

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Regional Final: Texas vs South Carolina

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Alamodome - Hemisfair

Texas Longhorns

Vic Schaefer

Elite 8 Postgame Media Conference



they've made here late in the season, it's really incredible. It's something that I'll always hold near and dear in my heart with this group because they did it. I mean, give 'em credit, man. They did it when probably nobody thought they could do anything like this.

We're disappointed. I think this is four in a row for me to be in the Elite 8. We're disappointed not to be playing past this. But I'm going to tell you, it's hard for me not to be -- I can't even get past just the pride and the love that I have for these kids, the admiration.

I'm going to tell you, it's a miserable way to live right now in this world with everything that we've had to navigate, and with COVID. College is supposed to be the best four years of your life. No socializing, can't go out and eat, can't spend time, it goes on and on and on. I've told you all this.

For them to do what they've done, I'm not sure many people can do what these kids this year for us at Texas. I'll forever be grateful to 'em. Again, they're going to be special in my heart of all my teams that I've ever been a part of.

Yet as we told them in the locker room, this is the standard. If I'm doing my job, we're playing on March 30th every year. If they're doing their job as student-athletes, we're practicing and playing every March 30th. That's what we do at Texas. We're playing in the NCAA tournament. We're playing deep into the tournament. Hopefully in years to come we're playing for national championships.

This group played four games in the NCAA tournament. You can only play six. So awfully, awfully proud of 'em. Again, Kyra and Charli, those are two kids that made me a better coach, made me a better father, husband, person. I mean, those are two people that challenge you. At the same time I've seen them grow and mature and develop. They're going to be great. Whatever they decide to do, this day forward, hopefully we've prepared them and they're going to be great.

As with everybody in that locker room, I'm forever grateful to them. They've made me a better person. Hopefully my staff and I, we've done our job and helped develop them on

South Carolina 62, Texas 34

VIC SCHAEFER: First of all, just want to congratulate South Carolina. They were really special today. They're really a tremendous basketball team. Always well-coached. Dawn and her staff do a tremendous job.

I told her it seems like when we play them, their defense is always on point, it rises to the occasion. They always play extremely, extremely hard on that end.

I thought today they were spectacular. It's hard to win, hard to be competitive, I don't think we scored after the three-minute mark. There was three minutes to go in the third quarter and we don't score again.

It wasn't just that. It wasn't the last 13. I thought they came out and punched us. We responded a little bit. But just, again, want to congratulate them, wish them the very best.

As far as my team goes, I couldn't be more proud of a group of young ladies. As I told them, this will go down, currently after 36 years in coaching, as the most I've ever seen a team grow and change and get better, improve. From where we were our first game in November to where we are today, really the improvement has really taken off just in the last five weeks. I mean, this group has really done some things that I didn't think they were going to be able to do.

Yet my staff and I, we didn't give in. We didn't give in. We continued to coach and teach and demand, and they responded. You got to give them a ton of credit, I mean, a ton of credit. I admire this group so much for the way they've lived during this tumultuous year.

You can't help but admire them. To make the run that

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and off the court, as well.

THE MODERATOR: We'll get right to our questions.

Q. I don't know if you've ever felt as good after a loss as because of what your team has accomplished. This is your team's first taste. You've been there, but this is your team's first taste. Can you put a value on the experience that these returning players are getting out of this month, what they've accomplished?

VIC SCHAEFER: Well, we told 'em, What you're feeling right now, there's some tears in that locker room, embrace it, feel it, use it for fuel. It's not a good feeling, but this is what we do. This is Texas. We'll be back. I mean, we'll be back and back and back and back and back. That's just the way it is.

But what you feel right now, what we all feel, I mean, I don't feel good, I'm proud of my team, I'm proud of what they've accomplished and everything that he did, but, I mean, I hate to lose more than I like to win, I can tell you. I hate it.

We didn't play well today. Again, I'm not taking anything from South Carolina because they played really good and they made us play the way we played. But this is the standard. This is the standard. This is the gold standard at Texas. This is who we are. This is what we do. We're disappointed that we didn't play better today, but, man, I am not going to let it cloud this season. I am not going to let it be a wall that I can't look back and reflect on this team and see what they were able to accomplish this year.

