Baylor – 80
Notre Dame – 61

An interview with:

THE MODERATOR: Joining us now are student-athletes Odyssey Sims, Brittney Griner and Destiny Williams and Head Coach Kim Mulkey.
We’ll start right off with questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Brittney, this is what you guys have been pushing for, striving for all season long. Now that you’ve accomplished it, what’s the feeling?
BRITTNEY GRINER: Feeling’s great. Only thing would have made it better was if my mom was here. But I know she’s home with my little nephew watching.

Q. Odyssey, there was a play when you were up 3 where you got knocked down flat, you’re mid-court and you got up and nailed a 3-pointer. How big a deal was that, do you think, for the team and what motivated you -- did that motivate you, that foul?
ODYSSEY SIMS: I’ve been getting hit by trains all year. And when I get hit, I just pop back up. I didn’t know I was going to hit a 3. But I tried to get back into the play as quick as possible and not give up on my team.

Q. Brittney, there was a moment -- I think about nine minutes left -- where you put in a hook shot. And then it kind of sparked -- I think it was a 15-to-2 run, but you pumped your fist and you get the whistle. You looked pretty emphatic. Could you talk about what you were feeling at that moment?
BRITTNEY GRINER: When I hit that little hook, it just got me energized. I was kind of shocked it went in, but it definitely got me going. Then I got that and-one on one and I just kind of lost it for a minute and just celebrating.

Q. Brittney, can you talk about getting -- people said you had to get a championship to validate your career as one of the greatest players ever. You got it and you fulfilled your pledge to win a title.
BRITTNEY GRINER: National championship, I wanted it because this is what we’ve been -- this is what our team wanted, and this is what we promised Coach when we got here. It had nothing to validate what type of player I am.
That was the last thing in the back of my mind. It’s the team and just getting the national championship for Coach and for Baylor.

Q. Odyssey, Brittney talks about getting the championship for Coach. You guys go 40-0 this year. You dominated pretty much the entire season. What can you say about the job that Coach did with you guys this season, the degree to which she motivated you and kept you guys focused?
ODYSSEY SIMS: She did a great job. She did a great job all year keeping us motivated, big game. She would talk trash to us to keep us motivated, make us play harder.
This entire year she’s been great. She’s one of the best coaches I’ve ever had. And toward the end of the season just going through what she’s going through now, she did an even better job. Made her coach harder than what she did and
made us play harder and made us want it more.
To win this national championship, we're probably more happier for her than we are for ourselves right now.

Q. Brittney, could you take us into your mind when the clock finally hit all the 0s? What was the first thing that you were thinking about? What were you thinking about?
BRITTNEY GRINER: I was just hugging my teammates. I had tears in my eyes. We finally did it. Unfinished business was over. And I was just ready to be with my team and hug them all.

Q. Brittney, Coach McGraw was just now talking about you, she said you’re one of a kind. She said you’re like a guy playing with women. Do you take that as a compliment or how do you take that?
BRITTNEY GRINER: Definitely, I take it as a compliment. Take it as a compliment.

Q. The pump fist notwithstanding, it appeared most of the game you were very calm, cool, collected, on the outside at least. Are you that way inside as well?
BRITTNEY GRINER: I’m fired up on the inside. I tried to stay cool and mellow and never really let the defender see if I’m rattled or just try to stay calm.

Q. Destiny, can you talk about just how important it was to win the rebounding battle and maybe even getting Devereaux in foul trouble?
DESTINY WILLIAMS: I thought we did a great job getting her in foul trouble because she helped Notre Dame out with rebounds and blocking shots. We had to rebound. We couldn’t allow them to get second-chance points. If so, it would have kept them in the game, and we had to limit them to one shot. A couple times they did and they’d score off it. And it’s something that we had to do in order to win.

Q. Destiny, you guys played Notre Dame earlier in the year, played Tennessee twice, Stanford, St. John’s, all these teams. How much did that experience of playing tough teams and sort of taking their best shot maybe come into play again tonight?
DESTINY WILLIAMS: It helps us out tremendously. There are times when we are down and we have to learn how to build back up and take the lead over again and finish out strong. I thought that a lot of those games prepared us for this playoff time when -- a couple games that we were down, and we didn’t get frustrated and not thinking correctly.
We’ve been in situations like that before that allow us to come out smart and take better shots and do a better job and finish strong.

