

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

Sunday, March 28, 2021

San Antonio, Texas, USA

Alamodome - Hemisfair

Texas Longhorns

Vic Schaefer

Sweet 16 Postgame Media Conference

Texas 64, Maryland 61

VIC SCHAEFER: Well, first of all, you have to be so proud of these kids and what they're doing, these young ladies and their fight. I mean, their resiliency. We got down 9-0 to start tonight. They've come a long way. I'm not sure a month and a half ago we could have dug out of that hole.

But at halftime we talked about it's 32-25, and I wrote as few notes as I've ever written. Defensively it was transition defense. We can guard them on the halfcourt. We really believed that. We just had to get back. Then offensively we just had to keep attacking. We felt like we had some areas we could explore and kind of take advantage of.

I thought our kids executed, boy, some really good stuff tonight. We had 10 turnovers, which I wrote on the board, 10 or less. That was our pregame on the board offensively that we had to have.

Again, we had some mistakes. We had some breakdowns. We lost Chloe a couple times, Benzan a couple times. Other than that, our kids did a phenomenal job defensively. I mean, hey, I don't have to tell y'all. All the experts had them hanging a hundred on us. That's fine. It's no big deal. But, again, you go to saying things like that and you better make sure you know who you're talking about. You have no idea what's inside the breastplate of my kids.

Those kids are amazing. Their toughness and resiliency is off the chart. To see them competing right now at the level they're competing at, against the teams that they're competing against. I mean, this is typically what our teams do. They get better in March.

This team has gotten better in the last month, we've gotten a lot better. Again, when you run into Baylor two, three times, if you don't learn from that, shame on you. You run



into an Iowa State, how they guard you. If you don't learn from that, shame on you.

These kids have learned. My staff has done a tremendous job in developing their positions from point guard with Kyra Lambert and Ashley, to our wings, to our post players. So I just think you're seeing kids that have continued to buy in, continued to work.

We've talked about the toughness thing. It's one thing to talk to talk, it's another thing to walk the walk. I think they want to be active participants in their success. You have to be. Nobody's going to give it to you.

I told them, Hey, if you don't come out and fight, if you just absolutely don't come out and absolutely fight today, they might try to hang as much as they can on you. But if you'll fight every possession, there's eight five-minute games. If you'll win those more than they do, you'll have a chance.

I was just really proud of them. I mean, you think about that. That's a Maryland team, we held them to 14, 15 and 14 in the second, third and fourth quarter. I'm telling you, they are offensive juggernaut. They can flat score the ball.

Again, we talked about being connected. We weren't going to do it one-on-one. We had to be connected. We had to know what they wanted to do and how they wanted to do it. We had to have the focus to keep 'em from doing that. The game had to be where it was because we're not going to win a 90-88 game. We're probably not winning 80-78.

Our kids have bought in and I think that's the difference in our team right now. They have finally bought in. They see what happens when you go to work, you put in the time. Hey, the game's real simple. The game will not cheat you. You will get out of the game what you put into it.

Our kids have put a lot into the game, especially in this last month and a half, especially our guards. Celeste, Jo, Kyra, they are shooting the ball really well right now, very well. It's because they've worked on their craft.

I thought my staff did a great job of getting them ready. The scout was right on. Again, they do so many things.



There was a couple of things that was their bread and butter, and I thought we took that from them.

Again, couldn't be prouder. Giving God the glory for No. 21 with this team. We'll stay for another one. That's our motto. There's another one. Let's see what happens there.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. When you went to Texas, I think everyone knew you were going to build a program on defense because that's what you did at Mississippi State. How fitting is it that you got a steal and score to go ahead for good in that game?

VIC SCHAEFER: Well, let's don't forget I did have the No. 2 offense in the country at Mississippi State one year. And I think we had No. 11. I like to score now. I'd just as soon as win 98-93. I don't care as long as we win.

With this team, we don't have a lot of depth. We were so limited earlier in the year with what we could do. Charli carried us many a night early. But now we've really developed a team. That's what I told them. We've developed a team, y'all. That's why we're succeeding right now.

You can't focus on one player on our team right now because everybody else has really worked hard to develop their offensive game. Defensively I've said this a lot, defensive chemistry is the last thing you get on a team. It doesn't come without hard work and doing it every day.

Defense is nothing more than teaching habits, y'all. The only way you're going to create a habit is to do it every day. I know our kids, we do some of the same drills every day. But that's what it takes to be a great defensive team.

So for these kids, they're in, they're all in. They understand. That's what I love about them. They are junkyard dogs, y'all. They are a bull locked in a china cabinet and they are coming out fighting. I just love 'em. I couldn't be more proud of them to be their coach.

There's a lot of satisfaction, y'all, as coaches to see kids do what these kids are doing, to see them grow. Again, to grow is to change. They've had to change because we're different. We're a different staff. We do things differently. They've had to learn that.

But, man, to see their faces after a victory like tonight, like the other night, and to know that they know it's because of what they're doing and how they're doing it, it's why we do what we do in coaching.

Q. It seemed like everybody had counted the Texas Longhorns out tonight and nobody was giving you guys a chance. How did you prepare your team and get them to believe in what you already believed? How did you prepare to face this potent offensive Maryland team?

VIC SCHAEFER: I've been in this situation before. You know that. I've been in a game where everybody thought they were going to hang a hundred on me and it didn't happen.

Again, it's a mindset. It's an approach. I told our kids, one of my favorite movies is For the Love of the Game. One of the things that he says when he's on the mound is Engage the mechanism. I told them this the other night after the game, when you engage the mechanism, you get rid of the noise. It's just you and the coaches, you and your team, you and the game.