I'm telling you, I've done it a long time. Again, it's the all-time team that has improved the most throughout the course of the season, but really in the last five weeks, y'all. We have grown exponentially. It's off the chart where this team has come from in the last five weeks. Give them a lot of credit. Give my staff a lot of credit. This is what we do.

Q. I know it's tough right now, but what was so difficult about that defense to come out and try and play against tonight?

VIC SCHAEFER: Well, they're just long and really they're quick, athletic. They blocked 14 shots. One kid had nine, I think. So they contest you in everything that you do, whether you're out there three-point range or all the way to the rim. They really make it hard on you.

Again, you have to love a team that does that. It's part of defense, contesting the shot. A lot of people don't do that. And they do it. Again, that's a reflection of Dawn. To me those kids really embody her and probably how she was as a player. I don't remember. I didn't see her play a lot as a

player. I'm sure they embody her as a player. Again, as the coach, I know they are an extension of her. You have to respect that.

That's what I told her after the game. Seems like every time one of my teams play them, for the most part, they really up their juice on that defensive end and really take it personal on that end and play really hard.

Again, I have a lot of respect for people that do that and play hard on that end of the floor. We did a good job with some players today, and some players we didn't. We couldn't make a shot. I mean, it was just really, really hard today.

You got to give them a ton of credit, boy. They play the game hard. They're physical. They're tough. They challenge you. That's why they're one of the teams that's always in this position.

Q. This time last year you're still at Mississippi State. You don't even know you're going to be here. What have the emotions in the last year been like for you, trying to move to a new city amid a pandemic, dealing with a whole new set of kids, making it to this point? What has it been like for you personally this roller coaster ride of a year?

VIC SCHAEFER: First of all, I couldn't be more proud and feel more responsible than to be entrusted with this program. The history of this program, where it deserves to be, where it's been, I can't tell you how honored I am to be the coach at the University of Texas. At the same time with that comes a tremendous responsibility. I wear that. I want my kids to wear it.

That's part of what we're trying to teach right now, is teaching that when you wear that burnt orange, you have the Longhorn on your chest or you have 'Texas' across your chest, it doesn't matter. It's not about you, it's not about something you might have done or you're doing, it's about all those that have gone before you that laid a foundation with Coach Conradt and her teams over those years, and the national championship. It's just the way it is.

It doesn't matter, if you coach at Texas, it doesn't matter if you're coaching Jacks; everyone wants to beat you. You're going to get everybody's best game. That's the way it is. We embrace that, my staff and I. We've lived it at the previous school where we were, Mississippi State. We changed that to where nobody respected us to the point where, man, when we walked in, everybody wanted to beat the crud out of us. That's where we are now at Texas. That's the way it is. It doesn't matter what sport it is, that's the way everybody feels.



So I'm proud to be the coach. I'm honored at the same time there is a responsibility we have got to get some things fixed. We are not fixed right now in my mind. We've got some things to address. We will address them. Then we will move on.

I'm excited about those five we have signed that are coming in. Third-ranked class in the country. Those kids are excited. They are excited about wearing the burnt orange and white and being Texas. That's what I want. I want kids embrace wanting to be at Texas and embrace the Texas fight.

From April 6th when I got hired, till not getting to campus till July, they still don't really want me going into my office over there in the stadium, it's been a challenge, no question about it. But my emotions are, I am extremely proud of this team. I'm thankful to have had the opportunity to coach them. I am fired up and excited about our future because we are coming and I think everybody knows it.

Q. You mentioned yesterday that Kyra had proven to you that she could be the point guard you needed to run your team. I'm wondering not including Kyra or Charli, the players that you likely have back, did they also prove to you that they can play for you, they are the kind of players you want in this program?

VIC SCHAEFER: I think at times I think we had people step up during the course of the season. At the same time we have got some things that we've got to get fixed. We have some maturity issues that we have to address. Again, there is a standard that's required at Texas in a lot of areas, not just one. So I think that's where we are right now.

