



2010 BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

DIVISION I WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

FIRST/SECOND ROUNDS

UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA, HOST



Saturday, March 21, 2010

Oklahoma

Press Conference Quotes

Oklahoma Head Coach Sherri Coale

Opening statement:

"Obviously, we're very excited to get the tournament underway and we're very excited to host the first and second rounds here on our gym floor and we appreciate our university and institution's willingness to put this event on and we're ready to get it underway."

On the team being where she wants:

"I've been pretty pleased with it. I feel like down the stretch of the season, particularly even with our one-loss record right down the stretch of the last three weeks, it would not be considered fantastic. I think we've slowly but surely been making an improvement. I think that's the key; to not be satisfied where you are the first of February, but to keep getting better and better. I think we have been improving even throughout the Big 12 tournament. I was just really pleased with the way these kids respond."

On what the underdog role does for a team:

"Anytime you win, you begin to learn to expect to win, and the more you do it the more you expect it. That's never a bad thing. That's confidence and confidence can sometimes be that little something extra that pushes you to the top. At the same time, I think depending on how you handle it, either situation could be viewed as an advantage. Maybe we haven't won and won and won, but we've come really close against the best teams in the country. I think our strength of schedule has to help us, too. The thing I think our schedule helped us with so much down the stretch is we just had to be focused on every single possession in every single game. We couldn't get ahead of ourselves or flop around about what happened on the previous play or game, because with our quality of competition, if we did that it would be over. It would be over in a horrible, ugly way immediately. It forced us to grow up and develop this grit and toughness that I don't think you get any other way besides playing the people the caliber of which we played."

On South Dakota State:

"I was very impressed. They are extremely well coached and they're tough and they play hard and that's a pretty lethal combination. You can tell that their kids expect to win games and they're not intimidated by anybody and what concerns me is their ability to shoot the 3-point shot. They're never out of a game because of their ability to hit open shots behind the arc. So they are a handful to guard, no doubt about it."

"Sometimes when schools transition from D2 to D1, or one league to another, they come in with this attitude that 'I'm going to shock the world,' a bravado that helps them. They stepped in and said last year that 'we can play with the big guys' and they sure did. I think now they are trying to build on that. The 'not only did we do it once, we're going to do it again' mindset, which is definitely an advantage for them."

On controlling shots and making percents higher:

"I don't necessarily know that you can do anything. A lot of that often has to do with the quality of shots that you're getting. Are you under duress? How quickly are you being forced to shoot? How hard do you have to work to get them? I said that after the Connecticut game. We missed a lot of easy shots. You're so exhausted by the time you finally get a good one that the last thing on your mind is making it. That sounds completely backwards, but sometimes that's what happens. So I think that they quality of the defense you go against makes a big difference there. Another part of it is just the confidence of your team collectively and the comfort level that they have with one another. That's where you get in the proverbial zone where everyone feels good and looks good."

More often than not, by the time you get to this point of the year, you know what kind of shooters your guys are. You see them in practice every day. That's a much truer form of what they're really capable of. And I know what shots we're going to make, who's going to make them and what the best selection is for our team. I think the critical part of it there is you get so focused on doing the right thing so that you don't have time to wring your hands about it. Sometimes poor shooting in games comes from wringing your hands about it and that makes you a much worse shooting team than you are realistically. We've moved, fortunately, beyond that. We have not had time to wring our hands. If you wring your hands, you're going to get beat. You have no time for that. You have to get to work. Will we shoot 67 percent from three? Not unless all the stars align probably. But can we make 40 percent of our shots? Yeah. And we probably will."

On playing a full-court game and balancing tempo:

"Once you get to the NCAA tournament, especially the early rounds, you can really take advantage of a full-court game in a way that you're not capable of late in conference play with all the familiarity and the caliber of teams in the league. You're just not going to get a bunch of easy baskets against guys in the Big 12 unless you get a steal or a long rebound. You're probably going to have to play in the half court and execute. Maybe in the NCAA tournament, when you get out of that familiarity, you can have some success in the transition game again. Danielle, more often than not, when she gets too sped up, it's when she's going against great athleticism and under great duress. When she's been able to rebound and go and pick her own speed, she's been fantastic."

On the team taking South Dakota State lightly:

"No chance. All you have to do is show them about 10 or 12 offensive clips and you have their attention. We had a close game with Army. We went into overtime with Marist. That's not in any way shape or form disrespectful to those guys, but they don't have the name of Connecticut, Tennessee, Baylor or A&M. We've been in little fights with every team across the country. Very little has come easy for our basketball team this year. As a result of that, we overlook no one or no thing."

On liking the bracket:

"I've never not liked my bracket. It's a chance to play."

On comparing South Dakota State to Iowa State:

"Amanda said it real well. They play real hard. Everyone talks about Iowa State because they make a lot of 3s and they do. But where they'll beat you is how hard they compete on every single possession. It may not look like that, because they maybe aren't as athletic as some of the other teams in the Big 12, but they give complete and total effort to every possession. I think in that vein, South Dakota State is very similar to Iowa State. They move well without the ball and they penetrate and pitch. They can all shoot it, and that's probably in our league, the very best comparison we can have."

Oklahoma Senior Forward Amanda Thompson

On how roles changed after the loss of Whitney Hand:

"I wouldn't say the roles really changed, but they developed. Everybody just had to do double what they were doing before. They knew that they had to step their game up that much more to make sure we were all successful."

On it seeming like a long time since they last played:

"A little bit, but it's just one of those times of the year that was good for us because it gave us time to prepare not only for our opponents but just to get ourselves together and just sharpen up everything. Get ourselves right with ourselves first before we can go against someone else."

On having famous athlete ties throughout the team:

"We really don't even think about that unless someone else brings it up. I mean the only benefit is being around the game for a long time and knowing about it and just seeing people compete when I was younger. Other people have probably seen the same thing. It helps when you get to this time of the year."

On not overlooking South Dakota State:

"You can't overlook South Dakota State. They are a great team, and after watching film, I just see that they like to score. We have to buckle up and hold tight and not take them for granted and play our game. I think we'll be fine."

On playing at home:

"I just feel like it's another home game and another opportunity to play in front of our fans again and another opportunity to make it a special night."

On being in Norman for the first two rounds:

"I think it's a good advantage, but we still can't relax just because we're at home and get to sleep in our own beds. We just need to take advantage of it and play like we've always played."

On the level of anticipation:

"I'm very anxious. I feel like we've been practicing all week, which is fine, but after watching all these games, it makes you just want to get out there and compete and show what you can do. We're kind of chomping at the bits as Coach Coale was saying."

On comparing South Dakota State to Iowa State:

"They play hard just like them. They shoot hard just like them and they've got a couple of tough players on their team. So at least we've seen it before and it won't be new to us. It will be a good game."

Oklahoma Junior Guard Danielle Robinson

On the growth of the team this year:

"A whole lot. You've seen everyone mature in their own way. When we lost Whitney (Hand), we came back and we talked about how everyone was going to have to do that much more to make up for her loss. I can see it in everybody, the way that everybody has responded. You can tell such a difference in our confidence level in the way we're playing right now. So we're definitely in a great place."

On finding the right tempo in the game:

"Our success is going to depend a lot on transition and how quickly we move the ball. We have to use our athleticism to our ability and that's what's going to be huge for us, the way we execute our transitions. The whole rhythm thing, you just can't get sped up, and I think we've done a great job of that in the second half of the season."

On playing at home:

"It's exciting. I feel like we haven't played here in so long. But it's always nice to play in front of our fans and it's also nice that they get another opportunity to come back and support us once again at home."

On the level of anticipation:

"We're definitely anxious. We knew that we needed to get our legs back under us before we could come out and play again. We're making sure everything is sharp. We're definitely anxious, but we know that we can sit back and watch today, but when the time comes tomorrow we'll be ready to play."

On South Dakota State:

"They made some noise last year. We have a ton of experience on our team and hopefully we can use that to our advantage."