

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Regional 3 Semifinal - Tennessee vs Texas

Saturday, March 29, 2025

Birmingham, Alabama, USA

Legacy Arena

Texas Longhorns

Vic Schaefer

Rori Harmon

Madison Booker

Jordan Lee

Bryanna Preston

Sweet 16 Postgame Media Conference

Texas 67, Tennessee 59

THE MODERATOR: Okay. We will take opening statement from Coach Schaefer and then questions for the student-athletes.

Coach?

VIC SCHAEFER: Well, I think first on my mind I couldn't be more proud of a group of kids. These young ladies have been -- they just tied the school record for most wins in the history of the University of Texas women's basketball with 34. We're going to give God the glory for number 34.

We're also going to congratulate Tennessee. That is one heck of a basketball team. I told her when I shook her hand before the game started, it's going to be a knockdown, drag-out. I knew it was going to be. She has done an unbelievable job with that group. They play so hard. You've got to really execute some things to handle how they play. We were real good at times and sometimes we weren't.

But I think the thing you've got to acknowledge, too, is not only do you have these two veterans here that provide us stability, but these two freshmen down here, they might have been the difference today. This is our juice. This is our energy. They're so unselfish. They have juice on the



bench, they play with juice on the floor. They really stepped up today. 5 for 7, 5 out of 10, 3 for 5 from 3 for Jordan Lee. Just really played well.

I think obviously the fourth quarter we held 'em to 9 points. When we broke the huddle to start the fourth quarter I told them, 50 points in three quarters is a lot. It's a little bit outside of where we like to be at that point. Boy, they went out there and guarded hard, defended. I don't think the last four minutes they scored, somebody said. So it takes a lot -- against that team, man, that takes a lot.

So I'm so proud of 'em, because I know it was hard, but we have a saying all the time, it will be hard, it will be difficult but it will be worth it.

So we had 40 paint points. Our goal is always 35, 36, which is good and we held 'em to 19% from three point range and they shot 37 from two. So we just found a way to score enough points and did a good job defensively, especially in transition. They only had two transition buckets. At our place I think they had 19. So it was 10-2 on fast break points for us, which at our place I think they had 19. So we did a much better job.

Proud of our kids. So hard to do, and, again, not our best night, right? I don't think anything thinks that watches us play that that was our best night. We had 14 turnovers, I think we only had 6 at half put we did force 18. Onto the next one.

As I've told 'em, to me it's the hardest one to win but they're going to have an opportunity to get it.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the athletes.

Q. Rori, how did you turn up the defensive intensity in the last five minutes?

RORI HARMON: We didn't want it to be the last time we did it. We talked about accountability and the leadership. It's not just us seniors or us who have more experience that stepped up to the plate to just tell everybody just lock in. Like, we were over here grabbing each other by our jerseys and telling them, you can't let this happen, you



can't let this happen, stuff like that. I think it was just collectively we all just wanted it so bad.

I know they played super hard, they really did. But I think us holding them to only 9 points in the fourth quarter, that just shows -- that's truly how we play defense. That is us right there. Anything else is not us at all but this is us, doing 9 points in the fourth quarter against a great team like this.

But, yeah, I just was so proud of my teammates to be able to step up like that and just played hard all the way. We know they were going to be pressing the whole game. We understood that we would be more winded than a few of them because of the way they sub in and out, but at the end of the day you have to find some toughness and we did.

Q. Jordan and Bryanna what was the mindset that y'all came in with? It did seem like you had a different energy when you all were out there?

JORDAN LEE: For me it's about taking things, I knew coming in I'm going to be playing behind some amazing people and amazing leaders. It's about staying consistent. I leaned on my circle to get some feedback and advice throughout the year, and keeping my mind in the right frame. Being able to take advantage of the opportunity when it presents itself and Bryanna and I were able to do that tonight.

BRYANNA PRESTON: For me it's simply to compete.

Q. Bryanna, when I asked you yesterday about bright lights and the NCAA Tournament, your eyes lit up. Then I would like to ask you about the sequence in the third quarter where you scored, got a steal, drew a charge, and were going pretty nuts. How exciting was that?

BRYANNA PRESTON: Very exciting, as everyone could probably tell on the court, screaming and slapping the floor and all that. It was just a great moment for me and I just fed off of that energy, and I just played hard every single possession because at the end of the day the game can come down to one possession and we want to be on top.

Q. Bryanna, you're not exactly scared of the moment, it doesn't look like. Can you delve deeper into that? Do you feel like your team needed you in such a big way?

BRYANNA PRESTON: Absolutely, we worked very hard in practice. My teammates know that I'm capable, my coaches encourage me and I just take that out onto the

court and I just play hard.

Q. Rori, how have you watched Bree grow from the start of her freshman year and over the summer to get to this point and what she did today?

