



2017 NCAA DIVISION I WOMEN'S BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

Oklahoma Press Conference Quotes
Alaska Airlines Arena · Seattle, Wash.
Saturday, March 18, 2017

Sherri Coale, Oklahoma Head Coach Opening Statement:

Congratulations to Gonzaga. They're a tremendous basketball team. I hate that their season is over this early because they're very talented and so good together and well coached. They compete, play the game how it's supposed to be played and they're a tough, tough 11 seed for a very talented team. On the flip side of that, I'm really, really proud of our guys. After being off for two weeks and the way we started in the first quarter. We shot it about as good as we could shoot it, competed at a high level and were connected. Our responses to all situations were pretty good and that continued throughout the afternoon. Even though our shooting cooled a little bit, the positive responses continued and I'm very proud of our team. I'm excited to keep working.

Peyton Little, Oklahoma Guard:

Can you take us through the game a little bit?

Obviously we got off to a great start in the first quarter, playing off of whatever the defense gave us and trusting ourselves on offense. We found a rhythm and really played off of one another. We knew Gonzaga is a great team and weren't just going to lay down. They fought back and we regrouped, talked in timeouts about what we need to do better, how to execute and that's what we did.

Have you been a part of that hot of a start before?

I guess the guess the week and a half or two weeks off really helped. We came out and really trusted ourselves and played confident.

On how they responded to Gonzaga closing to within five points in the fourth quarter:

We really tried to stay positive and regroup during timeouts. We talked about how we needed to execute on offense, get stops and get rebounds.

Did you have an advantage getting another win on this court?

I like to play here.

Do you have an appreciation for the fan support here?

Absolutely. It's fun when you get to come to a place like this and the arena is filled up.

Vionise Pierre-Louis, Oklahoma Forward:

How nice was it to not play another really physical Big 12 team?

I don't necessarily think it's a nice thing to not have competition, but there was an advantage inside. Coach let me know before the game that if I take care of my business inside that we'd have great shooters outside like Peyton (Little) and Maddie (Manning). So I did exactly that and took it seriously and tried to bang on the inside, take advantage then open it up for all the three-point shooters.

Did you focus on blocking shots today?

It wasn't a focus. My focus was more on offense and not getting beat on defense because they were quick. And also getting back on transition so I wasn't really thinking about having nine blocks. The ball literally just came to my hand and it was just a reaction so I didn't think about it.

Did you know how close you were to a triple double?

I found out just about five minutes ago (laughs).

On how they responded to Gonzaga closing to within five points:

We didn't let it scare us or speed us up at all. We had a nice pace throughout the first half and when they started to run, it was because we had a lack of communication on our transition defense. But we didn't let that frazzle us and we just stuck with each other and played for each other then pulled it out.

Did you have an advantage getting another win on this court?

I think it's more taking teams one by one and being in this atmosphere with all these fans coming to support high-level teams. That atmosphere that you get in this arena is top quality.

Do you have an appreciation for the fan support here?

Of course. It's amazing to have that type of fan support that they have and I'm very grateful.

Sherri Coale, Oklahoma Head Coach

Did you plan on Gonzaga's run?

Absolutely. We knew they weren't going away. They're too tough-minded, too talented, too good together and win too much. When you win as much as they win, they believe they have a run in them and are going to come back. And they did. They hit a couple threes ... and I thought the play Gioya Carter made, I don't know how much time was left on the clock, but Gioya made a layup and got fouled. I thought that was probably the play of the game. Obviously we had a lot of great plays, but that one stuck with me because we needed a basket so desperately. And it was somewhere in that period where Gonzaga was making their run.

Did you expect to have that many good looks early?

We thought that there were three things that we could do in terms of taking advantage of V.V.'s strength and size in the post. The way that they'd have to defend her, if we could be patient, it would be helping to swing the ball, we'd have driving lanes and they'd have to close out, or get wide open threes if they didn't close out. Then the re-post and swing it back and get it to V.V. We felt like they had to make a concession in terms of defending her and the whole key for us was to be patient enough to take advantage of that.

Is that what you like about Vionise as a starter?

V.V. had two great weeks of practice and one of the benefits of playing in a conference tournament early for us this year was to have those two weeks, to get back to basics and have everybody earn their spot. The slate is clean and she really took advantage and practiced really hard for two weeks so she earned that.

Did you like the way you played throughout the game?

What I liked about the way we played today was we stayed in the possession we were in. We didn't drag along and wring our hands about the mistakes we made. Or we didn't get panicky about what was about to happen on the next possession. We were very centered and very immersed in the possession at hand. That's what I liked about the 40 minutes. Make or miss, we just had really good responses – to their run, to calls, to makes or misses, to turnovers – we were able to just move on and dive into that proverbial next play. You have to be able to do that in the NCAA Tournament. Short memories are good things and I thought we had that today.

On when Gonzaga pulled within five points in the fourth quarter:

When I think back on that, I never looked at the clock. There are some games where a team will cut it and you look up and think we have to figure this thing out and measure this thing. And whether or not they took their cue from me, I have no idea, but we just continued to win the next possession. There were three big plays I remember – Gioya's layup being one of them, Maddie's (Manning) three from the corner where I was standing on the sideline in all my wisdom telling her to cut to the basket because there was nobody at the rim and I said, 'What are you doing? There's nobody at the basket!' then she hits a three. Then V.V. had a really nice spin move, back to the middle and finished softly at the front of the rim. Those three plays stick out to me. It was just a very intentional type of offensive mindset and I appreciated that from our team. And I think that only comes from when you got a bunch of guys that have been in this position before – this is their fourth NCAA Tournament so they knew how to handle that.

Did you like the way the game was called?

I thought it wasn't as brutally physical as we've seen the past few weeks. I think they let players make plays and they were consistent with their decisions. It's great for women's basketball because both of our teams rely on being able to move. We need freedom of movement – that's how we play – so it made it a great basketball game. What a great first-round game in the NCAA Tournament. It was well played by both teams and I think it's good for the growth of our sport.