

Big 12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 3, 2017

Candi Whitaker Zuri Sanders Recee' Caldwell

THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Coach Candi Whitaker from the Texas Lady Raiders, along with her two student-athletes, Reece' Caldwell and Zuri Sanders. Coach, your opening comments about tonight?

CANDI WHITAKER: Really excited for our players and for our team. It's always such an exciting time when you get to the Big 12 Tournament and the environment here and just really happy that our team gets to stick around and live another day and continue to experience the tournament.

Just a big win for us. We have battled all year and have six new players that haven't been through this league and we've learned a lot and anytime you can take a young, inexperienced team and win a game in the tournament it's key for us moving forward.

Q. Reece, Zuri, what did you take from Monday's game and be able to apply to today for the win today?

ZURI SANDERS: There was a lot, I would have to say. Being able to play them twice during regular season and coming in and playing them first round we knew a lot of their strengths and we knew a lot of their weaknesses. So we tried to attack their weaknesses and we knew what they were really good at and what they specialized in. But we put a lot of emphasis on what we could do against their defense and how we would attack.

Q. Reece, when is the last time you scored 20 points in a half? How did things open up for you a little more in the second half?

REECE' CALDWELL: I don't know when the last time I scored 20 points in a half. I actually wasn't thinking about that. It opened up, because my teammates calmed me down, I didn't have the best first half. So my teammates are so encouraging and told me to settle down and they believed in me and came out second half, and I felt like our whole team was in a



better flow. Things started opening up. I think we ran stuff more smoothly. I think that's what happened.

Q. Coach, what were some of the keys to beating TCU in consecutive games?

CANDI WHITAKER: You know, for us, defensively it starts with transition defense. TCU is very good in the open court. They have multiple 3-point shooters, so it was critical that we did a great job in transition defense to help that is run good offense. It was important that we didn't let them get loose in the open court. We thought rebounding was going to be a big key for us and a strength and we felt like we had over TCU, and then just attacking, setting screens, attacking the paint.

We had a lot of success at our place with being very aggressive, attacking the paint with the dribble or the pass and we wanted to really stick with that same game plan offensively.

Q. Zuri, what was key in getting you open in the second quarter and getting it going?

ZURI SANDERS: Something that my teammates and my coaches always tell me is run. When you run, good things happen?

CANDI WHITAKER: We're brilliant! We tell her to run!

ZURI SANDERS: So when I got my first open run, you start noticing that the defense is focusing on me, so I was able to help my teammates get shots on the perimeter. So I just did what I could do best.

Q. Coach Whitaker, TCU makes 9 of 9 free-throws, but you make 14 more than they do and was that the difference in the game?

CANDI WHITAKER: I think it's a big key. For us, anytime we are shooting high-volume free-throws we have won games and that typically tells us that we're being aggressive offensively.

Q. The time they beat you they had eight 3s. Monday they hit 7. Today 3 of 24, what was the key in the perimeter defense?

CANDI WHITAKER: It's just what it always needs to be, which is high hands on all close-outs, not much space and time, keeping them out of rhythm for their 3-point shots. They got some and some of them just didn't go. But they are a high-volume 3-point shooting team and

we've got to limit the easy once as much as possible.

Q. Couple of times in the fourth quarter TCU got within 6 or 5 and then wasn't able to convert on the other end. Coach, I will say that's a veteran move from a team. Would you agree? Was that something more defensively that you were able to stop 'em when they got close?

CANDI WHITAKER: I feel like in a lot of ways our team is really growing up. I thought we had some great defensive possessions, but most importantly secured that rebound and didn't give them second and third opportunities, kick out threes off of offensive rebounds. I thought we did a good job -- we were in a drought for a little bit and called Receé's number and stepped up and made a shot that got us back on track offensively. Both these two played I thought extremely well. Zuri was big-time tonight and I thought Receé controlled the fourth quarter for our team which is what we wanted her to do and what we expected her to do.

Q. Your perspective on the same question?

ZURI SANDERS: I would have to agree with Coach Whitaker. A phrase that we always use is if we get punched we have to punch back. They kept punching and doing what they do best and we had to do what we do best and that definitely showed in the fourth quarter. Whenever they would get closer, we would stay complacent and know where we were and be okay with where we were and know how to utilize our strengths and it definitely showed.

Q. Y'all struggled on the road this year. How good is it to get a neutral site win and build momentum?

ZURI SANDERS: I feel like a neutral site is nice because you have a lot of energy from, you know, both fans' sections. So I feel like that helps with the atmosphere. But at the same time the atmosphere is great at the Big 12 Tournament. It's fun to be around and I felt like that showed especially with our newcomers definitely able to experience that, being on a big stage they had fun and they showed what they were made of tonight.

Q. I would like for all of you to comment on this. It's not a frivolous question, it's one that has been a topic of discussion several times for me. Women's basketball uniforms. Seems like every player is rolling them up and getting shorter and shorter. Are you buying them too long? Talk about that.

CANDI WHITAKER: We're really blessed to work with Under Armour and they do a fantastic job for us. We are able to -- I do think that you see a trend changing in the women's game and in the men's game. There are men's players that roll their shorts. We are working with them -- we have shorter shorts than we probably

did five years ago, and I think women typically want uniforms that fit them well. So Under Armour is trying to work to work with us on that and get a uniform that fits women well.

Q. You don't get much time to celebrate before you have to face Baylor. Keys facing them a third time?

CANDI WHITAKER: I think, you know, when you think about Baylor it's just you've got to do your best to limit easy baskets which is not an easy task. The size, the depth, and the post that they continue to run in and out, you know, I think they've probably outrebounded everyone they've played, so I think you have to start there doing your best to limit anything that's easy and then there is no secret.

You've got to get hot, shoot the ball really well to upset Baylor, and I do think our team has the ability to do that. Baylor is a great defensive team. It's not like that's an easy task either. But there has to be a recipe where you can score with them and they do make it hard to get to the rim.

THE MODERATOR: Okay, ladies, congratulations on your win tonight.