

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

Sunday, March 31, 2024

Portland, Oregon, USA

Moda Center

Texas Longhorns

Coach Vic Schaefer

Shay Holle

Aaliyah Moore

Madison Booker

Elite 8 Postgame Media Conference

NC State, 76 - Texas, 66

THE MODERATOR: Joining us now in the post-game press conference Head Coach Vic Schaefer along with student-athletes Madison Booker, Shay Holle and Aaliyah Moore. Coach, we'll start with an opening statement, and then we'll direct questions to student-athletes.

VIC SCHAEFER: First just want to congratulate Wes and his program and their team. I thought they were really special today. They played really well. Obviously, James really played well that first half and was ready to go.

And I thought their whole group really played well. You know, for us, we're going to give God the glory and victory. We're going to give Him the glory in defeat. It wasn't our day.

We outrebounded them, 14 on the offensive boards, 13 overall. We got 20 more shots than they got. We just -- the first half we really struggled guarding, you know, defensively.

But, man, we're all disappointed. I mean, that locker room's no fun. It's rough. But as I told Shay, coming off the floor, like, this group has done so much, has accomplished so much. I will not let them or anyone take away from what they've been able to do this season with the things that have happened.

Like, this group's amazing. It wasn't our day. We didn't -- you know, we take great pride in being tough. And tough



doesn't have anything to do with how much weight you can lift. Today we probably weren't as tough as we had been in the past over the last two months.

But, again, it's not like we woke up and went and, hey, we're not going to be tough today. It just -- it happens sometimes in athletics. But those kids -- these kids played their heart out today. And, again, maybe didn't play well. Give our opponent credit for that, a little bit.

And then, again, sometimes these things happen. Yeah, it's probably the worst we've played, what, two months? I mean, we smoked a lot of really good looks in the first half. We didn't guard. But if we don't change that and we make three shots, it's 43-39 instead of 31. And you can go down the list of how many really good looks we had, who had them and all that.

So sometimes I don't know why. It's just not in the cards. And I don't think, again, when you look at 20 more shots, I mean, they outshot us at the free-throw line 25-11, you know. But we outscored them in the paint, 44-24. Outscored in the second half, but we got popped early, didn't really handle that well.

Again, probably could have been easily been a four-point game, two-point game at half. But -- man, this group, just because they dropped one today, it doesn't make them any less special. It doesn't make them any less remarkable. It doesn't make them any less of who they've been all year long.

Shaylee Gonzales should be up here. She's the most incredible young lady. What she's brought to our program, the impact, the presence that she has, so far-reaching and everlasting. Been here two short years. Like, I can't believe she's already been here two years, and she's not going to be back next year.

Would loved to have had her for all six, Grandma. But just -- you know, we don't win without her. We don't win without all these kids. Shay Holle had to go from being our third defender on the perimeter to being number one and just welcomed it with open arms and did it.



So we've had a lot of kids step up. Tonight wasn't our night. Give NC State credit. But it doesn't make it any less of the season that we've had today, and it doesn't make these young ladies any less of the competitors they've been throughout the course of the season, or any less of a champion that they are. These kids are truly champions.

THE MODERATOR: Go ahead and open it now to questions to the student-athletes.

Q. Madison, this is your first time reaching the Elite 8. It is your freshman year. Just your feelings on being here and how you use this for motivation going into the next season.

MADISON BOOKER: Yeah. It's my first one. It's been a long season. I got here, you know, workouts were going great, we looked like a Final Four team. We believe that we'll get to the Final Four. And then things happen. People have injuries. And basically, like, everybody's just mind changed, just like the outside. Not ours. People go down.

And they say they're not winning Big 12, regular season. They're not winning this many games. They're not making it to the Final Four. They're not making it this far. They're not a 1 seed. And just the fight we had, we had to get here, we kept fighting. We kept fighting the odds.

And we made people believe. This is my first season. It didn't go the way I wanted. But I think there's a lot to learn from the season also.

I'm just grateful to be here, blessed. My teammates, they're the best. You know, it don't feel good, but it will definitely push me in the future.

Q. Shay, what made Aziaha so tough to defend today?

SHAY HOLLE: Obviously, she was making shots. She's really good off the bounce. It's not like you can give her one thing. She could find a way to score the other way.

I think it maybe took me too long to adjust. We did a better job with her in the second half just as a team. First half, she's a really good, talented player, can score at all three levels, so...

Q. Aaliyah, your play earned you a spot on the All-Tournament team. I just kind of wanted to ask you just how you're feeling right now, the emotions kind of that you're going through and just what it's like to have your play recognized for the All-Tournament team.

AALIYAH MOORE: That's great. We didn't win, though.

That was the overall goal coming into this tournament.

It's hard. (Tearing up.) I was here my freshman year. I don't have much to say. It's hard because I saw the work that this team put in, the work that I've put in, and it's great I got that accolade.

But we had goals. And I'm really proud of us. I don't want to take away that we got to the Elite 8, but we had goals beyond that, and I saw us doing it. It's tough. Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Any other questions?

