

SHAYLEE GONZALES: 10 out of 10. And you should see his socks.

VIC SCHAEFER: She's really critical of my attire, just so you know. So if she says that, I'm good.

SHAYLEE GONZALES: Hey, I'm hard on him like he's hard on me. (Laughing).

**Q. Are we going to get to see socks? We're blocked here.**

VIC SCHAEFER: No, probably not.

**Q. Did Drexel show anything that surprised you at all, especially at the rate how you guys were scoring against 'em?**

SHAYLEE GONZALES: What surprised me, I would say, would probably be number 15 shooting that logo three-pointer. She shot that twice and I was guarding her the first time and I didn't expect that. So I would say that was a surprise.

DEYONA GASTON: I also agree with her. I was guarding her, I think that was the third, maybe fourth quarter, and she shot it from deep and I was very surprised about that also.

**Q. Shaylee, I wanted to ask you, how important is it to take this tournament just one game at a time and not try to look too far ahead down the line?**

SHAYLEE GONZALES: Yeah, I mean, as the No. 1 seed, we have a lot of targets on our back, so it's up for anyone to come after us. We knew that they were going to prepare super well for us and we were also going to prepare for them, so just watching a lot of film. We came in last night to watch film, and so just being mentally and physically prepared for that and just taking it game by game.

**Q. Shaylee, tonight was a night where not only did you score a lot, a lot of members of the team scored, but one of those players was not Shay Holle. Can you talk about her importance to this team and how much you all still rely on her and need her and the trust you have in her and what does she bring to the team even when she's not necessarily putting the ball in the basket?**

SHAYLEE GONZALES: Yeah, I mean, Shay's one of our best defenders. We always put her on one of the best players on the other team. She's just really solid. She had seven rebounds, three steals, and four block, so even if she doesn't score, she's still doing things outside of scoring, which helps our team a lot.

**Q. Shaylee, what do you think are the most important factors to being a good three-point shooter?**

SHAYLEE GONZALES: I would just say just being confident in yourself and then always putting in extra work outside of practice and what you do with the team. Shay and I always shoot like 30, 40 minutes before practice, just to get a lot of shots up. So shooting extra.

**Q. Shaylee or Madison, what have your teammates who have been sick shown you in those games gutting it out and still playing 30, 40 minutes in those games when they were sick?**

MADISON BOOKER: They showed me a lot of heart, just feeling that way and still wanting to play for us, with us, it just shows just a commitment that we all have to be basically like our end goal. It just shows basically our character, their character. They want to win, they want to be on the court with us, helping us. So it's just showing basically like their commitment to the team.

SHAYLEE GONZALES: We had people sick, we got girls having injuries, and they're just playing through it, so I think that shows character and heart, which I feel like makes our team really good that we all want to play, we all know our role, and we know what it takes to win, and that is what

makes us a really good team.

**Q. You led the team in rebounding and I thought that you were pretty physical in the paint. Just wondering how you maintain that level of aggressiveness when you're feeling under the weather.**

DEYONA GASTON: Well, in practice, we have practice guys and they're pretty strong, so I'm always battling with them in practice every day, so it's basically just like clockwork. So it's like I have to be aggressive all the time. So from taking it from practice to the game it's easier to maintain that.

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll excuse the student-athletes and take questions for Coach.

**Q. Do you need to quarantine your players at this point with all this sickness going on and what are your overall thoughts on DeYona?**

VIC SCHAEFER: Yeah, we had the issue at the Big-12 tournament, and that was kind of a stomach bug deal. DeYona came out of left field. I knew something was wrong when I got off the elevator this morning and there's my trainer standing there on the fourth floor. That's not her floor. So I knew something was up. She said that D didn't feel good, started feeling bad last night. She had to go see the doctor this morning and it was during our shoot around. She actually fell asleep in the training room. When she came back, I just told her to stay away and doc said she's no fever, she's not contagious, you know, but she's got some things going on.

So I go in and she's -- she came out -- I don't know if you noticed. She was out there an hour and a half before the game getting shots and she really was struggling. Doc encouraged her to do that. She says, you need to get out there and get some shots and see how you're going to feel after that, and she didn't feel good. So she went back in the training room here and was laying down and all I did is walked in and checked on her and she was laying down with a towel over her head. I said D, what do you think? And she goes -- she looked bad. I'll be honest with you, she didn't look very good. All my conversation with her was is, D, I know you don't feel good, obviously you don't have a fever and you're not contagious. I said, it's the NCAA tournament. You only have so many of these in your career, but, hey, whatever you want to do, I'm good. And so she kind of sat up and she goes, well, let me see if I can go out and warm-up a little bit.