Q. Brittney, Notre Dame was pretty happy with their defense on you in the first half. They said it was pretty effective. What did you do and your teammates do to get you the ball to get you more success in the second half?
BRITTNEY GRINER: We just really kept working. We started posting up harder and stronger and calling for the ball. And Coach made a couple of adjustments on the offense and just got the ball, was able to get the ball in.

Q. Destiny, could you just talk about the defense tonight and just how important it’s been to y’all all year?
DESTINY WILLIAMS: Our defense led us throughout the whole year. We frustrated our opponents, made every shot that they took -- made it a hard one, and we had to play team ball. I thought we really, as a team, just denied the ball, getting blocks and just rotated correctly. And that helped us out a lot.
Our offense, they didn’t flow the last game, and our defense picked it up and helped us get the win. And I think our defense is one of a kind.

Q. Brittney, I know it’s a little early right now, but what do you guys do for an encore next year? Went undefeated this year, won your title. What do you do for an encore next year?
BRITTNEY GRINER: Right now we’re just going to celebrate this, and when the season comes next year, we’ll start thinking about that. Right now it’s just celebrating.

Q. Can you talk about your relationship with Coach Mulkey. Up there she said you played hard for her because you know she has your back. Could you elaborate on that a little bit?
BRITTNEY GRINER: Like she said, we know Coach fights for us on and off the court.
She's there for us. And just the long relationship between me and her and just -- I know she's there and I got her back and she's got mine.

Q. Destiny, could you talk a little bit about just what the championship means for you and what it will mean for you going back home, the fact that it was over Notre Dame?

DESTINY WILLIAMS: Dedication that we put in. We put in a lot throughout the summer and for these games we played, it prepared us for this championship game. And we're excited to finally -- all the workouts, to finally get that championship. And we're just ready to celebrate it and enjoy it with our families and with our teammates and just ready to go home.

Q. Destiny, Brittney is real humble when she speaks about herself. Can you put into words how much she means to not just your team but the whole school, and especially with all the pressure that she has to go through?

DESTINY WILLIAMS: A lot of people look up to her. They respect her. And off the court the kid is --

COACH MULKEY: She calls her a kid.

BRITTNEY GRINER: Like she's 30 or something. You're my age. I told myself -- it slipped.

DESTINY WILLIAMS: They enjoy being around her. She's funny. She's well-liked off the court. She's like a regular student. She's not one of those who "I don't want to be messed with" or anything like that.

So on the court, she's just Brittney. She's here to play ball and she can care less about other things. And it's something that you need in players like that, because they will always help you out with a win.

Q. Destiny, I think you said you dreamed of this. Is the reality better than the dream?

DESTINY WILLIAMS: What? Are you serious? You're really going to ask me that? Oh, of course it is. The trophy is kind of heavy. It's heavier than my dream, but I like it.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, ladies. Questions for Coach.

Q. Kim, I know you do not like to compare teams. But because of the historical nature of this, a lot of people are going to be looking at this 40-0 with your history of the game. How do you want this team remembered?

COACH MULKEY: I thought the '05 team, we just came in the back door. We didn't have expectations placed on us. I think we were a 3 seed that year and we beat three No. 1 seeds to win the national championship. So we were the underdog.

The difference in that team and this team is that we didn't come in the back door. From day one the expectations were placed on us, we embraced it, and we lived up to it.

Sports is an interesting profession. You can embrace being thought about as being a dominant team, or you can shy away from it. Most of the time I'll try to protect them from you guys and from the public.

But we couldn't do that this year. You can't hide the talent in that locker room that I get to coach. So we embraced it. And that's a little bold on my part and it's a little uncomfortable for me because that's not my personality.

But I think they sense Coach is always brutally honest with us. I couldn't walk in the locker room and hoodwink them and tell them we don't have those expectations; you're not that good, you're one of many, because, truthfully, we're pretty special.

And that's the difference in the two teams.

Q. Is any part of this -- do you feel any relief tonight at all?

COACH MULKEY: My relief is for those players. I want to make sure you understand when I say this: I've done this since I was 18 years old. I've played for national championships. I've won Olympic gold medals. I know what it feels like.

My joy now with coaching is I want my players to feel what I have been blessed to feel for years. The joy for me is to watch all those Baylor people out there on the big stage and feel good and feel important, and that makes me happy.

My joy is to watch a Brittney Griner and an Odyssey Sims and a Jordan Madden, who never even won a state championship, win a national championship.

It's not about me. I've been around some of the best in the business. But my joy in coaching is for the people who have never had the opportunity to experience what I have.
Q. Kim, how satisfying is it when the game’s most talked about player has a game where she lives up to all the billing?

COACH MULKEY: If Brittney didn’t score a point, she would have lived up to the billing, because she’s so dominant on the defensive end of the floor.

You just held -- correct me if I’m wrong, is Notre Dame not the highest scoring team in the country, points scored? Second? They’re up there. You just held them to 61 points.

Brittney Griner’s presence on the defensive end of the floor, you have to make adjustments. Shots that they were making they were having to release it quicker before she could get over there. They got a lot of layups because they brought Brittney away from the basket.

I’ll go back to the original question to Brittney. It’s sad in athletics when people feel you have to validate your talent by winning a championship. But, you know what, that’s society and that’s the world we live in.

Brittney Griner, whether she won today or not, will go down in the history of the women’s game if not the greatest post player, one of the greatest.

I’m so glad that she has that ring now.

Q. With about a minute to go, you brought everyone out and put the subs in, and you had these big hugs at your bench with Brittney and some of the other players. You’re so good at describing things, could you tell us at that moment what you were thinking and saying and how great that must have felt?

COACH MULKEY: Just hugged them and told them I’m so happy for you guys. I’m so happy for you. Thank you for letting me coach you. Thank you for letting me challenge you. And I think I said it to all of them, not just Brittney and Jordan, but just every one of them.

There were many tears on that bench, but they’re tears of joy. And I think that’s what I said. Bell’s palsy kicks in, I don’t know if there was more than that, there could have been.

Q. What is the significance you attach to being the only team to go 40-0?

COACH MULKEY: No significance, honestly, right now, today, because the only words that are coming out of our mouth are national champions. 40-0 will mean something to me and to all of them when they’re through with their collegiate career and we’ll think back on what we accomplished, who we played to go 40-0. That may be the story, is who you played to be 40-0. You didn’t play a bunch of patsies.

But that was never a goal of ours. It had to be when the NCAA brackets were announced. But it was never a goal of ours.

Q. You had a 14-point lead in that first half, got down to 6, what was the message at halftime and did you make any adjustments to get the ball more inside to Brittney?

COACH MULKEY: We made adjustments, but, again, I didn’t think the whole night we took a bad shot. Maybe when the shot clock was winding down we forced up on some things.

But I thought a key to their run to cut it to 6 was they put their kids back in that had the two fouls, and I just thought just keep your composure. We’ve been here before. We’ve done this before. You’ve been in the locker room behind. You’ve been in the locker room with big leads, small leads, you’ve been in the locker room when you’ve had great momentum. You’ve been in the locker room when you lost momentum.

I didn’t sense anything in that locker room except that we were still in control of the game.

We made some adjustments on ball reversal, screening the zone. I just felt that we were very composed. We took very few bad shots. I thought we took care of the ball. You want to have an assist-to-turnover ratio 2 to 1; we almost did that. You had 20 and 11.

And I just felt Odyssey Sims’s ability to know when to shoot, know when to run and know who needs to touch the ball, give up the ball quicker to the I formation 2-3, I just felt she ran the show out there. I thought she was the point guard I envisioned her to continue to be.

Q. 40 and 0, all these players coming back, there’s going to be high expectations next year. How do you top perfection?

COACH MULKEY: Well, see you’re already starting. You’re making me embrace it now instead of letting me enjoy this. Yes, we have everybody back that plays a majority of the minutes except for Terran Condrey. We think we have one of the best recruiting classes in the country. One of our players was MVP of the McDonald’s All-American game.

