

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

Sunday, March 24, 2024

Austin, Texas, USA

Moody Center

Alabama Crimson Tide

Kristy Curry

Sarah Ashlee Barker

Aaliyah Nye

Media Conference

Texas - 65, Alabama - 54

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by University of Alabama. We're going to turn to head coach Kristy Curry for an opening statement. Then we'll take questions for the student-athletes.

KRISTY CURRY: I just want to say congratulations to Texas, to Vic and his staff and his kids. I just have a lot of respect for the program. I just wanted to congratulate them.

I don't want to get up here and talk about all the things we didn't do today, but I do want to mention that we've had 101 practices as of yesterday, and we've been on a ten-month journey with an incredible group of young women.

In our program, we have three core values, grit, love, and gratitude. The grittiness of this group, the love that they have for the front of their chest in a day and time where that's unique, and the love that they have for each other and the game, and just the gratitude every day to go about their business on and off the floor.

I'm just incredibly proud to be their coach. I'm incredibly proud of the 24 wins. We had two returning starters from a year ago and five people in that locker room. So the leadership that these three, these two up here with me, it's just been really amazing.

I told them how incredibly proud I was of them. We're not going to talk about what we didn't do well enough today. We're going to talk about all the things that we did well on a



ten-month journey with as special of a group as I've ever had a season with. So I'm incredibly proud of them.

Q. While the outcome didn't go in your favor, can you talk about the impact that you've had as a team, as an individual on women's sports? It's women's history month. I'm just curious if that ever resonates. Do you ever talk about it as a team? Just the impact that you've had.

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: I feel like we've been asked this question a lot. I think that to every young girl that is watching us on this big stage, I think that we just want to be able to show them that you can be who you want to be, you can be who you are. You can achieve the things that you want to achieve.

And always dream big because I was a little girl one day when I was younger and I had dreams to go play in college, I had dreams to play on the big stage. We got to play here at Texas in a great atmosphere. It's a game that you have always dreamed of playing.

So I think to every young girl, you're trying to inspire them to show that they can be on this stage too as long as they work hard, as long as they continue to be who they are as a person. You can always do the things that you dream to do and dream to be.

I think that's what women's sports all across the country is doing with players like Angel Reese and Caitlin Clark and JuJu Watkins from USC, and even Madison Booker here. Madison Booker is an amazing player. Just showing that they can hoop, showing that they can play. They've got skill, and they're just doing what they're doing.

So I think just showing young girls that you can go and do big things just like other people are.

Q. Barker, I want to ask you what's it like to play in the Moody Center with a crowd like that? I think nearly hit 10,000 fans in here tonight. What is it like in that atmosphere?

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: Yeah, it was a lot of fun. I



think, like I said, you want to play in atmospheres that are packed and rowdy and they're cheering. I like to play with crowds that are cheering against me sometimes. It was a lot of fun.

I have so much respect for the game of women's basketball, how much they supported Texas this year, how much they supported this team in this game. It just shows you that people love women's basketball. So it was a lot of fun. I'm very grateful that we were here and got to play at Texas.

I think that you always learn from your outcomes, and that's what we're going to do, and I mean it was a lot of fun. I think, as a young girl, this is kind of the stage I always wanted to play on.

Q. Aaliyah, you guys have played LSU, you guys have played South Carolina teams that have a lot of beef inside. How did the Texas bigs compare to that? And how tough is it when they're able to send in three or four fresh bodies and not lose much in size?

AALIYAH NYE: Obviously you saw that we struggled with that, and they're similar to the LSU and the South Carolinas that we have in the SEC. I think we just have to be tougher.

Obviously with their size we struggled. I think we just -- they outrebounded us. I think we just have to find a presence and we just have to be tougher when we do play those bigger players because we are smaller than them and we just have to find a way to work around that and just box out and try to grab that rebound.

I would say they are similar to the LSU and South Carolina that we have played, and they're very similar to them.

Q. For either of you, how did you feel about the quality and volume of the three-point looks that you all got tonight?

AALIYAH NYE: Well, I'm the three-point shooter here, I guess. I'd say I haven't shot the ball well these past couple of games, and I've noticed that. I try not to think about that. I wish I would have hit the shots that I -- I feel like I did get good quality shots. I just didn't knock them down with a couple other shots that I took as well. I think it just happens sometimes.

