

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

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Moda Center

**Texas Longhorns**

**Coach Vic Schaefer**

**Aaliyah Moore**

**Shay Holle**

**Madison Booker**

Sweet 16 Pregame Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: With us right now from the University of Texas, Vic Schaefer.

Coach, an opening statement.

VIC SCHAEFER: Yeah, thanks for having me today. Thanks for being here, everybody. It's a great day to be a Longhorn.

Excited to be here. Excited to have my team here. Giving God the glory for this group. It's an incredible group of young ladies. They have been absolutely nothing short of spectacular all year long. They're just a lot of fun to coach. I'm so proud of them and so happy for them, that they've had the success they've had.

They're a hardworking group. We've got some kids right now that are really focused. They're not ready to get to spring workouts yet. They like playing. They've had a great day today. Really good, good practice today. Really seem to be focused.

We're excited again to have this opportunity to represent a great conference, in the Big 12, that we've been a part of, that's helped us get ready for this moment. Hopefully we can continue to go out and represent what's been a very tough league for us all year long. A bunch of great players and great coaches.

With that, I'm ready (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.



**Q. Can you explain to us why you're disappointed to be in Portland as the No. 1 seed and why you think this is a home game for Gonzaga.**

VIC SCHAEFER: Well, I've been here before. It took us four hours and 48 minutes to get here yesterday, that's wheels up to wheels down. I'm pretty sure it took them under an hour.

I think their fans will be able to travel the 300-something miles easier than mine can the 2,000-something miles.

For that reason... Again, I've got experience in being in this area in this game against that team. Happened to me in 2010 when I was an assistant at A&M against the very same team when Kelly was coaching them.

It's no big deal really. I'm not disappointed to be here, by the way. I'm not disappointed at all to be the 1. I wouldn't care if we were in Timbuktu or anywhere else, I'd be excited to be the 1 seed anywhere.

But we're coming off playing in the Big 12 tournament championship, where we played basically three homes. We were the road team for three games, Kansas, Kansas State and Iowa in Kansas City.

Again, it just kind of comes with the territory. Again, I'd love to have them regional in the Midwest where it was fair for everybody. I've also been in that where I played in Dallas, I played in Kansas City, I played in Oklahoma City. At little easier for everybody to get there than here.

But it's fine. We're excited. Like I said, we don't care where we're playing. My kids, further the better. They like traveling, they're kids.

**Q. When Rori went down, was there any thought Shaylee can run point guard? How did you arrive at the decision that Maddie was going to be the one?**

VIC SCHAEFER: Shaylee had to play a little bit of point guard last year when Rori went down five games with the foot issue. In recruiting Book so long, to me, I felt like that



was our best option. We didn't really have a tryout. There was no tryout. First of all, we didn't have time, had three days to get ready for our conference opener. There was never really any doubt in my mind that Madison Booker was going to be our point guard. I like her skill set there.

It's panned out pretty good for us. There's been some bumps in the road. Man, there was bumps in the road for Rori Harmon. It's hard playing point guard at this level. It's hard being my point guard with the demands we put on you.

I couldn't be more proud of her, though. No, we got three days, we got to figure it out.

**Q. Shaylee Gonzales had a lot of success against Gonzaga at BYU. What did you see in her? How has her role changed from not having to carry such a big load as at BYU?**

VIC SCHAEFER: Let me tell you something about Shaylee Gonzales. We wouldn't be where we are today without her. She was the most unselfish, great teammate, great kid. Every day I get the same smiling, energetic, young lady. She is such a blessing to our program for the last two years.

Very unusual to be a second-team All-American, lead your team in scoring at BYU for four years. Now you come to us, and she's not our leading scorer. She doesn't have to be. But that's why she came to Texas. She wanted to be a part of a team and have a chance to play on this stage and play on a bigger stage.

Just a special, special kid. I mean, the character of her, the work ethic. Just embraces the challenge that our level has brought, and just has met it head on. Hasn't run from anything. Is accountable. Just a tremendous addition to our program.