RORI HARMON: I just told her before we walked in here that I knew she was ready for the moment and that she always needs to be ready, because just the way she puts that much effort and emotion into how much she cares about winning is just something you need as a teammate. I know she is an amazing basketball player, but I think she is just so successful because how great her attitude and how much she -- like she said, she just wants to compete.

I knew the time was going to come. Like I knew she was going to be that big moment in a game that we needed just because she shows it every day in practice. I'm just super proud of her and seeing how me and her can just talk to each other on the court. We didn't get a lot of minutes together on the court, at the beginning of the season. Now we're playing together and I just love it so much, because she is just somebody I can go to and talk to, and she listens so well during those tight moments. Not only is she just listening to what I'm saying but she is telling me what I need to do, too. So I think that's really important and a great relationship to have with a senior and a freshman.

Q. Madison, with the way they sub in so much, especially on defense, can you talk about that battle and keeping a level head when all these players are coming in and out quickly?

MADISON BOOKER: Yeah, I think that's when we lean on each other more than anything, because they're subbing in so much, it's just like, dang! Basically like who is in now?

But, no, I think that our coaches really prepared us. And I think also the number one thing with kind of containing them while they're subbing in so much is knowing the personnel, knowing who can shoot, who can do what. We talked about it so well, like we talked on the court about who can shoot while they're playing.

So just knowing personnel, our communication and leaning on each other, it really got us through the game.

THE MODERATOR: Ladies, thank you. Ready for questions for Coach.

Q. Coach, what have you learned? You had a lot of experience in an Elite Eight game both as an assistant and as a head coach. What have you learned about that and how do you put that into play? You're going against a program that hasn't ever been in an Elite

Eight game before.

VIC SCHAEFER: Michael, I think it's the hardest game to win. Before I get to that, that's some great kids, y'all. Like we are so blessed at Texas to have some absolute wonderful young ladies. Those kids, man, they played their heart out tonight.

The answer to your question, Michael is it's a difficult game to win. I been in it a bunch. The way we play, and we didn't even really press that much tonight. Obviously they did. We've got a day to kind of recover a little bit and get ready.

But, you know, that game as we all know there is so much on the line. But you've gotta just go play. You've gotta relax, you've gotta go play, it's another game. We all know what the ramifications are, but at the end of the day, you know, it's a game where you're going against somebody, usually it's in the top 10 in the country, and they've got great players and you're going to have to execute.

So TCU is no different. We could have met in Corsicana and saved money playing 'em, but nonetheless, I think it's great for our state. Coach has done a great job with them and that program. They've got really good players. I watched them play Louisville and they made three after three after three. It's another team that we're going to have to do a really good job of getting out and guarding.

But that game is very difficult and you gotta have kids that can just kinda block out all the distractions and everything around 'em and just go play the game.

Q. Vic, yesterday you talked about the best press attack is a great point guard. Did you want to amend that comment to make it plural, great point guards?

VIC SCHAEFER: Yeah, played three of 'em today.

Q. Exactly. And two, Rori talked about rubbing off on Bree, how have you seen her prepare her for this moment and also the future of the program?

VIC SCHAEFER: Again, that's who Rori is, you know. She did that with Booker, she explains why Coach is running what he's running. And for Bree she has had to learn the same lesson, there is a reason why I'm running something.

But I think what you have to realize, Rori is fast, Bree is electric. And that's two changes of pace that is hard for teams to kinda get used to, you know? So Bree and Jordan, y'all, they are not short on confidence, for being young. Sometimes you know what they say, what you

don't know don't hurt you. Those two are just so confident.

And, you know, Jordan goes 5 for 7 tonight; is that right? No, 5 for 10, Bree went 5 for 7. Both those kids are just -- they're really confident kids and they played a lot the whole season, really. Tonight I got a whole coaching staff telling me that the four-guard lineup is plus-19 or whatever. So finally I just said okay, and we played 'em the whole fourth quarter together.

Q. You've been coaching in the SEC for a little while. Talk about maybe not just the depth of this league this year but specifically with teams that -- there are a lot of teams that could come and win a game depending on the match-up, but talk about the depth of the league this year specifically with teams that could win a game.

VIC SCHAEFER: Well, I mean, it's a nightmare. That's all I can tell you. I have to live it for two months, two and a half months. It's the worst two and a half months of my life, every year. There's just so many good teams, so well coached and so many great players. For us to meet them in the Sweet 16, just, again, it says a lot about our league.

As I told Coach, she's done an unbelievable job with that program in such a short period of time. A lot of people think what she would do or how she is doing it was going to work. I think she has shown them they ain't right. What they do and how they do it is very effective.