Q. Shay, you have a lot of emotion on your face right now. Can you just talk about what it's like, playing with your dual partner in Shaylee and the season that you guys have had together, just kind of being that dynamic duo up front?

SHAY HOLLE: Yeah. Shaylee is super special, definitely part of the reason I'm upset. She just puts in a lot of hard work. And me and her get shots up every day together. (Crying). Sorry. So I'll definitely miss her, but, yeah, I'm super proud of her.

I know she has a lot of great things ahead. It's not like her story stops here at all. We're super blessed to have had her the past two years. But, yeah. I mean, she's an amazing person, more than anything. And I know God has a lot of great things in store for her. So I'm excited for her in that way. But, yeah. Definitely going to miss her.

Q. For any of you three, just before halftime, the NCAA announced the two three-point lines were not the same. Did you guys notice that? And I guess what --

WES MOORE: They were not aware.

Q. They were not aware. Okay.

THE MODERATOR: We have time for one last question for our student-athletes.

Q. Shay, I just wondered, with what Aziaha did today, did you -- were you surprised? Did she remind you of anyone that you had played against previously? Or was she just unconscious?

SHAY HOLLE: I won't say she's unconscious. It was unconscious because she's a really good player and she's super talented. She definitely played very well. Good players play well in big games, and she did that. So I don't want to take away from anything.

It's not like she played out of her mind, I wouldn't say,



because she's more than capable. She played great the game before this, and we ought to watch that game.

I mean, it was definitely a good game for her, I would say. But, yeah, she's just a really talented player, so...

THE MODERATOR: To our student-athletes, we thank you very much for your time. Congratulations on a great season. The floor is now open to questions for Coach Schafer.

Q. Vic, can you talk to us about the three-point line that you were told before the game, and did it matter? If it had been right, do you think that Aziaha James wouldn't have hit all those threes? None of us know what the actual measurements were. Maybe you do and could share with us.

VIC SCHAEFER: Yeah. I was notified, I don't know -- I think my kids were warming up -- that there was a discrepancy. And so I think it's about a foot from one end to the other. But they gave us the option of bringing somebody in and re-marking it correctly, which would have taken an hour. And we might have lost our window with ABC, or playing how it was. We wanted to play, and we played.

I mean, I wasn't going to be the guy that goes, No, I don't want to do it. I don't really -- you want to know if I think it had anything to do with the game? Probably not. But I really would have loved to have done what I normally do my last 12 minutes before a game instead of walking around out there, trying to see if the floor's screwed up. Yeah. Yeah.

Q. Vic, why did you not want to take the delay to get it right?

VIC SCHAEFER: Well, our kids had already warmed up. It would have been at minimum an hour because they were going to have to bring somebody in from outside, and the potential of losing our window on ABC.

If I would have done it, I'd have been the only one in the room that wanted to do it. And, again, at the end of the day, when we went out there and analyzed it, it just -- at the end of the day, we had already played a game on it. We both won. So we just decided to play.

Q. Coach, a lot to be desired at the end of this one. Just can you talk about what made this team so special, even when it ends here in the Elite 8?

VIC SCHAEFER: Well, I mean, anybody that's been around and seen teams and how they develop and the

players that are on those teams and what their skill sets are and capabilities, their ability to play the game and their investment.

You know, when I watched this team grow over the last three months, the investment that they put into the game is probably, number one, because they had to. You know, we had been behind the 8-ball a lot this year with Rori, then Taylor -- well, let me start over -- with DeYona, then Rori, then Taylor, then DeYona again, then Booker for a game.

So, you know, this group's been so resilient. And so on a day when our toughness wasn't quite what it's been, you just can't let one day define you. Like, one day doesn't define this team. Everything -- I think somebody told me that they haven't won 33 games at Texas since 1987/88. You think of all the history and tradition of Texas women's basketball and all that, and this team did something that hasn't been done in 40 years? Come on. And did it under some really challenging situations.

So we'll be back. I can say that with great confidence. If we lose Shaylee and Hadi, the class that we have coming in, Rori back healthy, and everybody else a year older and a year wiser, I'll be sitting here next March 31. Is that what today is? There you go.

I mean, I always say if I'm doing my job, I'm playing to April. I almost got there. But if you'd know anything about this group, anything about this team, those kids are so special, man. They're some of the best kids I've ever been around in my life.

So it's been -- I'm heartbroke for them because I wanted them to experience, you know, going to the Final Four, playing in that game. But at the same time, I couldn't be prouder of a group.

Q. Forgive me for my ignorance on this one, but which three-point line was correct? Like, which end was wrong?

VIC SCHAEFER: That was about 2 1/2, 3 hours ago and some crying in between, so I'm not sure I can remember. Shoot, I don't know. I can tell you this: Go out there and get up in the stands and look at it, and you can see it. Sorry.

Q. That's okay. Thank you.

Q. Was it one that was too short or one that was too long? Do you remember that?

THE MODERATOR: I think Coach already said he doesn't

remember, so if we could move on to the next question.

Q. I did have another question if I could actually ask that one, too. With Aziaha James going off the way she did, did you think that was more of a defensive breakdown or just a player that was on a heater?

VIC SCHAEFER: You go back and look at the film. Shay Holle's standing right there looking at her a bunch, you know. I mean, okay. We could turn nine threes into nine twos, and that cuts it to 9. But she's going to get by you. You know, she's just so quick and athletic.

Their athleticism and length at guard was a real concern going in. The first thing on the board was, on the defensive side, was transition defense. We had 16 points we gave up at halftime. They didn't get any the second half.

That was number one. Number two was dribble penetration. So to me, that was the two things that we really had pinpointed and talked about. And we just had a hard time getting -- you know, handling it. It just happens that way. And, again, man, Shay Holle's been nothing short of spectacular this year for me.

I think the kid was -- she's a really good player. And today she was outstanding. You've got to pat her on the back. You know, we talk about it all the times. Sometimes you've just got to pat them on the butt and tell them, I'll see you the next time down. That's what we had to do with her because she made some really tough shots.

Q. When you jumped in, it seemed like it was a choice not to tell the players about the three-point line? Did you kind of not want that to be in their heads?

VIC SCHAEFER: Yeah. No, there's no point in talking about it. It is what it is. I mean, like I said, you guys are going to make a big deal out of it. Again, it's a shame, but it is what it is. And I don't think anybody wanted to draw attention to it and put the thing off for an hour, you know. And at the end of the day, I don't know that it mattered.

Q. Is it disappointing to you at all that we're having to spend half your press conference right now talking about a three-point line instead of talking about your team?

VIC SCHAEFER: Well, I hate to say this, but I have a lot of colleagues that would say, only in women's basketball. I mean, it's a shame, really, that it even happened. But it is what it is.

I mean, I'm not the culprit here. You guys are asking me about something that I had no control over. So Vic Schafer

ain't the problem. (Laughter.) But, anyway, it is what it is. It's a shame. That's all I can say.

I'd be glad to talk about my team, though, because I'm really proud of them.

Q. Unfortunately you're up there instead of an NCAA rep. But how limited was Taylor today, and was what was kind of her status?

VIC SCHAEFER: She was cleared, obviously, you know, and played well for her ten minutes that she played and certainly made an impact. Would liked to have probably played her a little more.

But when I played her the first half, she missed a hedge and gave up a driving layup. And she had a much better second time through. She was completely -- obviously, our people are going to be very thorough, and she was completely cleared, so...

Q. You got some really good minutes from your sophomore, Mwenentanda. She came in, gave really good offensive minutes, really good boards. Can you just speak about sort of the boost she gave your team off the bench today?

VIC SCHAEFER: I'm proud of her. She came off the bench the other night and didn't play very well. And she knew it, and it upsets her. The kid wants to please so bad. And I want her to be -- I want her to be great. I think the kid can be, but it seemed like Friday night she couldn't get out of her own way. Tonight she played well. And I think she's really comfortable in certain things that we do like when we're playing zone. She's really good at the top of the zone and takes up a lot of room and space.

She just was different tonight, which I'm really thrilled for her because she's a great kid, man. Like, she is a great kid. Mom played at -- played for Wendy Larry. And so she comes from a really good family and basketball family. And so was happy for her to see her come in and be able to help us a little bit.

You know, again, we missed a ton of shots, y'all. We missed some point-blank shots. Sometimes that happens. And it hadn't happened to us all year. But tonight it happened. But sometimes it happens on that stage, right? Especially when you've got some kids that maybe haven't been there.

So, again, before I go, I just want to thank everybody for being here. And I want to thank everybody for what you mean to our game.

I've done this a long time. I've seen some of y'all. Some of y'all weren't even around when I started coaching, and that's a good thing. But at the end of the day, to have you all here covering our game and promoting our game and caring about our game means so much.

And for me, for somebody who's literally invested my life in this game, I want you to know how much it's appreciated. Our student-athletes appreciate you. My administration appreciates you. And I can tell you, as the Head Coach at the University of Texas, I appreciate each and every one of you. And you just keep telling the good stories, and hopefully we won't give you too many bad ones.

But we get it. Sometimes the good comes with the bad. It's one of the things I'm proud about this group, y'all. You're never going to write anything bad about them. You're never going to write anything about their character.

These kids are -- they're great Longhorns. And they're incredible competitors, and they do it the right way. And that's how I can sit up here today with a smile on my face, even though I just got beat, and be so proud of them. Because I know they did everything they could today, yesterday, the day before to get to this point.

Trust me. This was not easy. And just like I told y'all, Apollo 13, rewiring the capsule to get them home, it was a challenge. But I'm going to tell you, I think we got them home, and that was our goal. And we'll be back. Thank y'all. Praise the Lord and Hook 'Em, Horns. Thank y'all.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports