

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

Saturday, March 28, 2026

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Dickies Arena

Texas Longhorns

Coach Vic Schaefer

Rori Harmon

Jordan Lee

Madison Booker

Sweet 16 Postgame Media Conference

Texas 76, Kentucky 54

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by the Texas Longhorns, head Coach Vic Schaefer and our student-athletes Rori Harmon, Jordan Lee, and Madison Booker. We'll begin with an opening statement from Coach.

VIC SCHAEFER: Well, first, just want to congratulate Kenny and Kentucky for being in the Sweet 16. I have a lot of respect and admiration for him and that program, those kids. You know, Strack and Key are, they're such a load inside. I thought we did a really phenomenal job with them today. I thought Rori was really special on the ball. I'm really proud of my team.

I just love how we opened the game. I love how we came out ready to go. I love how we defended the first half. I just thought we were really, really locked in. Our transition was obviously very good early, and now that was off of our defense.

You know, you can usually tell with our group. If we're locked in and focused, we're usually creating some problems defensively for people. I just thought our kids were really, really good today. I'm awfully proud of them.

They continue to take a scout and really go execute it. They've done a great job. I'm wanted going to get too worked up about the second half. It's really hard. We've kind of had this issue all year long. We've had some big leads at half, and we can't seem to play 0:00 on the clock



and the scoreboard, and that's young people.

We'll take it. And again, Kentucky is a really good team, and we've had to battle them a couple of times. I thought our kids really did a bad job taking away the things that we felt like we had to do to have a chance to beat them.

You look in the paint. We had 44 paint points and 26 points off turnovers. That's a really good sign. Then 20-0 on fastbreak points.

Again, really proud of my group. It's a good win for us. Giving God the glory for No. 34. Just really feel blessed.

THE MODERATOR: We'll now take questions for our student-athletes.

Q. Rori, can you take us through what happened with your hand in the first quarter, and how much pain were you playing with today?

VIC SCHAEFER: Well, first of all, she made two jump shots after the first -- next two things after it happened, so whatever happened, it doesn't seem to be too big a deal.

Go ahead, Rori.

RORI HARMON: No, it's not that big of a deal, but yeah, I have jammed this middle finger quite a few times this year, so that's basically what happened. It's pretty swollen right now, but like Coach said, I think in the heat of the moment, you kind of forget about it obviously.

I missed two free-throws, so I'm going to blame it on that (smiling).

Q. Madison Booker, is there such a thing as winning too easy when ya'll win three games, over 100 points, or not?

MADISON BOOKER: I never think winning is easy. I think preparation is everything. I think we've been prepared very well this week. I think we have high energy every day in practice. I feel like we came out ready to get better and learn something and play together and build our chemistry.



No, winning is never easy.

Q. Rori, obviously you had a four-by-five in terms of categories statistically in the first half. When you come into a game, what is the mentality that you approach to make sure you're showing that effort on both sides of the ball? Then when you're in the game, how do you make sure to execute?

RORI HARMON: Yeah, the urgency that I play with is that when you lose right now you're done, so that's constantly in my mind. There has to be a certain urgency and intensity that we play with to not let any team try to work their way back or anything. I think that's how we came out today and how we played today initially in the first half.

But just execution-wise teams are getting smarter, they're playing harder. You're getting everyone's best basketball. You have to present your best basketball at this point, too.

Q. Jordan, what does it say about your team that your level dropped a bit in the second half, but you still win going away? How much confidence does that give you guys going into the Elite Eight?

JORDAN LEE: We definitely put a premium on starting fast, getting out, and punching first in the first five minutes. Definitely proud of us for that start.

It's March. You know, you want to be hot at this time of the year, but like Coach mentioned, going forward the level of competition, the preparation is only going to get higher and it's only going to get better. We just want to clean up some of the things in the third quarter and make it an even better second half.

Q. I know this is the second time this season that you all have played here at Dickies Arena. What does it mean to come back here and play in front of so many Texas fans and be so close to home?

RORI HARMON: It means a lot. We're super grateful and fortunate to be playing here in Fort Worth. I'm super happy that a lot of our fans were able to make this trip safely.

I kind of thought of it it's like defending your home court in a way. I'm glad that we showed up tonight and did that.

Q. This question is for Madison. Obviously looking ahead to the Elite Eight, you've got Michigan. You guys have your big three. They have their big three. What can you tell me, without giving away too much, about what you've seen from their star trio?

MADISON BOOKER: They want to play fast. Definitely watching their game today, they want to get up the court and play fast. I think we have to do a good job of getting back and communicating on defense and you know, protecting the basketball, so building a wall, because I mean, they're good. Like I said, they only play fast and shoot the ball very well. They're also a very young court.

I think we have to do a better job of trying to be mature and just talk about it on defense and try to slow them down a little bit, play our pace. Make them -- control them. That's just going to be our focus.

Q. Jordan, and Madison, you can chime in on this also. There were a lot of bodies on the floor today. Was one of the points of emphasis just coming out and playing just very physical with Kentucky? Did you see something in the game plan that made you believe that that would be the way to go with them?

JORDAN LEE: No, not at all. We kind of just played our basketball. We want to own the paint, and that's what we did today. They had two great post presences inside, so Coach is kind of on our fours and fives all week to make sure we limited their touches and knowing how intricate they are in key parts of their system. We just wanted to come out and do that, and I think they did a great job.

MADISON BOOKER: I thought Jordan answered that very beautifully. That's why I didn't say anything. No, I think our style of basketball is just physical. I mean, it's the SEC. Both teams are from the SEC, but I think we kind of just wanted to just control them and try to get on the boards, block them out. Like Jordan said, limit their touches also too.

Q. Rori, the missed free-throws, highly unusual for y'all as a team. Is there anything going on with the ball, the rims, or anything?

RORI HARMON: I'm not concerned. That's all I have to say. We'll fix it.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, ladies. We'll now take questions for Coach.

Q. Coach, can you talk about the moment that you gave Sarah Graves at the end of the game to take those free-throws in her hometown?

VIC SCHAEFER: She's just a special kid. Our team, I can actually asked another player to shoot the free-throws, and she pointed to Sarah. She said, Coach, let her shoot them. That's the kind of team I have.

I've got a great group of kids. They're pretty competitive too. You know, it wouldn't have mattered if we were in Timbuktu today. I would have still done that. Our players wanted that too. Again, I just think that speaks volumes of the kind of kids that we have at the University of Texas and on my team.

Q. We've seen Jordan Lee essentially have the games that she's had this year, strong games. She finished with 18 points to lead the team. How much does it say that she's obviously continuing to rise to the occasion, especially in these big games like this?

VIC SCHAEFER: Yeah, I think Jordan, you know -- I'm really proud of her development. I don't know -- y'all would know more. Danny would know. I don't know if there's another player in the country that's improved more from their freshman to their sophomore year.

She averaged five points a game last year. She's at 13 1/2 this year, but then the other stuff that she does. You know, she plays like I want to play. She's a good defender. She's tough. She's very cerebral.

I think that would be something for somebody in the room that has Twitter access to pull up and promote. Might be more than one of you, but to find out, you know, who else in the country went from an off-the-bench player to a starter and does what -- has done what she's done.

Because again, guards -- you win with guard play. You win championships with guard play and size. You got no chance to win championships if you don't have size. You can have all the size in the world, but if you don't have guard play, you can't win.

Our guards, you saw it. You had three of them in here tonight. That's who y'all wanted to see. They played pretty well. My guards played really well today. They were part of that 24 turnovers that we forced, and they also scored the ball and shot the ball well; 8 for 16, 5 for 10, 8 for 13. I mean, that's pretty good starting one, two, and three.

Jordan has been special, and I think when you've got another wing player like we have with her, other teams now, they can't just focus on Book, and they better not take their eye off of Rori.

Rori has gotten better too, y'all. Rori is having a very good year for us, and she's gotten better. She's always played hard. She's always guarded tough, but offensively she's really, really I think stepped up here in the last month.

Q. All throughout the season you've kind of talked about finding that consistency for all 40 minutes on

both sides of the ball. Did you see that tonight? If not, what's kind of the key to finding that missing piece?

VIC SCHAEFER: Yeah, I don't think I found it tonight. The second half was 28-28. We turned the ball over way too much. We had 16 turnovers tonight. Again, I was so proud of them at halftime. I thought we really came out. They like it when I tell them they look like Piranhas on a roast, and that's what they looked like.

I mean, they were rolling and playing really hard and really well and sharing the ball and going in transition. You liked that, didn't you (laughing)? You know, like I said, when we're ginning, when we're rolling, that's what we're doing. I just thought second half was frustrating at times, but at the same time, it's really hard with young people to get them to understand, hey, let's go out and play 0-0.

In their head, it's like, Coach, it's not 0-0. We're up 20. It's just part of it.

Q. I know you were just talking about the second half, but when you look big picture at these last three games in the tournament, winning each game by at least 20 points inclusive of today, do you think this is some of the best basketball or the best basketball your team is playing this season, like right now? If so, what kind of difference have you seen in allowing them to do that at the biggest stage, the biggest part of the year?