Again, getting kids to buy into a system, you know, she's done it so fast. A lot of credit has to go to her and how they play and the problems that they can create. We had a few more turnovers today -- well, only two more than we had the first time but it seemed like we had more trouble in the backcourt than we did the first time.

But, you know, our league is a monster. There is just no way to -- no other way to describe it. I mean, it's just a nightmare of a league. Anybody in this league -- you know that's the thing, y'all. You go to the NCAA Tournament and you think, oh, thank goodness, we can see somebody else. No, I get to play two games and then all of the sudden I gotta play Tennessee. Give me a break!

But that's our league. There are just so many great teams, they are all well coached, and so many great players. I walk out and I look at Tennessee and it's like looking at a WNBA team. They've got size at guard, size at 5, size everywhere. Athleticism, quickness all over the floor. It ain't much fun.

Q. Vic, you touched on the defense earlier but to hold the nation's leading-scoring team to 59 points and do what you did to them in limiting their three-point shots,

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

what was the biggest key to the defensive effort tonight?

VIC SCHAEFER: Well, don't worry, I can brag about my defense all I want, there's going to be somebody affiliated with your network going to be complaining about my offense tonight. It's okay, I know you're just the messenger.

But, you know, our defense was really, really good tonight in that fourth quarter, especially down the stretch. You really gotta credit my kids and commend them because I'm sure everybody out there was thinking, good God, they look tired and this is when it's -- all we did was buckle down and held 'em to 1 point in the last five minutes; is that right?

Again, I think we've been in these battles enough. We know what it takes. Again, when you're tired or maybe in that moment of the last four or five minutes, that's when you -- you know, you don't rise to the occasion, you fall back on your fundamentals.

I thought we did a much better job of keeping them out of the lane. I told Jordan Lee in the timeout at five minutes I said, Baby, you gotta get your nose on the ball. You've got to stop letting them drive that thing deep into the lane. So we did a little bit better job of that. And that flare screen on the left wing was giving us problems for three. We might have handled that a little better, I don't know if they ever ran it again, but that was something we were focused on, too.

Again, this is what we do. This is who we are. My kids take great pride in their toughness and their competitive spirit. You know, when it gets hard, it just is about right for us.

It was hard today, y'all, it was really, really hard.

Q. You --

VIC SCHAEFER: Did you drive here?

Q. I flew this time.

VIC SCHAEFER: Congratulations.

Q. Thank you. When you talk about the confidence that Bree and Jordan have, did you see that when you were recruiting them?

VIC SCHAEFER: No, that's what we try to recruit. You gotta recruit kids that have a competitive spirit, that are tough, you know, and both of 'em are pretty -- they're both cerebral kids. Like they're really smart. Jordan Lee, you

know, she may be doing open heart surgery in ten years.

Both those kids are extremely smart, but their competitive spirit is off the chart. Like it's just really special to have freshmen like that. Y'all, we just played in a Sweet 16 game and had two freshmen play 27 1/2 and 33 1/2 minutes. I looked out there on the floor and say, well, we got two freshmen out there and that may be why that happens. But there are so many good things that happened with them on the floor tonight.

I'm just so proud of them. They were really tough tonight and it took everybody that we had over there to get it done because Tennessee is that good.

Q. Vic, is it because of the ever-changing world of women's college basketball, do you find it ironic that here you are in the Elite Eight the fourth time in five years, the one time you weren't was a team that was a team led by a guard that you're going to see Monday night, in Hailey Van Lith, not to mention a one-time Longhorn in Sedona Prince. The irony of what happens in NCAA tournament play?

VIC SCHAEFER: The year we didn't we lose our leading scorer, Sonya, we lost her with seven games to go and we still found a way to win the league. But we were a way different team and ran into a good team in the second round.

Yeah, this is the world I live in. There's gotta be something done, obviously, I mean -- y'all, I'm watching film all day yesterday. After we get done with practice I stayed in there, but I got to take an hour to make a phone call to recruit because the portal is open. It just makes no sense.

But I'd spent all day -- I couldn't watch any more film. My brain was done and we were ready, the hay was in the barn as we say in Texas but I've got to take time, my staff's gotta take time to be on the phone. It's crazy. You know, but, this is the life we choose to live, and it's just the way things are right now.

But my team deserves all the attention that I have. And when we got back yesterday they'll tell you, I sat at that table in the team room and I stayed there for nine hours trying to find something, and we watched film last night, we got done at 9:00 and I was done. It had been a long day. I know my staff was on the phone and I said hello, but other than that, my team deserves my total attention right now.

If that costs me a kid, it costs me a kid. But this team -- I learned this from Coach Blair: The most important recruits you got are the ones in your locker room. Those kids deserve all your attention. I'm going to give this group all

my attention, because they've earned it. They deserve it; they're great kids, and so, again, if -- if it hurts us, then it hurts us, but I'm not doing it any other way.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

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