So I give that kid a lot of credit because she -- I really didn't expect her to play. She looked bad, and I know she felt bad. So I'm proud of her because she ends up with a

double double and, you know, she will look back on this somewhere down the line in her career or at work in the real world and realize, hey, I'm okay. Everybody can't work on their best days, right? If all we do is go to work on the days we feel great, we probably would have a hard time keeping a job.

So I'm proud of her. I really am. I wouldn't say D would have done that two or three years ago.

**Q. The intent for the full court press, why you chose that strategy. And Shaylee looked like somebody who can average 25 a game. Why you been holding her back so long?**

VIC SCHAEFER: Well, you know, she really looked good tonight. She shot it really well, 8-11, 5-6 from three, she had three steals, two assists and didn't have a turnover. That's a pretty good stat line for a 2 guard. We need her to score like that. Her and Shay both are -- Shay fills up a stat sheet in a whole different way tonight and helps us win, seven rebounds, three steals, four blocks. She leads us in blocked shots. Those two have helped us win a lot of games in a lot of different ways.

You just got to love both of 'em, how hard they play. Somebody asked Shaylee about her defense. That kid's really good defensively. Like, she's smart. I wasn't real pleased with our team early on defensively, but I thought they picked it up as the game went on. But both those kids played really well.

And then what was the other part? Oh, yeah, so we wanted to -- I wanted to get my kids going, really. Give 3 credit, Amaris Baker. She really stressed us a little bit in their press attack. So we got something out of it early and I thought we gave up some stuff out of it. And again, I felt like we could get out of it and guard 'em on the half court after that. But really just wanted to get going, wanted to get our team going.

**Q. Selection Sunday show, you said six wins, now you're down to five wins. What more do you want to see out of your team as this tournament progresses?**

VIC SCHAEFER: Yeah, so just to be completely transparent, we had two really good practices last week when we came back from the Big-12 tournament. I gave 'em Wednesday and Thursday off. Friday and Saturday was just off the chart really good. I mean, I cut 'em short. They were just locked in. We took Sunday off, and after the Selection Show, we just -- I don't know, y'all, I've tried to tell 'em, but we just haven't had that edge. I even told 'em before the game today, I kind of got on 'em a little bit, because I wasn't impressed with our shoot around, wasn't

impressed with yesterday's practice, and so just really wanting us to get that -- we've had an edge all year. Nobody picked us to win when Rori went down. So we've been playing with this edge of trying to prove ourself and get it done and I just felt like we've lost that. Whether it's you go through and you get the No. 1 seed and now you're feeling your oats. You know, I don't know. I don't know what that is.

But I just -- I know it. I see it. So I really -- I had to remind 'em again that we haven't done anything. We certainly earned the seeding that where we are, but the fight is now and we've got to keep our edge. So that's what I would like to see my team have, a little more focus and a little more edge to 'em because that's what it's going to take from here on out.

I don't know who is going to win today, but both of 'em are really good. They're well coached, they got really good players, they got All-Conference players. Like, it's going to take a great effort on our part and nobody's going to give it to you. And I don't know. I'll be honest with y'all. I was very concerned going in and even start of the game, but second quarter's a little better defensively and the third quarter, that's us, that's what I see sometimes in practice and I think, okay, we got a chance.

**Q. Is Aaliyah okay? It looked like she went to the locker room, came back.**

VIC SCHAEFER: Yeah, she just -- you know, it's not her surgically repaired knee. It's the other one. She's just got some tendonitis in it and it just flares up. Sometimes when she plants wrong or a hard stop, it's almost, it sets her off. It's really uncomfortable. So give the kid credit. She's gutsy. She's played with it and, doc's done symptom some stuff with her to try to help her get better. But tonight it really, the start of the third quarter -- and you got to try to keep her warm too. Like, I almost have to get Peloton over there and get her in a workout to get her going at halftime instead of letting her come in because once she cools off, it's hard to get back warm again.

**Q. What was it like having Sarah back on the floor today?**

VIC SCHAEFER: She's somebody that our kids love and she's got a lot of respect and admiration from all of them as well as myself. So it was great to get her in the game today and allow her to have some playing time. The kid plays really hard. Like she, practices hard. We've missed her and I'm glad she's back healthy.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