We’re going to embrace it. I don’t think
you guys are going to let me hide it. You all keep trying as best you can to encourage Brittney to leave. That's not happening either. Where is Jerry with the New York Times? His article, I loved it, but that's not happening. She's not going anywhere. She'll be worth the same millions next year as she's worth this year.

We have to embrace it. If we lose two, three, four, five, and we go 30 and 10, I don't care. I want to be in New Orleans. That's my home state. And I won't have enough tickets for family, but I'll do something to get them in the arena.

But that's what we want, another national championship.

I saw Calipari wants to go undefeated. Good luck to him.

Q. I don't know if there's a turning point, but you were up 3 and Odyssey takes a hard foul right in front of you, and she gets up and hits a 3 and it just looked like that's when things started to roll. Did you sense that as a big deal at the time?

COACH MULKEY: No, I didn't sense it as a big deal. I'm so engaged in what are they doing defensively, computing with my coaches, do I need to run this.

At the moment you don't realize where the turning point may be. I just know the kid, she harasses the ball so hard that she gets hit and popped all the time because you have to relieve pressure by having somebody out there to screen for it, to help the point guard.

And she's aware of it. And she just bounces right back up.

Q. Kim, great Baylor contingent here in attendance to celebrate it. Obviously there was a big watch party at the Ferrell Center. What do you think the party back in Waco is going to be like?

COACH MULKEY: Well, you know, at Baylor, they used to not let the Baptists dance. I bet they're dancing now. It's fun. Look, it's been a great year for Baylor. Robert Griffin being here. I don't know what other coaches from Baylor were here.

It's just a fun time. And I look forward to going back. I know they're planning a celebration at the Ferrell Center when we arrive back tomorrow. Let's enjoy. This is a memory. This is a memory and that's all we have in our life. We have our family and we have memories.

And this is for Baylor. This is for everything that you can do for a university, is play at the highest level. And Baylor is doing that, not just in women's basketball but in all sports.

Q. I know that you've said that until you got to the Final Four and had to win the 40 and out, that that wasn't a goal in itself. But last year when we were preparing the schedule for this year and you put 40 games on the schedule, was there any awareness at that point that was setting you up for a possible place in history?

COACH MULKEY: Not at all. I think our media relations person, Julie Bennett, maybe somewhere in February, somewhere in there, just casually mentioned it. Maybe coming home from a trip. She said: You know, if we win it all, we could go 40 and 0 and undefeated.

Nobody felt that. We didn't plan that. Didn't know anything about it really until she brought it to our attention.

Q. I think you've just made a lot of people in Los Angeles very unhappy. But is that like take it to the bank, Brittney's not coming out next year -- this year?

COACH MULKEY: No, she's not going anywhere. I don't know what part of that y'all don't understand. She's not going anywhere. She is not even going to be able to go do a lot of things because she wants to graduate in four years. She wants to get her degree. And Brittney Griner is not going anywhere. She said it; I've said it. I don't know what else we can say. She's not going anywhere.

This kid is -- she's a jewel. She enjoys Baylor. Come see her. Watch her longboard across campus, paint her body at a football game. Watch her do cartwheels and roll down the halls. She's a kid. She enjoys her college life.

She knows she's going to make money someday. She's not in a hurry to go into that crude, rude, crazy real world. She likes her little comfort there in Waco, Texas.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports
An interview with:

THE MODERATOR: Joining us at the podium are Head Coach Muffet McGraw and student-athletes Skylar Diggins and Natalie Achonwa.

We'll start with the student-athletes.

Q. Skylar, can you talk about, seemed like you had to come back and come back and come back, and just what happened that second half that it got away from you.

SKYLAR DIGGINS: Yeah, in the first half we had foul troubles and things like that. We had to go deep into our bench early, and we had to make adjustments and things like that.

And they made a couple of baskets and got up 7, 9, and then we just kept digging ourselves in the hole by not taking our shots. I don't think that we were taking the shots that we had. And when we were, we weren't shooting it confidently. And so that dug us in a hole a little bit. So we were chasing, chasing. I think we spent a lot of energy chasing.

And I think in the second half we -- we hit some shots in the first half to kind of cushion the blow. In the second half those shots just weren't falling. And they were hitting a lot of theirs.

Q. Skylar, is there any point in the game that you would say was the turning point for you?

SKYLAR DIGGINS: They went on the run there, and I just remember we had cut it down to 5 or 3, and then they went on a run. And I saw 10, 12, 14, 16, 19. They just went on a run. We couldn't get stops.

We couldn't get rebounds when we did make them miss shots.

Q. Natalie, seemed at times tonight you and your teammates were in perfect defensive position, arms up, and you just couldn't stop Brittney. How frustrating was that?

NATALIE ACHONWA: Very frustrating. I think Brittney Griner had a great game, and she was hitting those shots.

And I think personally I could have done a better job on executing our game plan. I think I gave her the baseline a couple times.

But as far as that, she had a great game. She was making her shots.

Q. Skylar, can you talk a little bit about the legacy the four seniors leave?

SKYLAR DIGGINS: This is a great senior class. And I know me watching their whole careers, even on the sidelines, just amazing what they've been able to do and bring this program back to an elite program, and being able to lead this team to back-to-back national championship games is amazing.

And I hate that it ends on a game like this, because you fail to see everything they did to get to this point.

But it's amazing and the best team I've been a part of ever. Never been a part of anything like this. And we'll all keep in touch. They're like my sisters. And it's amazing and we're going to miss them.

But very proud of them, and I know the Irish fans are proud as well.

Q. Natalie, of all the things that Brittney does well, what's the hardest to stop?

NATALIE ACHONWA: She keeps the ball high. She's 6'8". She keeps it up there. A lot of posts bring it down, and that would give us the
advantage, but she keeps the ball up and she fights for position.

Q. Are you convinced that Baylor is the best team this year in the country?
SKYLAR DIGGINS: Obviously. They're a great team. They're a hardworking team. They've got players that can -- multiple players that can score 20. Every player knows their role and they play it to a T. And they showed they're the best team in the country.

Q. Skylar, now that you are a senior leader, can you talk about how this game fuels hunger and what you take from it going into the offseason building for next year?
SKYLAR DIGGINS: Gotta do a better job being a leader. I thought I didn't have good leadership out there tonight as far as keeping our fire. But I'll do better. I promise.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.
Questions for Coach.

Q. What was your game plan against Brittney and how did you adjust during the game?
COACH McGRAW: Our plan was to double. We were going to play mostly zone and bring the double team. And I thought it was fairly effective in the first half. I thought the zone looked pretty good. And the second half, when we got into the foul trouble that destroyed our game plan, we really needed Devereaux. She was a big part of the plan. And we didn't have her.

We came in with Markisha Wright, who I thought played well as a freshman. But in the second half we were afraid to foul. Every time Brittney got the ball, even when we brought the double team, we didn't really lean on her. And I thought she got really close to the basket almost all of her shots, and she shot it over us.

There really wasn't anything we could do. We brought the double team. And she just -- she made great shots. She's a great player. She was unstoppable, I thought, for the size and the players that we had in. It would have been great to see Devereaux play for 39 minutes.

But I'm not sure it would have changed a lot. She just -- she's so big. She's hard to stop.

Q. Muffet, have you ever seen anyone who has ever been able to impact the game at least down low as Brittney did and obviously as she did tonight?
COACH McGRAW: No. I think she's one of a kind. I think she's like a guy playing with women. It's just there's so many things that she can do that I've not seen a lot of women -- well, really, you know, there's been some guards that had some skill like that. But as a post player she's the best I've ever seen.

Q. Even though you had foul trouble and some other things going wrong, you cut it to 6 at halftime and cut it to 3 and had the ball. Could you talk about the way your team was able to fight back?
COACH McGRAW: I was proud of that. And I think Markisha was in there for some. I think when we brought Dev back in -- it was really disappointing that she got the third foul in the first half. That really was disappointing. Because she was why we made that run, having her back in.

And Skylar getting two fouls, that didn't affect it quite as much because she was able to stay out of foul trouble the rest of the game. And the second half Dev got a fairly quick one.

And we just weren't big enough. We just needed a little more size, and we just, we missed so many shots that they -- their defense is really good, but we missed a lot of just a lot of open shots, too.

Q. When Dev got in foul trouble, Markisha Wright and Natalie Achonwa played a lot of solid minutes. Could you talk about their play a little bit more and what that means for the future of your program?
COACH McGRAW: Ace is really talented, and I think she's got a great future. I think the way she played against Maryland I thought was a great start for her to move into next year.

And Markisha Wright, I like her. I wish I would have played her more throughout the year. Because she's strong and she's a really good low block player, which we don't really have. So I think the two of them will be really good next year.

Q. Obviously a championship game loss is going to be rough no matter what. But I wonder if you're more emotional tonight because of this senior class that you've grown so fond of?
COACH McGRAW: I was hoping nobody would ask that question. The waterworks will begin now.
It's such a tough way for their career to end.

Q. In a situation like this, one wonders, if you had anything to change about your game plan or the execution, if you could have a do-over on it, what would you change and why?

COACH McGRAW: I would -- I'd have Dev play more. I think that was -- that's really -- we didn't have any control over that.

I thought our game plan was sound. We didn't -- we didn't score. I think we got really frustrated with our inability to score, and they were scoring so easily, 40 points in the paint. And we were struggling to make a basket.

Q. Did you think Skylar was a little tough on herself tonight? And then what do you see from her in terms of being your senior leader for next year?

COACH McGRAW: I mean, she played a great game. She didn't have any turnovers. We only had seven turnovers as a team. We did do a few things well.

She's just such a big-time player and she just didn't get a lot of help today. But she did everything I thought she could possibly do.

Q. I'm wondering how you help players who have had such a great year all year but there's such a hunger for this national championship, especially after last year. How do you help them process this in a way that they can actually learn from the loss and still not be overwhelmed by it and be able to come back and move on next year?

COACH McGRAW: I think it will be toughest for the seniors not having that opportunity to come back. They're the ones that carried it so hard last time also.

We've got a lot of new faces now with Kayla and Skylar and Ace, really kind of the three main players returning. So I think for them it will be good motivation.

And for the freshmen, we've got to improve a lot to get ready for next year, and I think them seeing what it's like even from the bench I think will help them.

But I think we'll be able to process that. I think it will take some time, but eventually we'll remember what a great season this was.

Q. Is the feeling in the locker room any different than last year? Is there more of a feeling that Baylor really just kind of outplayed you the whole game or maybe more so than Texas A&M?

COACH McGRAW: I think it hurts no matter how much you lose by. But I think the feeling last year was a little different, I think more of we kind of let it slip away a little bit, but this game got out of hand. So I think there was some frustration that everybody didn't play as well as they wanted to. But it's still pretty much the same. Everybody's pretty emotional.

Q. Baylor has everybody back next year. What is the future of this program going to be like? Can anybody stop them next year?

COACH McGRAW: I think -- no, I think they'll be preseason No. 1. And we're still going to work at getting Brittney to leave early.

Q. You talked about double teaming out of the zone. To my observation, it looked more like the primary defender was frumping Brittney and the help was coming over from the other side. Was that part of the game plan, or is that when she got moving on you?

COACH McGRAW: We did three different things. The most -- most of the time we played behind and brought the help. We also fronted for a spell. That was fairly successful, actually.

And then we played a box and one on Sims for a while. Tried to put the box on Brittney. So we were trying to play behind her then also.

Q. At this Final Four, one thing that was successful against Baylor was the backdoors, sort of the UC Davis patent backdoor. Did you pick up on what Stanford was doing, and next season do you think there's something that could be expanded on that?

COACH McGRAW: We run the Princeton offense which involves a lot of backdoors, and I think when we started the game you saw at the beginning of the game we were game planned to a T: Use the screen, engage Griner, and hit the roll.

And I think Dev got two quick baskets before she got her two quick fouls. That's what we were trying to do really most of the game, was to engage her in the ball screen and get the roll.

And then we had some backdoor...
opportunities that -- I think they learned something, too. I think they got off a little bit. We got a couple. But I think they started playing a little softer.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

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