We've won -- 32, 26 -- 68 games with her. She has really impacted our program. I am so thankful we were able to get her.

When I took her, I thought we were getting a kid that would impact our kid, and she has done that and then some. She had an average of 17 points a game. We haven't needed her to. She had to do that at BYU. She doesn't have to do that at Texas.

She just enjoys being on our team. She just wants to win. Coach, I don't care, I just want to win. The impact that her and Shay have on this team defensively, it's off the chart. I'm amazed. I continue to be amazed at those two's progress defensively, how good they are, y'all. I just

watched them work out for an hour at Nike, we went through our defensive stuff, and I'm sitting there going, They're incredible. I mean, they are.

My team was really good, but those two stand out because three months ago they didn't have to do what they're doing now on that end of the floor. They got to do that now for us to win. They just continue to get better, better, better, smarter, smarter, smarter. Just impact kids, man. I'm lucky to have them.

**Q. You have a kid who spent some time in Oregon in the early part of her career in Taylor Jones. A kid who has been through a lot during her college career. Can you discuss her role on your team and how you got her back to Texas.**

VIC SCHAEFER: Yeah, she has been through a lot. She made the decision that she wanted to go somewhere else. We were, again, fortunate enough to get her.

Great story. Her daddy is an Aggie. Tough for him to put that Texas orange on. I went to that school, too. I told him, Trust me, brother, it ain't that hard.

When he comes to the games, I give him a hard time every time I see him, he has a Texas Longhorn on somewhere on his body and he's got Texas orange. I rib him quite a bit about it.

I've always said if we could get her healthy, I think she could be pretty good for us. When she's been healthy, she's been pretty good for us.

We had her healthy and really rolling early in the season. She had an unfortunate incident, kind of took her out for two, three weeks. When you're out two, three weeks, it takes two or three weeks to knock the rust off.

She's been kind of up and down as far as maybe stats and numbers, but she's obviously made a big impact on our team. Getting her back in her home state, I know she's loved it, enjoyed it. We've certainly enjoyed having her. She's really impacted our program.

**Q. Does Gonzaga remind you of Oklahoma or any team you've faced this year?**

VIC SCHAEFER: Yeah, they remind me of them. I don't know how to differentiate between which one's on steroids because they're both just off the chart. They both shoot the three so well. They both really have a presence. Got players that have a presence on the floor, that are unflappable.

So they do in a lot of regards. They do, except I would say I have to say -- is it pronounced Ejim? So Ejim is really unique. She is tough. That's somebody you better know where she's at and what she's doing all the time.

Again, from the comparison perspective, absolutely. They're both very, very similar. They both want to shoot the three, and they're both very good at it. All you have to do is look at the Utah game the other night. Gonzaga had already made more threes in the first half than they were averaging on the year if I'm not mistaken. It was late, I was dozing in and out. I've already rewatched it on the airplane yesterday, and one time before that.

I know I saw that graphic somewhere.

**Q. Do you go anywhere without your stack of papers? Do you go to dinner with them also?**

VIC SCHAEFER: This time of year, I don't. I have a file on everybody. If I've played you more than once or twice, you usually have a couple of files. There's some teams, Kansas State, I've got three files on. I'm always going over my notes (smiling).

**Q. You had three days to figure out when Rori went down. You put Maddie in there. I keep waiting for her to play like a freshman. Do you keep waiting for that? At this point do you consider her a veteran who can do everything? With your whole team, are you impressed by that? You haven't played like you lost an All-American.**

VIC SCHAEFER: I think obviously two things are involved here. First, you have to give Madison credit. It wasn't easy early. The first five minutes, if you look at our Baylor game, she's throwing it all over the gym, fifth row, eighth row, rolling it off her foot. I had to get her out, set her down and calm her down. She came back in and was fine.

I think the other part is, not only is she really accepted and embraced her role and likes it now, part of that transformation is because her teammates have encouraged her and been there and supported her through it all.

