

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Regional Semifinal: Texas vs Maryland

Sunday, March 28, 2021

San Antonio, Texas, USA

Alamodome - Hemisfair

Texas Longhorns

Celeste Taylor

Sweet 16 Postgame Media Conference



Q. Like you said, you have been working hard all year. The last few weeks you're clicking at an extremely high level. What is going on? Why are you clicking so well right now?

CELESTE TAYLOR: I mean, we've definitely gotten a lot more time together, to spend together, getting to know each other, building our chemistry throughout this season even. It's really hard when you're so secluded from your teammates back in Austin. We're very strict. Our university is really strict on what we can do and what we can't do.

I think just being able to see each other when we walk down to go pick up our food before we eat in the room. When we're able to play games together within our meeting room. I think that's built a lot of chemistry between us.

We've gone at it for a long time now together. So I think just getting through those tough times together and helping each other push through, it definitely has helped us out in the long run.

Q. All we've heard the last couple of days is the Maryland juggernaut, averaging 98, they're going to put up a hundred. Carol said they're going to put up at least 80. You guys knew what you were capable of defensively. It's one thing to know it, but it's another thing to go out and do it. How much motivation did you have hearing all of that talk, knowing how good you've been on defense all year?

CELESTE TAYLOR: From the beginning, since when we got in this tournament, people continue to say -- people continue to not say our names. People continue to not bring us up in conversation. I think from the beginning, we know what we have on this team. We know when we're locked down and focused what we can do. We know when we play together, we know what we can do together.

I think all of us from nobody speaking on us in the beginning to now, people saying everything that they said, I think we just take it in and we hear it, we go after it. We attack.

Texas 64, Maryland 61

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by Celeste Taylor. We'll take questions.

Q. What makes you so tough to be able to win these grind-it-out games?

CELESTE TAYLOR: I mean, I honestly have no words right now. But we've been saying this from the beginning. We work hard consistently. From the first time I met this coaching staff, we put our heads down and we worked. Whether it was the summer workouts, running on the track at 6:00 in the morning for six week straights till right before we got here. When we're here and practicing, getting prepared for these next games, we work every single day. We put our heads down and we go to work. We just fight.

We have the phrase, 'the Texas fight'. I think we've shown that throughout this whole tournament.

Q. Y'all knew what you were going up against offensively with this Maryland team. What was working for you especially after that start when they went up 13-2?

CELESTE TAYLOR: I mean, basketball is a game of runs. They went on their run early. We came back and we shut them down. There were people out there saying they was going to hang a hundred on us. I think we took that personal. Every last one of us took that personal.

We just went out there and we said we need to play defense. We know we can score, but we have to play defense and we have to get stops. I think that's what we did.

We helped each other, yeah.

ASAP sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

Q. It felt like a Texas home game with that crowd tonight. Did that help you guys at all, the 4,000 fans, whatever it was, cheering you on at the end of the game?

CELESTE TAYLOR: I mean, it's amazing. It's amazing to have fans up in the stands. We've been lucky enough as a university to be able to have some fans during some of our games. Just the atmosphere out there, it just makes it a lot better.

When you tie up the game, you hear everybody cheering, or when a timeout is called, you just took the lead, it's just amazing to hear those fans out there.

I think it definitely it helped us out tremendously. But at the end of the day we're going to go out there and do what we have to do no matter who's in the stands.

Q. Can you take me through the sequence in the fourth quarter, you hit the jumper, Lauren deflects the ball and Kyra goes the other way. How big was that 30-second sequence for y'all?

CELESTE TAYLOR: I mean, it was really big. I know the work that I put in. I know that I've taken shots like that when I'm in the gym by myself. So it was just a matter of jumping up and, like Coach says, be a big girl and shoot over them. That was just in my head. When it came out of my hand, I knew it was going in.

Lauren has done amazing for us in this tournament. Every time she's come in, she's put her all into it. Gave us everything she has. We talk about our post players playing in the passing lane. Lauren was in that passing lane. She stole the ball, deflected it, and Kyra ended up getting the steal. From there, we just need another stop, we just need another stop. We weren't as focused on it, but we knew we had to get back down and get another stop.

It was really exciting. It was a big moment for us.

Q. This is your first time playing the NCAA tournament after COVID last year delayed it. You have more games coming up. Is this everything that you dreamed about?

CELESTE TAYLOR: Yeah, I mean, as a little kid, you look up and you see people playing in March Madness. You look up and see people playing in the Sweet 16, the Elite 8, the Final Four. It's honestly been so surreal to me. It's just been amazing, honestly.

I know that me alongside with all my teammates, off

camera we put in so much work, we do so much to get us to this point. To finally be here and be in this situation is just an amazing feeling.

But we know we got to put our head down and keep on working.

Q. How crucial was Joanne tonight? She had a big game, then of course she goes out, comes right back in. How critical has her leadership and toughness been this season?

CELESTE TAYLOR: Yeah, I mean, from the beginning, people counted Joanne out. I said in the beginning of the season that people are going to be saying her name a lot. Some of the things people don't notice, she's been our outside shooting presence honestly. I will feed her all day to shoot the ball, to attack the rim. She's just real gritty. She is competitive. She wants to win. She has the will to fight and the will to win.

Just being surrounded by people like that alongside myself, everybody else on the team. When you have a team that is competing and willing to win, willing to fight, it just makes everything more interesting and amazing.

But she's been a huge role, not just tonight, not just last game, but in every game that we've played this season.

Q. Balanced scoring efforts. You and Charli with double-doubles. How good is it that there are multiple options on this team as far as scoring is concerned?

CELESTE TAYLOR: Yeah, it's amazing. You hear so many other teams talk about how they have multiple people on the floor that can score. I think that we've shown throughout the season that it can be anybody's game any night. That's why we have plays drawn up for anybody and everybody. We personally think that we have mismatches, people may think they have mismatches on us, but offensively we have a ton of mismatches.

It's been amazing. Everybody on the court can score at any time. So just having faith in each other and confidence in one another to know that they're going to hit a basket at any time when you need it, and just knowing when to feed your teammates the ball, where to feed them the ball, so that they can be successful.

But just having people on the court that can score, forget about scoring, I mean, we all lock down on defense. To know somebody has your back on the defensive end is just an amazing feeling.

Q. Early on y'all go down 12-3. Looked like the game

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

was going to tilt in their favor. Vic has talked about the resiliency you all have showed especially in this tournament. Do you think everything you put into the last couple months, did that all show up in the last 35 minutes tonight?

CELESTE TAYLOR: Oh, yeah, definitely. I just think that we fought together since the beginning with the whole situation of COVID that we're in. We've been so resilient through that. I mean, I think out of a lot of teams, we haven't really had problems with COVID. We've been really staying safe and staying together, just following instructions.

I think that's one of the biggest things. We've done a really great job of not getting sick. Obviously things happen. But we've done a real good job of listening and staying the course and putting our heads down, wear our masks.

I mean, we just have this resiliency within us as a team. When we're focused and we stay together, we know that we can get through anything. So I think just proving that we can get through the year, the regular season, the resiliency we had within that, I think just coming out here and showing that we had this resiliency in us all along. I think that people are starting to get on notice about us, just see who we are as a team.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports