

# **NCAA Tournament Quotes**

**Game No. 1:** Oklahoma (22-8) vs. Illinois State (26-7)

Noon; March 22, 2008; Mackey Arena

Final Score: 69-61

## **Illinois State Head Coach Robin Pingeton**

*Opening statement...*

“When we fell behind by 17, we could have given up, but we didn’t. We were warriors and we battled back. That’s the kind of team we have had all season long. We are losing three very special seniors, kids that have certainly left a legacy behind at our program. The future is very bright and we’re really excited about it. I have a ton of respect for Oklahoma. I think Sherri (Coale) has done a great job with that program, a very talented team. I thought we proved that we could play with them today and I’m very proud of our team.”

*On whether or not it was ISU’s goal to make Oklahoma beat them with jumpers...*

“We wanted to guard from inside out. We felt like if they knocked down consecutive shots from the 15-foot range that we would have to play them with that call and then our next attempt would be to make them put it on the floor. I felt like overall, for the majority of the game, I liked our game plan. I felt we executed it really well.”

*On how this experience will help the team in the future...*

“I’m really excited about the future of our team. It’s exciting when you have the conference player of the year back for her senior year in Kristi (Cirone). We do have some young kids that are awfully talented and I think every year we need to continue to take that next step forward with our program. When we recruited these girls, we told them that we were recruiting them to put Illinois State on the map. To be honest, I think we are on the map now. These kids have a lot to be proud of. We still have a lot of work to do in moving our program forward.”

## **Illinois State guard Kristi Cirone**

*On turnovers in the first half ...*

“I think in the beginning we were tight with the ball. We were getting used to their style of defense. They were very aggressive, but after a while, we settled down and started playing our basketball.”

*On playing against Oklahoma’s zone defense ...*

“Sometimes in a zone you have a tendency to have a doughnut around you and that’s why sometimes we had a bad shot. But we started penetrating and kicking out which put us into a positive rhythm.”

*On momentum into next year ...*

“This game shows us that we can play with teams like Oklahoma. It gives all of the younger players experience and it teaches us what we can accomplish when we step up and play hard.”

## **Illinois State guard Shala Jackson**

*On shooting 0-8 to start the second half ...*

“Not to take anything away from Oklahoma, but we were just not hitting some of the shots we were taking. We dug ourselves into a hole, but we fought so hard just to get out of it which shows great character about our team.”

*On it being her first NCAA Tournament ...*

“I don’t think it was an issue, it was exciting and I see it as a blessing to win our conference and then be able to come here to the NCAA Tournament.”

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## **Oklahoma Head Coach Sherri Coale**

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“It was nice to have a little run in the second half where we shot the basketball pretty well. It gave us some life. That’s how we were able to build that 15-point lead. We missed a few, and that’s how we gave up that 15-point lead. It affected our defense a little bit. I was really proud of the resilience of our kids. They’re just a young bunch who just aren’t accustomed to this stage and feel the pressure of everything. I thought we responded and handled that well. I made some adjustments in the second half offensively and they did exactly what I asked them to and they found a way to win, and that’s the name of the game in March.”

*On the key to the second half run ...*

“I really think it came from our defense. It was their ball out-of-bounds to start the second half. We had excellent intensity. We contested, we rebounded and that led to some transition baskets and got Illinois State on their heels a little bit. We were able to funnel them into traffic a couple of times and disrupt them and create some steals, or at least some deflections. I really think it was what we did defensively that led to taking a little pressure off of us offensively and we needed that to happen.”

*On the Illinois State’s offense ...*

“They are a hard-nosed, tough, efficient, offensive team. We forced them into 18 turnovers --that’s very uncharacteristic of this basketball team. They can score; they can all score. They’re very smart. They’re very well-coached, they’re very tough, and they’re very talented.

## **Oklahoma Guard Rose Hammond**

*On her confidence ...*

“The last few weeks of practice we’ve been focusing on playing hard and that was my mind set coming in. The whole time I had confidence from these last two weeks.

*On her long jump shot at the end of the game ...*

“The shot was for Jenna Plumley and I was open on the other side. I am pretty confident in my shot. I just shot it because they were leaving me open all game. I just stepped up and shot it.”

## **Oklahoma Center Courtney Paris**

*On Oklahoma’s play...*

“The name of the game is surviving and advancing. It’s about people like Rose Hammond stepping up, being confident and making shots. We told Rose to go score because they were leaving her open.”

*On the second half...*

“The momentum in the second half was really important. We didn’t get the run to start the game that we wanted. The start of the second half was big for us. Everybody is confident in making big shots on our team.”

*On the game Illinois State gave them ...*

“They gave us a tough game and that’s what we expected. It is tournament time and they were urgent. They have some pretty good players and they just stayed with it the whole time.”