Lubbock, she had six turnovers in that game, but it didn't seem to be that bad. We won by 27. That might be one of the reasons. Still it just didn't seem to be as bad.

You fast-forward throughout the whole deal, and you get to the conference tournament championship game, she has 25, she's the Most Outstanding Player. The biggest stat she wants to show me is the zero turnovers in that game. That's a point guard.

No. 1 stat for a point guard is the W. The second most important stat is the turnovers. She's just really embraced the importance of running our team, and not losing the importance of her role in scoring for us. She's got to score for us.

Again, I just had to do it 15 minutes ago, I have to get on her for turning down a shot. She's so unselfish, to a fault. Drives me crazy. Most of the time coach will sit up here and talk about kids that are selfish, that maybe take bad shots. That isn't Madison.

You know what, it doesn't even occur to me anymore that she might have a bad game and it's because she is a freshman. If she has a bad game, it ain't going to be because she's a freshman. It might be some other reason for doing that, but it ain't going to be that.

**Q. In December you said that you thought your team was only decent defensively. That was before Rori got hurt. Where would you say they are now? With her going down, who has had to become the defensive quarterback for your team? Is it the guards, or have other people needed to make up for that?**

VIC SCHAEFER: Yeah, so my evaluation would be I'm just proud of where we've evolved to defensively because they get it. They understand that on our good nights, we're usually locked in on that end, and that transfers over to our offensive cohesion and our chemistry there.

We've been pretty good. I mean, I'm going to be honest with you. The last 24 hours before we played Alabama, I thought they're averaging 76 points a game in the SEC. I'm like, We're going to have to score 80 to beat 'em. I was so worried about 'em, I think they're so good, Kristy does a great job, offensively they had so many weapons, and we go in there and lock them down to 54. I walked off the court going, I can't believe we just did that.

Then I look at my team throughout the course of the year, the teams we've had to play, an Iowa State team that's so hard to guard. They have the monster inside that's so hard to deal with. She's so good. Great guard play. That point guard, I have so much respect and admiration for her her whole career.

You can go through K-State. Go through all of 'em. Every team in our league. We've had games where we've held people in the 40s and 50s.

I'm proud of where we've evolved to defensively. We're pretty good most nights. I don't want to say it and have a train wreck tomorrow night. I don't want to jinx myself. But

they get it. Like I said, I've watched them this morning, and they were really locked in.

The person that had to become Rori is Shay Holle. Probably my third option. She got the third best guard before Rori went down. Shaylee usually got the first or the second. Rori got number one. Shay had to become my lockdown defender. The kid evolves into an All-Big 12 defensive team player. Amazing. Amazing.

I could go through each one of our kids and talk about how they've elevated their game both ends of the floor. Shay Holle is on the All-Defensive team because she cares. That's it. You can talk about the work, talk about everything she's done, the time she's put in. But she doesn't do all that if she doesn't care. Shay Holle is a giver, just like Shaylee Gonzales. Two guards out there, they just want to win. Tonight we're going to go 2-12, Coach, against Alabama, but we're going to lock down Nye, who is an unbelievable defensive player, hold her 6-18. We're going to go over and get the other guard and hold her to 7-19 who is first-team All-SEC. That's the kind of kids I got. That's what's made it so fun to coach 'em.

They're just winners. That's all they know. I've watched it all year. I've shaken my head a bunch. But all they do is win.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you very much. Best of luck tomorrow.

VIC SCHAEFER: All right.

THE MODERATOR: Joining us now, the student-athletes from the University of Texas.

We'll open it up for questions.

**Q. Shay, Taylor Jones played her first couple of years of college ball out here, transfers home where she's from. What has she brought to the team? How happy are you that she did decide to come home?**

SHAY HOLLE: Yeah, I know, I thinking coming back here, she's very happy that she came home. I think having her on the team just really opens so much up for us. Like, she's such a presence inside, and people really have to focus on her.

As a guard, it helps us out a little bit. I think people tend to collapse on her, maybe try to double, so it opens up the wing a lot.

Yeah, I mean, she's such a force inside. Rebounding, she's so long, she alters a bunch of shots on defense.

Really on both ends of the floor. Yeah, she's helped us out a lot.

**Q. Aaliyah, Gonzaga is very balanced offensively. How do you go about defending them?**

AALIYAH MOORE: Yeah, I mean, they are a very smart and fundamental team. We are really going to have to lock in on defense. That's something that we've talked about. Our plan is to execute the scout.

I think it started back in September, practicing every day, working hard in practice, doing all our defensive drills 100%.

We need to lock in, play our game, play Texas basketball, and we'll be just fine.

**Q. Aaliyah, since the Oklahoma game, how would you assess how your team has done with its rebounding?**

AALIYAH MOORE: A lot better. That game was low, as I'm sure many of you saw. We gave up five possessions in a row with no rebound. We needed to rebound. It was very vital.

We came in the next day, I think that we needed that almost in a way. It was halfway through the season, maybe a little bit towards the end, but we needed that. I think we needed a news flash of teams are not going to back down. Just because we might be bigger does not mean we're going to get every rebound. We need to lock in on the fundamentals, we need to box out, put a butt in the gut. I think we've done that in the practices since.

I'm really proud of us. I think that's something that teams have had to focus on against us, is boxing us out, because we crash the boards hard.

**Q. Coach was just in here talking about how Maddie technically is a freshman, but she doesn't play like one. In what ways does she act like a freshman, or is she just super mature all the time, acting like a veteran?**

SHAY HOLLE: We just got done talking about her and her LEGOs. No, she actually is pretty mature honestly. I forget that you're, what, 18?

MADISON BOOKER: Yeah.

SHAY HOLLE: She's silly, she's goofy. Overall she is pretty mature, I'll say.

AALIYAH MOORE: I spend a lot of time with Book out of

the court. Sometimes I have to tell myself that she's a freshman. There's moments where I think, There it is. There it is, for sure.

THE MODERATOR: Madison, would you like a rebuttal chance?

MADISON BOOKER: No, I'm good. Everything they said was right (smiling).

**Q. Coach was talking about the way that you guys have had to step up defensively, Shay, with you in particular, but Aaliyah -- whoever wants to add to that, feel free. What are the ways that you feel like you all have had to elevate the defensive game, your effort, especially once Rori went down?**

SHAY HOLLE: Yeah, I think especially when Rori went down, she kind of not only ran our team, but especially on the defensive end she really set the tone for us. We knew it was going to be a team effort 'cause not just one person can fill the role that she does.

I think more than just like getting extra reps and doing more defense in practice, I think it was more of a mental thing, just really knowing that we have to embrace that. When our defense is good, like everything else kind of flows for us. It all starts on that end.

Really, like I said, embracing it. I think we have and it's shown. Then obviously I think going against each other and going against our practice players has helped. But yeah, just the extra reps and the mental piece.

AALIYAH MOORE: Yeah, I mean, Shay hit it. She hit everything.

MADISON BOOKER: I'm just going to say that when Rori was playing, I think she kind of shadowed our defensive problems on that end. So when she went down, we knew that they were going to come to life. We had to do something about it. I think we just stepped up as a team.

We knew that we had to have each other's back and play team defense, because that's what it was going to come down to.

**Q. Does Gonzaga remind you of Oklahoma at all? If so, how?**

AALIYAH MOORE: Actually a little bit. I could see the comparison. The smart, patient ball, kind of waiting for that moment. You turn your head, they're going to backdoor you. They make a lot of smart moves, passes. I can definitely see the comparisons.

I never thought about that, but yeah.

SHAY HOLLE: Yeah, I would agree. I think both teams can shoot the ball really well. They're going to use the shot clock. You're going to have to lock in that whole time on defense. Yeah, they're super smart. Not necessarily super big inside, but they spread the floor.

Definitely some similarities. We've seen the style before.

MADISON BOOKER: Yeah, they played hard 40 minutes. We have to match their intensity all 40 minutes.

**Q. Shay, how have you evolved defensively over the last three, four years? As far as the actual defensive part of it, how much have you evolved?**

SHAY HOLLE: Yeah, I think now, four years in, it definitely comes more naturally to me I think. Freshman year I had to think a lot about where I was supposed to be, what I was supposed to be doing. It kind of made me a step slow. Just the comfort of knowing Coach Schaefer's style of defense, knowing where I'm supposed to be, how he wants it done, mixed with working on it every single day. I'm guarding the ball every single day in practice. These are guys that are super quick. They keep me humble, for sure. They get by me.

Once I get to a game, it makes it a lot easier. I think that's shown.

But yeah, I think my defensive game has definitely evolved a lot. Coach Schaefer would definitely agree. Me and him make jokes that freshman year I couldn't guard the dead (smiling). I put my head down and go to work. Yeah, I think it's really just the work that pays off.

**Q. Maddie, you're in a unique situation in that Rori gets hurt, but she's there, at every practice, on the bench talking to you. I'm sure she has helped you. What has that relationship been like? What have you learned from her?**

MADISON BOOKER: I mean, really about anything, being a point guard, how I'm supposed to run a team.

I think her biggest advice to me was that I need to make sure, me, how I play, is going to show to the rest of my teammates.

For example, one game I wasn't doing too well. It was showing on my face. I was pretty mad, of course. She stopped and pulled me over and said, Hey, like your teammates see how you're looking, so now they -- it's

affecting them.

I mean, the relationship there is like a little big sister (smiling). Yeah, she's just like given me great advice. She's helped me grow every day.

**Q. For Madison to do what she's doing, playing a position she wasn't used to, to take over a team like she has, do you feel like she nationally or however you want to frame it isn't getting the respect she might deserve?**

AALIYAH MOORE: Well, yeah, I'm always going to ride for mine. Maddie is my point guard. I think she deserves everything she has coming for her. She's an amazing player. I see her every day, the work she's putting in that other people don't.

I think at the same time Maddie will tell you she doesn't need all the awards to know her worth, and we don't need to see her get all those awards to know that she's one of the best, in my opinion, in the country.

We instill that confidence in her. She has her own confidence. Doesn't really matter what people think, as long as we know. We're solid in our base.

Yeah, in my eyes, she's Player of the Year in every category, so...

SHAY HOLLE: Yeah, I would agree with everything.

That's one of my favorite things about Maddie, she doesn't care about any of that, how many points she scores. I think she likes having assists more. She'll be like, That's cool, that's great, but most important stat is winning.

I think if she just keeps that, she'll get all the awards she deserves. She does deserve every single one in my opinion. We know she's focused, and we have all the confidence in her.

AALIYAH MOORE: Just ball, Maddie.

MADISON BOOKER: Just ball (smiling).

**Q. Maddie, Texas sent out the cookbook to national media members as a Player of the Year campaign. There are some recipes in the back. Do you actually cook those recipes? I got the impression it was grandma. Can you cook off the court?**

MADISON BOOKER: Yeah, I do. Only cook one recipe, that's hibachi. That's my favorite thing to eat, hibachi.

SHAY HOLLE: Okay (smiling).

**Q. Maddie, Coach was talking about how I guess in the Big 12 championship game the stat you were most proud of was your turnovers, that you came a long way from some higher turnover games. How has that process been like for you? You're a player that's very unselfish, so you're not worried about the points. Being able to embrace that role, a true point guard?**

MADISON BOOKER: Yeah, I think that's the most important stat, just like in all of basketball. Just going from having high turnovers, make sure I limit my turnovers to three or less, it's really my goal. Really two or less. None would be awesome (smiling), great.

But I think what that means to me is if I limit my turnovers, my team can limit their turnovers, more opportunities for us to score.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much. Best of luck tomorrow.

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