

Big 12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Sunday, March 5, 2017



Jeff Mittie Breanna Lewis Karyla Middlebrook Kansas State

Baylor - 88

K-State - 71

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by the Kansas State Wildcats, Coach Jeff Mittie and his student-athletes Karyla Middlebrook and Breanna Lewis. Coach, your thoughts about today's game?

JEFF MITTIE: Well, I thought it was -- I thought the pace of the game was a little quick for us. We did want to get -- we did want to try to get -- disrupt them early in the game and I really thought Baylor handled it pretty well. They obviously put up a lot of points. I thought they were playing at a high level in the first half.

Now, I did think we were playing at a high level as well offensively doing some good things. We were getting to the rim and getting to spots on the floor that we wanted to get to, but the pace was just a little quick for us.

Second half, you know, we had our opportunities. We were doing a great job of getting to the free throw line. We just weren't converting. We had numerous trips of 0-2, 0-2, 0-2, and the obvious thing is that you can't do that against a team that's in the top-5 in the country. You're not going to win games if you're losing those kinds of plays, but our kids did do some good things to get there. Baylor is just playing at a high level.

Q. You had 18 points and a lot of those came in the paint, and if memory serves it was the same last time. What do you see against Baylor that allows you to get in the paint so much against them?

KARYLA MIDDLEBROOK: Well, this game we set a lot of high ball screens and I was taking advantage when they were going under. Sometimes they were late on that, and I just had a quick step.

Q. Coach, any idea what was going on for you guys

at the free throw line tonight?

JEFF MITTIE: Yeah, I mean, I don't know. We've been a solid free throw-shooting team. Just one of those nights. Kindred Wesemann goes 1 of 4. I don't know what she was shooting prior to here, but it's got to be in the mid-80s, or something like that. That's one of those things. Players have to go through their routine, step up there, knock 'em down. Tonight we didn't do that. We will go back to practice -- I know we're disappointed that we didn't make them. I know we're disappointed that we made good plays to get there, and you know to get to the free throw against Baylor you've got to make good plays. And I know we're disappointed that we didn't convert those.

Q. Coach, seemed like every time y'all seemed to get some offense going they had an answer for that. How tough is it to combat a team that always seems to have an answer?

JEFF MITTIE: We needed to string some stops together. The margin was about anywhere from 12 to 15 in that stretch early in the half and we kept talking about getting three stops in a row. I don't know that we did that. We certainly didn't do it multiple times, but Baylor is playing at a high level right now. Their ball movement is excellent right now. Alexis Prince is really playing at a great pace. I think Wallace in the last two weeks has really played well. And then you talk about Davis, I thought last night had a great look to her. She carried that over to today, and we're not even mentioning Kalani Brown.

So I mean they're playing at a good level. I wouldn't use the word "frustrating." It's just that the margin of error, you've got to get stops and our margin today wasn't very big and we didn't take advantage of -- we didn't play well enough to take advantage of it.

Q. Coach, how is Kindred Wesemann doing?

JEFF MITTIE: I don't know the answer to that. They're looking at her right now. I think that the best thing I can tell you is we're hoping that it's a little pulled muscle, but I asked the doctors not to coach and they ask me not to be doctor. So I tried to abide by that. They definitely don't want me to be doctor. I can assure you of that.

Q. Now you guys can turn your focus to the NCAA Tournament. What are some things you want to

see out of this team as they progress into that?

JEFF MITTIE: Well, you know, with the way the tournament is set up across the country for you for most of the Power Five's, we're done here, so we've got a week before Selection Show. We need to get back and get better the next practice, get better the next practice I would like so see us continue. I thought we made strides in the game with our discipline. So I would like to see that continue on. We did some things different today, so I would like to see how we can expand that. Not too different, but get back, get a little bit of rest, get better and wait and see where we end up in the NCAA Tournament.

Q. For the players, what can you learn from a game like this?

KARYLA MIDDLEBROOK: I mean, we can learn a lot, just knowing that the NCAA Tournament the games are going to come quick and you're going to have to turn around and each opponent is going to be different and the game plan is going to be different, so Coach talked a lot about having discipline in the game plan and today we wanted to slow it down a little bit more. I think carrying that over will be a lot for the NCAA Tournament.

BREANNA LEWIS: I agree with her and having poise and taking it one minute at a time.

JEFF MITTIE: You know, the one thing -- one of the things that in terms of when you already played 18 games and now you go a third time against people, I think we have the toughest league in the country in regards to the schedule. I do think that prepares you for the NCAA Tournament. There isn't anything this team hasn't seen. There isn't anything we haven't experienced. We've got a good veteran group. I expect our leadership to be strong in that locker room leaving here. I think we will get back and have a good week of practice and see where we're going. When we went at the start of the year one of the slogans was to leave no doubt. Last year we sat on Selection Show and we weren't sure that name was going to show up there. We thought it was, but until it came up we didn't know and this year we know that our name is going to show up there. We feel good about that. We feel good about having a solid season, and now let's see if we can make a run in the postseason.

Q. Coach, from the time you've taken on the job at Kansas State up until now how much closer has the gap closed and made the Big 12 Women's Tournament and the league more competitive than it was when you first took the job? And how many teams do you think will make the NCAA?

JEFF MITTIE: Well, I said yesterday I felt like Iowa State was an NCAA Tournament team. The way West

Virginia played those were the two teams that came in that were kind of on that "bubble" as some of the experts say.

But the way West Virginia looked last night I don't think there is any doubt that there's an NCAA Tournament team and they're still playing in this. I think we're going to get six in. I think Baylor is set up for that second seed nationally, but they obviously still have work to do here with making it to the championship game for tomorrow.

So I expect that the league is going to be represented very well. I felt like the league overall this year that the bottom was better and there was more offensive talent in this league which made a lot of nights very, very difficult. So I hope I answered your question, but right now I think the league sits pretty strong for six.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations on a good season. Best of luck in the NCAAs.