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An interview with:

**COACH NIKKI CALDWELL
DANIELLE BALLARD
RAIGYNE MONCRIEF**

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by LSU head coach and student-athletes Raigyne Moncrief and Danielle Ballard.

COACH CALDWELL: Very proud of our team for fighting for 40 minutes. Texas A&M is a very explosive team. They're seasoned. They have great leadership in Coach Blair. They have unbelievable players.

I was proud of our group for staying the course and sticking to our game plan. We were able to make the plays down the stretch that we needed to solidify the win.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Coach, you started out hot. What went into that? How were you able to attack early?

COACH CALDWELL: Well, in the first half we were shooting the ball extremely well. We were shooting 52% from the field. In the second half we struggled a little bit. But we wanted to make an attempt at the basket so we talked about really penetrating, getting in the seam so we could get ourselves to the free-throw line.

We knew Courtney Walker and Courtney Williams, those guys were going to try to take over. They did just that. Offensively they got on the glass, got a lot of second and third opportunities. I felt as though that really changed the momentum and rhythm of the game in their favor.

Q. Danielle, what about your mentality allows you to go in there and battle with these taller players?

DANIELLE BALLARD: I just know when my teammates shoot it, it's a 50/50 chance it's going to go in. I try to crash the boards as many times as I can because I'm capable of getting rebounds. That's one thing I'm good at is getting rebounds, so that's what I do.

Q. Coach, talk about the matchup tomorrow with South Carolina, where you think you have an advantage.

COACH CALDWELL: With South Carolina, they're a very deep team. Their first five, you've got to be aware at all times where Mitchell is. Ibiam has played very well. Welch gives them a lot of energy.

Our team defense has got to be there. It's got to be done by committee. All five people have got to be able to defend the basketball. All five of our players have to be committed to rebounding the basketball. Once you get through the first wave, here come the 'Twin Towers'.

Defensively we're going to have to extend our defense, try to disrupt them away from the basket because they are so good in the paint.

Offense we've got two very explosive guards here with Danielle and Rai. They do a nice job of just slicing through people's defense. Their ability to make jump shots, we're going to have to have that. To make the extra pass, we're going to have to be that team. When we demand a double-team, find your teammates. But it's going to be equally as important for our team, Anne Pedersen, to knock down shots, Sheila Boykin, DaShawn Harden, the supporting cast has to be on top of their game as well.

Q. Danielle, do you recall the rebound when you pulled the ball away from Jada? Talk about that play. Do you recall being able to make that play, what you saw there?

DANIELLE BALLARD: Well, I saw her about to go up for the shot. I tried my best to try to take it from her because coach was staying to stay physical till the end of the game.

I tried my best to get the ball from her. She's a very strong post player. Luckily I came up with it.

Q. Coach, you lost three out of four before winning these last two against A&M. What has been the difference?

COACH CALDWELL: The difference is we've gotten off to better starts. Our two losses on the road to Ole Miss and to Arkansas, we were in the hole 9-2, 11-2. It's a 40-minute basketball game. We have to give ourselves a shot at the very beginning of the game.

We've moved Raigyne Moncrief to tip for us. She's done a good job of getting the tip the last couple of games. That's led to baskets.

We're a team, again, that's finding our way and understanding it's a 40-minute game, not a 30-minute game. Today we put together a 40-minute basketball game.

Q. Coach, you've seen a lot of really talented rebounders from the guard spot. Can you put what Danielle is able to do when she's able to crash the boards, the aspect that brings to her game.

COACH CALDWELL: Danielle, when we moved her, she's playing in the back of our zone, we feel very confident that she's going to come up with the rebound. She has a toughness about her. She's physical. But more importantly, she's confident in knowing that she can go up against anybody.

Her ability to hone in and follow the basketball, that's something that you can't teach. That's something that you've learned at an early age and you just have worked at it and you become very good at it.

When you look at guard play across the country, I don't know of any guard that's rebounding the basketball like Ballard. I know that at the beginning of the year Raigyne Moncrief took on that responsibility for us, as well. She, too, is capable of bringing six, seven boards from that guard spot, too.

Q. Seems like every time Texas A&M started to make a run, you made a big play to stop the momentum. How did you maintain composure during those times?

COACH CALDWELL: Our composure is through practice. We've talked about how we've got to be better in late-game situations. Down the last four minutes of the game, we want the ball in

Ballard's and Moncrief's hands because they are just great play-makers. They finished out the game for us. They've shown they can do that time and time again in our conference.

Again, a lot of credit to A&M. We were ahead and they did not quit. They kept fighting and fighting. The momentum was going their way, but we made a charge of our own and were able to finish out the game through our defensive pressure and we also made free throws down the stretch.

Q. Raigyne, you were in and out of the game a lot because of foul trouble. How were you able to not get frustrated and still help your team?

RAIGYNE MONCRIEF: My players, my teammates, the ones that were on the bench, they were keeping me in the game, Stay with it, your time is going to come. Coach Tasha also telling me. It's basically my team, the family aspect. Everybody was telling me to stay with it.

Then Coach Niki trusted me to put me back in the game and things started happening for me.

Q. Coach, a win like this, you're up to 17 wins now after winning 10 in conference. You don't want to just stop here with a big game tomorrow, but you have to feel pretty confident at this point of a bid?

COACH CALDWELL: Texas A&M is one of the best teams in the country. We have been able to put a body of work together in the last 10 games which has shown our competitive nature.

These young ladies have worked extremely hard. We have a lot of basketball left in us. We do not want to cut our season short.

Obviously we have another big task ahead of us tomorrow in South Carolina. But that's the beauty about being in the SEC, is that when you're competing, it feels like an NCAA tournament. That game today felt like an NCAA tournament game. Two teams going at it with great players.

Williams and Walker are two of the best players in the country. I have two of the best kids in the country, as well, with Moncrief and Ballard.

That's what you want to see. That's exciting to see players excel at this high level and be able to compete on a national stage.

Q. (No microphone.)

COACH CALDWELL: I told these guys,

we win, you have ice cream and cake. You lose, you don't. I tried to make them understand if mommy is happy, we're all going to be happy.

Q. South Carolina had 15 blocks this afternoon. Does that change your game plan at all or are y'all going to attack the paint?

COACH CALDWELL: The one thing about South Carolina is their size is very -- I don't know of anybody bigger than them. We want to be smart and attack at the rim at the right time with great spacing, but be aware you need to make the extra pass.

We're going to have the ball in Ballard's and Moncrief's hands quite a bit. They're explosive off the bounce. But when they bring that second defender, be play-makers out of that. Or you have to go to your jump shot immediately.

We definitely want to be aggressive because that's a strength of ours.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, ladies, thank you very much.

COACH CALDWELL: Thank you.

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