

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Regional 3 Final - TCU vs Texas

Sunday, March 30, 2025

Birmingham, Alabama, USA

Legacy Arena

Texas Longhorns

Vic Schaefer

Elite Eight Pregame Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: We are ready to begin with Coach Schaefer. He will give an opening statement and we will take questions.

VIC SCHAEFER: I have an NIL deal with Hilton. Morning, everybody, thank you for being here. You know, just going back to yesterday, again, want to commend Tennessee and Coach Kim Caldwell and their team. They've had a heck of a year and it was a knockdown, drag-out. When I shook her hand before the game I told her, I knew it was going to be one. A lot of respect and admiration for the history of that program.

Obviously being around as long as I have, I know what that program as well as my own has meant to women's basketball. So to be a part of that game in the NCAA Tournament was really humbling and an honor.

You know, I don't think there is enough time in the day, there's not enough words that I can use to describe my pride for my team. You know, we've lost -- we lost two starters throughout the course of this season, Laila Phelia, a first team All Big Ten player, never got off the ground, and then to lose Aaliyah Moore seven games into conference, and this team just keeps on rolling. You have to give 'em credit. It's not always pretty. We certainly have plenty of faults. All my fault, but we certainly find a way, have that toughness about us and find a way to get through -- get through it.

So I'm really proud of my kids. Win 34 games is really hard, y'all. It's commendable on their part.

As far as our game tomorrow obviously we're about three, three and a half hours apart from each other in our old conference. Have a lot of familiarity with each other. Coach has done a great job with 'em. They have had a heck of a year, so we're obviously going to have to play



well. They're on a hot streak themselves. You know, they have great players.

So they have players that can make plays and I think that's the thing you have to acknowledge, when things break down they have players that can go make a play. And that in and of itself it problematic sometimes. You can go through everybody's sets, which we do, my staff is so good and so thorough.

But, you know, when you have to deal then with somebody that can go make a play, that becomes problematic and so TCU can make plays. We're going to have to be really, really good and on point with what we're doing and how we're doing it defensively, and offensively we gotta take care of the ball as always. Again, believe it or not, this is one of my better shooting teams. I've said this before, I'll say it again, my national championship team in 2011 we had a four-minute drill and 90 makes was the goal. This team makes 135 and we have it every day and we make it every day. A little bit unfair how my team has been perceived shooting-wise when I look at it every day and know what they're capable of. We just gotta take care of the ball. We shoot the ball -- I think we shot 46% yesterday, 47%.

Q. Coach, you're plenty familiar with the state. Speak to the magnitude of two Texas teams playing not just in the NCAA Tournament but for a chance to go to the Final Four specifically?

VIC SCHAEFER: Well, I'd like to say that, you know, it's that we all have nothing but Texas kids but that would not be true. He has kids from all over, I have kids from all over, but I think I certainly have some really good Texas kids.

I think it speaks to really the commitment of two institutions and, you know, it's unique, for sure, to have two teams, but I'm sure it's happened before. But as I said, they have really good players and they have a really good plan. He's done a great job coaching 'em. It's a game that obviously we're going to have to really do a good job defensively, we're going to have to do a good job executing offensively, and you've got to deal with veteran kids. I don't know how



long Sedona is has been playing, seems like a really long time and Hailey has been around five years.

So you're going to have to deal with -- and they have plenty of other players. You're going to have to deal with kids that can make plays and that's problematic in and of itself.

Q. Coach Geno and Kim offered their thoughts on the regional, I'm not sure if you saw what they said but I'm curious about the regional and how it's shaped out in this tournament and how you would like to see them change at all.

VIC SCHAEFER: I was the lone ranger last year. I experienced what they're complaining about now, I experienced it last year and I was kind of the lone ranger. I have to agree with them. We're trying to have a press conference right now and it sounds like there is a daggum party next door. Last year I had a press conference and there is some machine backing up with a beep, beep, beep going on.

Seems to me like there could be better organization and better planning all around. This is not it. As I would tell my kids.