Again, it is part of being at Texas. There is no gray area - are you in or not? Do you work hard or not? Are you focused or not? There is just not any room.

I wasn't hired to bring a top-25 team to Austin. I was hired to bring a top-10 program to our university. A big difference. A top-25 team, those No. 14 through 25, that group is fluid every year. They are in, they are out. You don't know where they are going to be or where they are going to end. If you are a top program, when the preseason poll comes out in October, your fans they all look one through ten, where are we? They don't have to go down to 14 or 20 or 25. That's what we were hired to do. That's what we are going to do. We have gone to work. We have addressed some of those things and we will continue to work at but that is our challenge. That's our goal. What I think we have just done in this run, I'm excited about our future.

Q. Coach, I was wondering if you could talk a little about Charli. She said she is leaving for the WNBA. She struggled tonight. She struggled against some other post players. What do you think she'll need to do to make that transition, because she'll have to do it very quickly?

VIC SCHAEFER: Whoever gets her, they are going to get a motor, a work ethic. If you tell her, Charli, you need to do 500 of these moves, she'll do 500 plus 100. She is an extremely hard worker. Really special. She can do so many different things. She carried us a lot earlier when we were struggling early in the season shooting the ball and had some injuries. She's carried us a lot of nights.

So what she is going to have to do, she'll do exactly what you ask her to do and then some. I think for her, obviously the next level is a little bit physical. It's a lot physical. I thought her and Boston both tonight didn't shoot it extremely well, but at the same time it is not because they won't do it or are not trying.

That next level, I've not coached it. I've watched. To me whether you are the point guard or the five player, it is a physical level. I think you would agree. So you have to understand and embrace that certain things you might have gotten away with or didn't get away with at this level, at that next level there is not a lot of whistles. They let kids play. So I think that may be but she's got range. She can score at all three levels. She's got all the footwork, great hands. Whoever gets her, they are going to find that out real quick.

Q. Vic, you told us pretty consistently throughout the year that your team was young and immature. I know you said five weeks ago things changed a little bit. How did your staff get them to change? Why do you think they bought in at that point?

VIC SCHAEFER: We didn't give in. I don't think we gave in as a staff. I didn't give in - talking to them every day, telling them a story, giving them an occurrence that's happened previously, showing film. The film doesn't lie. So I just don't think we gave in.

At the end of the day I can remember walking out of meetings going, I'm not giving in. We are going to keep coaching, keep teaching, keep demanding.

I think that and the fact that our kids finally said, okay, I see it. There is little glimpses during the course of a year and a season where they start to kind of get it. As bad as that first Baylor game was, I think we have proved to ourselves that night that we can compete defensively then we had to



figure out a way to score some more points.

Once Jo and Celeste and Kyra started making shots for us, it just makes things so much easier. Lauren has played really well here lately. She didn't have a great night tonight but she's really played well for us.

Again, the other thing is having Audrey in practice every day and not having to sit out and lose her two weeks like we were most of the season, about five weeks ago we finally got her back and were able to keep her. She is such a chemistry kid for us, such a tough kid defensively, and is smart. I think that had a lot to do with it, quite frankly.

So again I think Kyra, our point guard play was pretty important. Ashley had some nights where she really helped us as well. So I think the Audrey situation, getting her back and having her in practice every day and having her play every night, that helped give us some chemistry. I tip my hat to Celeste and Jo, because once those kids found their shots and started making shots for us things get a whole lot easier.

Q. Congrats on a great year. You guys tasted that sweet nectar against Maryland, then the downer tonight. Those two experiences are very important because they will be able to take from them going into the offseason. What were your conversations with them after the game to that end?

VIC SCHAEFER: Yeah, just don't take things for granted. You know, don't just think this is going to happen. There is a lot of hard work, commitment and dedication, lot of long days and hours that go into making this opportunity.

This was an opportunity today. This was an opportunity to go to the Final Four. We got to the game that could have got us to the Final Four. You don't take it for granted. You don't take it lightly. You don't lose focus. It is just a lot of things that you are trying to teach them. In the locker room I was trying to team, you don't take things for granted.

And then how you are feeling, those tears, use it for fuel. You don't want to forget how this feels. Use it for fuel. I remember walking off the floor getting beat 60 in the Sweet Sixteen. Boy, I put "60" up everywhere you can find it for the next season, that next team. We used it for fuel. When we got the opportunity again, we were ready.

Losing in the Final Four that first time, losing in the National Championship game, we used it for fuel and fire again and got back to it again. So we don't want to take things for granted. You get four years of this. You want to embrace every moment, every practice, every game. Don't take anything for granted because you never know when

something might be yanked out from underneath you.

That was the message and again I really feel good about those kids in that locker room. Celeste, Jo, Audrey, let me tell you, those three, I'll go to war with those three anytime because of their focus and how hard they play and their commitment. For the rest of them, when you are young, you don't really understand and you don't realize it. That's part of the coaching. We have got to bring those kids along and help them to understand where we are today, the work that we put in, the hard work and the dedication, you can't take that for granted. We have got to grow from it and get better.

Q. I'm wondering if there was any one thing or one incident or anything that you can point to that led to your kind of getting over the hump and getting to your level at the five-week mark, and also what you've learned this year about yourself and your staff, because I know you're a growth man.

VIC SCHAEFER: Yep, well, the victory at home over Oklahoma State, we had played them early, early in January and man, they just really took it to us. When we played them at our place, you know, that was a big win for us. I have tremendous respect for Jim Littell and his program and those kids. Our kids really I thought played well that night. So that was a game that I felt like we could grow and learn from.

When we played Baylor at our place, we had a five-minute stretch to start the third quarter. After that we went toe to toe with them. So you know, I think that gave us a little bit of confidence.

Our first half at TCU we got up 20 I think in the first half. We were up 15 at halftime. Just had played lights out. Guarded really well. We had some moments defensively in those last five or six weeks where our kids had, Wow, I get it. I see it. I see what he's talking about. I understand why we are doing the same three drills every day in practice. I understand that. It's making sense to me. So I just think all those things add up.

Again if you don't learn anything playing Baylor three times, shame on you. It's a five-point game three minutes to go in a Big 12 Tournament. We get the stop and we get the rebound, but then we fumble it and give it to them. They make a shot and go up seven, that was pretty much the game.

I just think when you go through those close games and what we do, when we point out all the little things - the loose balls you don't get, the rebound that rolls off your fingers, the charge you don't rotate and take, the contested



shot that you don't contest, the layup you might have missed, the bad screen that you might have set, the free throw blockout you missed. All those things, when you go into a game that's decided by three, five or seven points and you've got seven or eight of those, kids understand that. In every loss that we had, we could go in those games and point that out. They could look at it and go, I get it. I see it. I understand it.

That's how you grow and learn. Look, we are still making a lot of the same mistakes but not making as many. That's how you are able to beat a UCLA or Maryland because you're not making near as many of them. You are still making some, but not make near as many.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you for your time today. Again, congratulations on your great first season at Texas in such a challenging time. Best to your and your team.

VIC SCHAEFER: Could I say one more thing, please?

THE MODERATOR: Please. Certainly, Coach.

VIC SCHAEFER: Thank you. I just want to thank everyone that's been associated -- we have been here two weeks. We were at the Hilton first, then at the Marriott now for four or five days. The people in the convention center, the COVID testers, the people here in the arena, I just want to thank everyone. They have been spectacular. From the people preparing the food for my team at the hotels to the restaurants that we have ordered from.

Again, to the NCAA, while things weren't right originally in the beginning, I know they tried to make them right. But to these people at the convention center and in our hotels, I just want to say thank you from the University of Texas. We appreciate everyone for their hard work, their commitment to keeping us healthy. We really appreciate it. It's been a challenging but a very rewarding experience. I know there are some things that need to be addressed. And again I will say that, they need to be addressed, and I'm sure they will be. But from my players, from my students-athletes, my staff, there's a lot of people that went through a lot of trouble to make our experience very special. To those people I want to say thank you.

With that, I appreciate everybody, praise the Lord and Hook 'em Horns.

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