For us, that's kind of where we are right now. We are engaging the mechanism. We are focused on us. Nobody thinks we can do it. That's fine. I've been in this before and I've come out just like tonight many a time.

It's not uncharted water for me, per se. It is for this team. This team's never been. I got a lot of kids that have never been to the NCAA tournament on this team, certainly not in the Sweet 16 or Elite 8.

To see them respond right now is really, again, it's why we do what we do in coaching. So, again, it doesn't faze me. It's all about your approach in my mind. I told them tonight, I mean, I think I used the phrase 'nobody gives you a snowball's chance in hell.' That's okay. It's no problem. I don't care what people think.

If I worried about what people think, man, I'd really be all tied up. I couldn't coach my way out of a wet paper bag. But that's not me. I don't care. The proof's in the pudding. What we do and how we do it is what works.

I run into it in recruiting all the time. You go over there now, y'all are going to work on some defense. You come here, we're going to practice about an hour and 10, an hour and 15. Get up five hundred shots, spend 10 or 15 minutes on defense. You know what, those are usually teams that aren't here and we're beating.

I don't think twice about it. Hey, if that's what people want to say, hey, it's okay.

Q. I don't think anybody that watches basketball didn't think you had a snowball's chance in hell. For



heaven's sake, you're a good coach and a good team. You have South Carolina coming up next, a team you know very, very well. Can you talk about having that matchup, the strengths you have versus what you know of South Carolina?

VIC SCHAEFER: Well, again, obviously we've had to go against them as a coaching staff. My players have never played against them. Obviously tremendous respect for Dawn and her staff. We've had some knock-down, drag-outs over the years. We've got a day of practice to get ready, one shootaround. Again, we'll see how it goes.

But I am familiar with them. Again, our kids are going to have to go play. My staff will do a great job. We'll have a good plan. Then we've got to go execute. I haven't seen them play a lot this year, so I'll have to have a little refresher course.

Hey, this time of year we don't sleep. I didn't stay up last night because I was worried about Maryland. I stayed up last night because I was worried about the game. That's just me. I stay up before every game. I worry about everybody. I respect everybody. I make sure our players respect 'em.

This time of year, you're playing the best. We're going to play another team that in my mind is one of the best. So we'll have great focus tomorrow. Dawn has been here many, many times. She's got a heck of a team. There's no question about it. Lots of great players over there. Her staff does a tremendous job.

We'll be excited about it. We'll take on that challenge. We'll be here whatever time we play, when we play, we'll be here.

Q. We were sitting here four years ago in Dallas when you pulled off the win over UConn. You played South Carolina in the final. You had about a day or two to get ready for them. Does that help you knowing that? Your players haven't played them, but you know her system probably pretty well, I would think, that it gives you some edge that it's not some team you've never seen before, a staff you've never seen before?

VIC SCHAEFER: Correct. At least I'm not getting back to the hotel at 1:30 in the morning like I was after we played Connecticut. We were the late game, went to overtime. Our kids didn't get back to the hotel till 1:15. There were 5,000 people in the lobby waiting on us. We'll get home a little earlier tonight.

I learned a little bit as a coach what you can do that next day versus what you don't need to do. My kids will be

ready. Again, we'll certainly have a refresher course and get ourselves as a staff ready also.

Q. It felt like a Texas home game. With all those fans, the celebration you had afterwards, what does it mean that it basically was a home game for you with the support you had?

VIC SCHAEFER: Well, it's just special because our kids haven't played in front of anybody all year. We actually went a month or more where they wouldn't let anybody in the Drum. We wouldn't let anybody in the Erwin Center because of the stage we were at in Austin. My kids haven't played in front of anybody at home.

So for them to have that opportunity tonight, it's really special. I mean, think about it, y'all. Kyra Lambert is from San Antonio. She's getting to do this in front of her parents, her family, her friends. We have kids from the state of Texas. They're getting to do it in front of their family. We have kids from out of the state whose parents are here, mamas and dads are here.

To have those fans tonight and experience that with them. Again, you guys have followed me enough, y'all know I want our kids to have a relationship with our fans. So when the game's over, we ain't running to the locker room. We're going to get up there and wave. In the old days we'd be taking pictures, hugging mamas, kissing babies, vice versa. We'd stay there till it's over.

In the NCAA tournament it's a little different because they won't let you do that. We weren't going to walk out of that arena without acknowledging our fans that were there tonight. Man, they were special. The atmosphere was special, really. I thought they made it special for both teams.

Really a neat deal, a great experience. What this team has been doing, y'all, I've been doing it a long time, what they're doing right now is really, really special for our staff and to see their growth and maturity and their development, to be a part of them experiencing this.

It's not been easy. Again, change is hard. Young kids can't get past hard sometimes. They have. Like we said tonight, my teams typically, when it gets hard, that's when it gets about right for us. I thought tonight, starting out 9-0, getting down, you're down seven at half, it got hard. But we outscored them the third quarter. I'm telling you, every timeout, Joanne Allen-Taylor, Celeste Taylor, Kyra Lambert, they are not letting anybody in that huddle think anything but win.

I told them at the 7:13 mark, a timeout called, they caught



the ball down in the corner, I told them 7:13 for the rest of your life. Turn it loose, let's go play. Boy, they did.

Awfully proud of them. Again, it's very gratifying and satisfying to see these kids and their growth and improvement, just see them succeed because that's what you want. You want to see them have fun, be kids, enjoy the moment. Thinks the NCAA tournament, enjoy it.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

VIC SCHAEFER: Praise the Lord and Hook 'em Horns.

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