

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Regional Final: Baylor vs UConn

Monday, March 29, 2021

San Antonio, Texas, USA

Alamodome - River Walk

Baylor Lady Bears

Coach Kim Mulkey

Elite 8 Postgame Media Conference



UConn - 69, Baylor - 67

Q. Tremendous season, first of all. What did you draw up in the huddle, and what did you see when DiJonai drove the ball from where your standing?

COACH MULKEY: What did you see?

Q. I was surprised they didn't call a foul.

COACH MULKEY: Then write it like that. You don't need a quote from me. I've got still shots and video from two angles. One kid hits her in the face one kid hits her on the elbow. And she was one of the options, if you're wanting to know what I drew up. One option was for NaLyssa and the second option was for her.

Q. We just obviously got done speaking with Carrington and she says tape doesn't lie about what you could see on that call. So you can't change the end of this game how it ended but is there something that could be done in the future about a review when a play like that happens that obviously could impact the final game score?

COACH MULKEY: It will never happen. It doesn't matter -- oh, well, we missed the call. It doesn't matter. You know, it doesn't matter what you write. It doesn't matter what I say. It doesn't matter what we saw. It doesn't matter what we think. Life goes on.

Q. Can you speak to the impact of DiDi having to leave the game with an injury? Did she think she could come back? Was it immediate obviously that she wasn't going to be able to go?

COACH MULKEY: Were we up about 10 at that point? I think we were up double figures at the time when she went

down. And I knew it had to be a hamstring because that's what she grabbed. It swung the whole momentum. Her injury -- I'm so tired of injuries, Lauren Cox's injury in the national championship game; we hung on won that.

Injuries are impactful. Injuries are impactful through the course of the year but you have time to make it up. You don't have time to make it up in a game. And we went up from being up 10 and a chance to extend the lead. You're on a roll; you've got all the momentum in your favor. And that changed the momentum obviously. Anybody that watched it did.

I was proud of our team. They kept fighting. And all you can do is ask for the opportunity to win it at the end. And I thought -- what else could I do? All I can do is put it in the hands of two kids we think can get fouled or score the ball. And, guys, you all can write the rest of the story.

Q. Talk about DiJonai's game today. She played so well for you. Obviously the one play at the end, how well she played for you in this obviously huge stage?

A. She's a big-time player. Just so grateful that I got to coach her. And she stepped up big time for us not just this game but all year long. And I thought she was pretty special out there myself.

Q. You've talked a lot this season about how every team and how every run is unique. And I know you don't want this year and this team to be remembered by the way that game ended. How would you say this team should be embodied and remembered moving forward?

COACH MULKEY: Talented. Big 12 championship. Tournament championship and regular season. Very much Final Four and national championship worthy. They're as good as anybody that's left. I would say unfortunate things happened through the course of the year, the six cancellations -- the six cancellation of games -- the six games that were canceled, I'm sorry, because of COVID. Four of those six would have been against ranked opponents. And I feel like it was held against us.

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At some point when you had the circumstances that we do, you need to do the eye test to see who deserves the No. 1 seeds. I thought we were worthy of the No. 1 seed. I'll say it now. We didn't harp on it. I think Geno said it yesterday or the day before in his press conference: We can't control the COVID situation.

I think a gutsy performance out there today by a lot of kids when you lose the National Defensive Player of the Year playing against the Player of the Year, that some people think -- and I felt if she had not gotten hurt, I really -- well, you saw the game.

Q. You touched on it a little bit. But I guess the resiliency of this team, because you guys got down 12 real early in the game, and even in that fourth quarter you all got down nine, had a chance to win.

COACH MULKEY: Resiliency, you could use that word. I think it's just very good. I think we're a very good basketball team. Don't get rattled. Just keep battling and guard people. And I mean, really, guys, we lose DiDi Richards, when you're up double figures and you still have a chance at the end to win it when momentum is shifted. We didn't get to the foul line in the second half very much.

And I want to say this to all of you -- I don't think my words will matter. But after the games today and tomorrow, there's four teams left I think on the men's side and the women's side. They need to dump the COVID testing.

Wouldn't it be a shame to keep COVID testing and you've got kids that end up test positive or something and they don't get to play in a Final Four? So you need to just forget the COVID test and let the four teams that are playing in each Final Four go battle it out.

Q. I was wondering if you could touch on the performance of both NaLyssa and Queen tonight on the glass and their presence inside offensively and defensively, and how well they did for you guys?

COACH MULKEY: I hadn't seen the stat sheet, to be honest with you. I don't even know what their stats are. I just know that every kid that played gave it everything they had. And actually I'm looking at it now.

NaLyssa was with a double-double. Queen almost a double-double. I thought they battled. I thought there were opportunities early where their height inside bothered us a little bit, altered shots. We missed shots.

But you just keep figuring out ways to score. And they competed tonight, got to the offensive boards. Each of them had four offensive rebounds.

Very, very similar stats. I thought we took care of the ball in the first half. And that's what got you back in the game when you went down early, is you didn't turn the ball over.

And they had like eight turnovers in the first half. But you know, guys, the whole story of the game is DiDi Richards goes down and the whole momentum shifted, okay?

So you think at that point your team could fold their tent. You've got a freshman that you put in there that hasn't been on this big stage and I'm sure she was nervous, and we gotta build her up, make her feel good. But I thought all you can do is coach to the bitter end and give yourself an opportunity. And boys and girls, it would have been fun to see DiJonai go to that foul line right there.

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