But they're right. You gotta get 'em up at 7 in the morning for a 30-minute shootaround at the most important time of the year. There's eight teams here, it's problematic. So it's just -- I would agree, I guess I probably just better leave it at that. I would agree with what they said.

Q. Vic, we've touched on this a couple times, but today is the 39 year anniversary of the '86 team winning a national championship. I wonder if you could reflect on that?

VIC SCHAEFER: That record of 34-0 has you know hangs in my practice gym, it's pretty big. Hanging up there, and it kinda looms over the court. Obviously that was a team of excellence and it's what we're chasing. So I mean, you think about it, anytime you win that many games in a season, go undefeated, that team with Clarissa Davis and that group was so special and so dominant. That was the day and age in the Southwest Conference, when they were just a dominant program.

It's certainly something that I'm aware of. I think I made mention of it last night that this team has tied that record for wins in a season. It is something that we acknowledge and we see it every day in our practice gym. And just like Coach Conrard we're all trying to chase that greatness.

Q. You and I have been around for a minute.

VIC SCHAEFER: Couple.

Q. Couple minutes. Rori was talking about the mental health aspect of getting back from her injury. Seems there has been a growth of sports psychology for players in the last few years. Can you talk about what you've seen from the mental aspect of players, from talking to people, seems like it's more important now than a few years ago, and how it's grown and how it's helped players get better?

VIC SCHAEFER: It's an interesting topic because up until, I don't know, five, eight, ten years ago, you know, I had my kids in the old days, I haven't at Texas because we had COVID and it's quite as, I don't want to say convenient but it's just not as easy, but I had my kids sign my door every day. I wanted to see them outside of basketball. I wanted to see them outside of a practice jersey.

Coach Harris who was my associate head coach wanted to make sure she saw what they were wearing to class. They weren't rolling out of bed, rolling down the hill and rolling into the classroom. So they had to walk by three assistant coaches offices. The coaches were the counselors because what it provided them is if they got to my door, if there was something on their mind, they could step into any assistant coaches office and talk to them. Those are the counselors.

But it's evolved to where it is now where you've got professionals on campus that can help these student-athletes deal with it.

And so it's something that obviously has become more and more important but I think it's always been there, I think it's just more recognized and then professionally dealt with. I've seen it all. I've had -- like I said, Coach Lovato has been with me a long time and done a great job coaching kids through tough spots, whether it's relationships, home sickness. There is so much in a kid's life 18-22 and when you are in a high-end, high-impact, high-importance program where there is such a premium put on winning and being great. Now with social media, I mean, I have some players that go "Coach, I'm not on social media." You have to stay off it. There is so much criticism and it's so unfair. I get it, too, and there's people with -- everybody's got an opinion like they got a belly button. So you just have to -- and there is no recourse, you know.

So it is hard. It's difficult, and I'm glad that we have these professionals on our campuses that can help these young people.

Q. You talk about toughness a lot in your program from the first day you came on campus and Rori kind



of embodies that for your program. Hailey Van Lith has put a charge into TCU. What problems does she present and how does her toughness trickle down to the others on that team?

VIC SCHAEFER: Yeah, you know, they have so many good players. Obviously she can create for all of 'em and they have kids that can lineup on the perimeter and make shots. Then when you have the aircraft carrier inside and we do too, we have two of 'em. So when you have that inside, you know, that draws attention. So it really is problematic.

So you've got to really do a good job of handling the person that's creating, and I think that's where Hailey obviously can score at all three levels. She creates well for her teammates, she enjoys the assists as much as the bucket. She's just a really tough competitor. I just think that's who she is. That's kind of the engine for them that kinda makes them go.

But just like with any team, I mean, they got great shooters. They've lost, what, three games? That's why they are who they are and what they've done. Winning is really hard, y'all. Like it's really hard. They went and won their league. So you have to understand what you're dealing with and they're obviously it's why they're a 2 seed.

Q. Coach, yesterday Oldacre doesn't get as many minutes, the match-ups are more -- Taylor is out there more with the guards. How does that change going against TCU, are Oldacre and Jones more important in different ways because of Prince and how do you approach that?

VIC SCHAEFER: Both of them, they're going to have to do a great job down low with Prince and certainly both of them, they'll get a dose of it. So we'll have to be really good down there. But, again, I think you've gotta do some work early with her and at the same time, you know, they really do a nice job -- he was at Oregon and a lot of that stuff that they've run for a long time they continue to run at TCU.

They're really good at it. Again, when you've got a player like Hailey who can kinda ignite it and run it, be the quarterback of it, again, you're talking being a player that scores at all three levels but can really assist at the same levels, too.

So you've gotta really be focused, but you can't lose focus. You can't lose two out there on the perimeter, you can't lose any of them. They can all fill it up. If you're going to play H-O-R-S-E with them, you're gonna get beat. It's not good. So you gotta really be diligent, defensively we have

to be really sound and really, really solid so we don't get into some issues that they can present.

Q. Just what do you remember about meeting Madison, beginning the recruiting process as a seventh grader? What stories, what moments come to mind of first getting to know her and how have you seen her evolve since the person she was in middle school?

VIC SCHAEFER: Obviously when you're a seventh and eighth grader you're recruiting kids that, you know, you may not have seen yet in a junior high game but there's obviously talk and word on the street, so to speak about a kid. So we knew that she was someone that in our state at the time of Mississippi, there's not very many kids that come from that state that can play at the SEC level. So one of our philosophies at State was, if we get one like that you, gotta close the borders. You can't let somebody come in.

We fought off Florida and Kentucky and somebody else for Victoria Vivians, and so when Madison was young, we knew she could potentially be that kind of player. So the first time she came to campus, I think she came in, like, September 3rd, which means it's about 105 and the humidity is 110. We're sitting under a tent with no breeze and we always did that, we always tailgated with our teams and recruits and it's hot and you're thinking, here is a kid that's in 8th grade. Five years from now, shoot, I hope we win enough and I still got a job. You know?

So obviously she goes into her freshman year and she starts playing really, really well and so you're keeping an eye on her.

Once I went to Texas, I really wanted to continue to recruit her. Loved her, loved her presence on the floor. I think when you start watching kids as they mature and develop, the thing that I really pay attention to is their presence on the floor. Obviously you want them to be really skilled and talented, but I always look at that presence piece because that entails a lot - teammate, how hard they play, their basketball IQ, so many things. She had it all. It was no question in my mind.

Watching her through high school, AAU, it was just somebody that I really believed could be what she is today. A two-time First-team All-American, she has a chance to do at Texas what no one has ever done, be a four-time, First-Team All-American and her jersey can hang in the Moody when she is done. She is that good. She is that talented. That's special when you have an opportunity to leave a legacy, be that talented and that good at a place like Texas where we have had a bunch, a bunch of really

special players. So that's really special. And she is such a special kid, too, just a wonderful young lady, tremendous family.

Raised right. Mom, dad, auntie, grandma. She has such a great support system. So she's just very special, very unique. And I have some others like that, as well. Really fortunate to have that.

So it was quite a long process when you start thinking about it, but once I got to Texas I really wanted to continue to try to cultivate that a little bit, because I just really felt like she could be who she is now and boy, she's lived up to everything and then some, probably, for such a young -- she's 19. Like, she's 19.

I've said this before, some of y'all haven't heard me say this, but she has done the hardest thing there is to do when it comes to individual awards. She has led from the front. She was preseason SEC Player of the Year and then she went and did it. She was everybody's number one thing on the scouting report, and yet she still was able to go and achieve that. That's really hard to do. It's just like a team that's picked preseason No. 1, man, there is nothing harder than now you gotta go live it. Because you're the target.

So you gotta give the kid a lot of credit. If she was sitting up here, she would be bragging about her teammates. She is so humble, got so much humility, man, she is a special player but a special kid.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Vic.

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