

Big 12 Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Sunday, March 5, 2017

Karen Aston
Ariel Atkins
Kelsey Lang
Texas

West Virginia - 62

Texas - 59

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by the Texas Longhorns, Coach Karen Aston and her two student-athletes, Ariel Atkins and Kelsey Lang. Coach, your thoughts about this evening's game?

KAREN ASTON: I think first of all you have to, as disappointed as I am, I don't want to discredit how hungry West Virginia played tonight. They, I thought, played incredibly well yesterday. Looked like a team that probably was on the bubble and was really, really hungry to prove themselves in a lot of ways. I thought they played tremendous yesterday and played a lot tougher than we did today.

It was a struggle for both teams offensively, and when it got right down to it, I thought in a lot of ways they outcompeted us and that's disappointing for us, disappointing just in the sense of you never want to look at a situation and say that you got outcompeted, and I thought we did today. I thought when it came down to loose balls, getting stops, being mentally tough enough to finish shots when you need to finish 'em. We didn't do that and they did. So, again, lots of credit to them on their performance.

Q. Coach, after the second quarter it looked like very low energy out there, second quarter. Adjustments at halftime were they more X's and O's or were they more mental, emotional, get up and get at 'em?

KAREN ASTON: It was a little bit of both. Statistically uncharacteristic of the way that we normally play. We had one assist and 10 turn overs. That's the sign of a team that's trying to do too much individually, not much of a team. And that's more of what we talked about at half was just try to get back to sharing the basketball, reversing it, trying to break their defense down by



reversing it. I thought we did a better job of that in the second half.

But you're absolutely right in bringing up the second quarter and the first half in particular. I thought after the first 6 minutes of the first half we completely got out of who we are. That's a problem. That's a problem that we need to address.

Q. Coach, today you made some adjustments in game situations of attempting to get your bench more involved. Were you happy, satisfied? What transpired with that situation today?

KAREN ASTON: I thought our bench was probably the difference in the game yesterday. I mean, we just -- I don't want to say they were nonproductive or productive, not too many people were productive today, including myself. So it wasn't really a bench problem. We got in some foul trouble, but we were 0-10 in the paint in the first half. We missed a lot of chippies in the second half down the stretch.

So a lot of focus I think more than anything, mental toughness of finishing a round when you are in traffic, loose balls, those kinds of things. I wouldn't point out the bench being significant negatively or positively tonight. They were positive last night, but I thought Audrey was pretty good off the bench and that was about it.

Q. Ariel, when you hear "outcompeted" I know how big of a competitor you are, how badly does that make you feel that you may have lost a game because you were outcompeted?

ARIEL ATKINS: Terrible and disappointed. It was my job as one of the leaders of this team to make sure we show up every day, so I'll take that.

Q. Kelsey, same question.

KELSEY LANG: I agree with Ariel. Being a leader of the team I think that falls on us first, and, you know, we set the example not only in the games but in practice; and I think that we didn't do that today.

Q. Coach, where do you think you stand next week?

KAREN ASTON: Well, I said before the tournament started that I thought that our body of work was good enough that we had put ourselves in a position to host,

and I do still feel that way. I didn't think that there would be a whole lot that would change our seeding, other than if we didn't win yesterday. I think that might have hurt us. I think West Virginia is clearly an NCAA Tournament team. They've proven that this week. We need to get home and regroup a little bit, catch our breath in a sense and refocus on how we prepared and what we did in the stretch that we won 19 games in a row. That would be my message to our team right now, not negatively.

But what did you do? What did we look like when we won 19 games in a row? And what have we looked like the last two weeks, and how can we change that? I think that's a challenge for our team in the next however many days, 10 days or so before we get ready for the NCAA Tournament. I mean, I'm proud of this team. I don't want to act like I'm not. You always feel bad when you feel like you got outcompeted and when you just didn't feel like you did your job as a coach or as a player, I know it is disappointing.

But as these two said, we have a young basketball team and some of the peaks and the valleys of this season has been from our immaturity, and it's up to the mature players and the mature coaches to lead better, and that ultimately falls on me. We will be ready and be better for the tournament when it gets going.

Q. Coach, talk about two things: One, the 19-game run. Also the conference's chances of getting multiple teams into the tournament; and, if you can, how many?

KAREN ASTON: Regarding the 19-game run, I mean I -- it's been a terrific season just from the standpoint of watching this team grow. I said it probably the first day I saw them practice that I really enjoy them. They're a fun-loving team, but they do stay on a roller coaster a bit with how they prepare and how serious they are about what they're doing and we have to grow up a little bit and continue to grow. During that 19-game win streak I thought that they were real locked into listening to the leaders and trying to get better every day in practice.

That's kinda what I remember about that process of that win streak was just that every day they took one day at a time and they didn't look ahead to anything and I think that late in the season we've gotten caught looking ahead. That's the best way I can describe it.

As far as our league is concerned I think I said it way back probably a month ago that I thought our league was better than people were giving it credit for. I do think that we should get six teams in. I do think West Virginia should get in. I think Iowa State has proven themselves late in the year, and I think there's the rest of us that think we're in. But obviously that's up to the

committee. But that's what I think about the league.

It's really challenging and it's competitive and I think that all the teams that I've mentioned deserve a spot in the NCAA Tournament, absolutely.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, congratulations on a great season. Ladies, good luck in the NCAAs.