I felt like I did get good looks at the three.

KRISTY CURRY: But you've made a lot more this year, and I'm just really proud of you. So we're going to focus on all the good.

Q. Did you all notice that Kevin Durant was in the crowd, and what was that like?

SARAH ASHLEE BARKER: I didn't know Kevin Durant was in the crowd, but that's awesome. He went to Texas. He's an amazing player. I grew up watching him. I think just him supporting women's basketball means a lot even though he was supporting Texas. Just him being here, that just means a lot to us just knowing that one of the best players ever was watching us play against Texas tonight.

So I think you need to be grateful for that and grateful for that opportunity that he was in the building tonight.

THE MODERATOR: Aaliyah and Sarah Ashlee, we really so enjoyed watching you play this weekend. The best to you and your teammates moving forward. Congratulations again.

We'll open this up for questions for Coach Curry. Questions?

Q. Coach, in your opinion, what does Texas do that makes them -- that puts them amongst that elite class of teams in the country?

KRISTY CURRY: Well, I just think they're so big and physical. When you can't get to the free-throw line, you've got to play north-south. You can't play east-west. You just have to credit. They're just big.

I feel like that's really hard when -- again, they just run waves at you at the 4 and the 5 spot. But I think you have to understand Madison at the point guard spot with her size, her ability to see over, her ability to make decisions. I mean, they're just big at every spot.

I think it's -- Shaylee and Shay do such a great job of playing their roles. Then you've got the great size around them. They're a lot of fun to watch. They're not a lot of fun to play against.

Credit those kids today. I told our team they were in the same position a year ago and didn't like the feeling and did something about it. So that's what we have to learn and grow. I look forward to getting Naomi Jones back and our recruiting class getting to campus and staying healthy. We'll be a little bigger. Hopefully we can counter some of that size in the future.

Q. You guys started off picking Booker up pretty much full court and really harassing her early in the first half and seems to let up later on. What went into that decision?

KRISTY CURRY: Yeah, you know we were in foul trouble, right? We didn't want to put ourselves in a position to be in foul trouble. I did think later in the third and the fourth we did a really good job of improving from the first and second quarter on handling her ball screen action.

I thought we got the ball out of our hands more there in the third and the fourth. Again, when you're in foul trouble and you have the limited depth we have, with what's going on with Jess lately, we were just trying to protect ourselves and go a little bit more zone to try to get to the half.

Q. Kristy, what made Aaliyah Moore a tough matchup tonight?

KRISTY CURRY: My goodness, she threw that three in at the end of the shot clock. She hadn't made many all year. She played so well. She's such a great player. She does such a great job of making a decision at the high post. She'll take you off the bounce. She can post you up.

Really credit her. She had a big day for them today. That was the difference a lot. A lot of the difference. When you hold Booker to 21, one under average, you think you give yourself a chance, and she really stepped up today. So credit her.

Q. Can you talk about -- obviously you guys got close in the game. You had a run with it. But how fun was it to play against Coach Schaefer and to both teams battle back and forth? How much fun was that for you to go head to head with them?

KRISTY CURRY: Well, I just have such great respect for how he coaches and his style of play and how hard his kids play. We feel like we play really hard too. That was a heck of a gritty effort by Alabama today.

Again, it's really special to me. I look down at the other end, and I've got Lindsay Wisdom-Hylton that took me to four NCAA Tournaments at Purdue, and you've got Blair that we played against a lot and Sydney Carter that we played against a lot. That just host out means a lot to me.

Coming to Texas and having spent seven years in the Big 12. Always enjoy the challenge of coming in here, as a competitor you embrace this. As a competitor you want this. I just had a chance to see Coach Conrad in the hallway. Who as a young coach, what she meant to me, the class and the grace, what an example she was to me, and Vic to be doing what he's doing. I'm really cheering for them when I'm not playing them. I know we're excited to add this kind of quality team to the SEC in all sports. It will be a lot of fun to battle against them in the future.

I want to end by saying how much I appreciate the city of Austin. Everyone around the University of Texas for hosting us this weekend. It's been an incredible classy, wonderful student-athlete and coach experience. Thank you for your love and encouragement of college basketball.

My 25th year, to see this room packed the way it is and to see where our game's going, I just appreciate everyone for loving our sport. We appreciate you so much. Roll tide.

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