VIC SCHAEFER: Yeah, I don't think there's any doubt, Alexa. They're playing well right now. It certainly is some of our best basketball. It is our best basketball of the year. I think two-fold. One, we've gotten back to defending a little bit. When we went through that rough stretch, we gave up some points.

Our standard at Texas has always been 20. I mean, 60 points. 60. Not 20, 60. Our standard has always been 60. You know, one film session probably after -- I don't remember it for sure. It may have been right after Vandy or it might have been after even the next one that we won. Rori got up and said, hey, guys, I've been here five years. The standard here is 60 points. In our last five games we've given up 67 points a game, which was something that I had pointed out to them.

She said, that ain't it. That's not the standard. Ever since then, we've been pretty good defensively, locked in. But the game gets so much easier to coach when you're not living and dying with every defensive possession, when you're not trying to grind out some 62-58 win and living and dying with every possession.

I think with this team offensively is probably -- if it's not my best offensive team, it's my second best offensive team that I've ever had. They just have so many weapons that you have to be worried about, and it's really hard to match. Usually every team has one good defender. Some have two. Not very many have three. It just makes it a tough match-up for people.

Again, we kind of muddled it up a little bit in the second half tonight, but I'm not real worried about it. We'll fix it.

Q. Not getting worked up about the second half or the free-throws. Who are you and what did you do with Vic Schaefer?

VIC SCHAEFER: (Smiling) You know, just trying to enjoy my group, you know, Cedric. 5 for 15 at the free-throw line, we haven't been that all year, you know, and that was one of the focuses tonight. I sent them a text. You know, they don't have their phones, but trust me, they've got some form of technology with them. I've learned this over the years. So I sent them a text.

I said, hey, we really got to rebound today. We've got to do a great job defensively with our scout and then we've got to make free-throws. Those were three things that we really talked about today.

Obviously that was the one thing we probably didn't do very well, but you know, I'm glad Rori is not worried about it. If she's not worried about it, I'm not worried about it. We'll do better. I'm glad we got to the line 15 times. You know, we'll do a little bit better shooting them. Cedric, this team, they've worked hard to put us in a position where we're at right now, and they've also -- sometimes I can get -- you know, you've heard me talk about worrying about coaching against a ghost, and I can worry with the best of them. I'm a big-time worrier, but sometimes I have to sit back and look at this team and give it to them.

Give them their credit that they have really answered the bell. They have really responded. They're playing really good together. They're having fun together out there. They're playing with a smile on their face, playing with a lot of juice.

Sometimes as the old coach you got to step back and say, you know what, it's a pretty special group. Need to enjoy them a little bit.

Q. We look out there, and we obviously see talented ball players and a coach who obviously knows what he's doing, but what are some of the things that maybe we don't see behind the scenes that allow this program to just maintain and sustain that level of

competitiveness?

VIC SCHAEFER: Yeah, I think when you talk about building a program, you know, the only thing harder than building it is sustaining it. We've really worked hard since I got there six years ago on building our program and building a fan base.

You know, we didn't have very many fans when I got there, and we were in that big old Irwin Center. You could have 3,000, 4,000 in there and it felt like 300 or 400. So I think one thing we've worked really hard is trying to build our fan base, and we got one. They traveled today. You could see.

That doesn't happen without a lot of people behind the scenes that work really hard, and then you've got to give the kids credit. They're fun to watch. I mean, you coming to watch us, we're not standing around in a two-three zone playing hope-you-miss defense. They play hard. They respect the game. They honor the game.

But we have some kids. Justice is rolling in dough with her cookie company that she's got going. You know, Rori has been around. It's going to be really -- whenever this time -- whenever the time comes, it will be hard for me. She's been with me five out of six years.

Kylie, you all look at Kylie out there, and you think she's the meanest thing God ever put on earth, and she's a sweetheart. You can get her to smile. It just might not be out there in the game, but she will smile a little bit.

You know, my two transfers, you know, you have to really respect Ashton and Teya. Both those kids are senior transfers. They come in, and they both choose Texas. Been real easy for one of them, to go, well, she's coming, I'm not coming, but both of them said, hey, Coach, I don't care, I want to be a part of the program. I'll come in and compete.

So that's two kids that are in their last year of competition. That says to me a lot about them, who they are, how they were raised, their character. You know, I can go on and on about our players, but at the end of the day we have tremendous support at Texas. Our kids, they feel -- I think they feel the responsibility of being at the University of Texas. It's not for the faint of heart. It's just not. It's not a place that you go to to be good. It's just not. It don't fit. We're chasing greatness. When they go sit in the cafeteria, they're sitting next to Olympians, all-Americans, all-conference players, but that's the University of Texas.

Appreciate everybody being here today and for your coverage. We'll see you maybe tomorrow. Praise the Lord

and hook 'em horns.

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