

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Wednesday February 28, 2018

Stephanie White
Christa Reed
Kayla Overbeck
Vanderbilt Commodores

Arkansas - 88

Vanderbilt - 76

THE MODERATOR: We're now joined by head coach Stephanie White along with student-athletes, Kayla Overbeck and Christa Reed. Coach?

STEPHANIE WHITE: First of all, I want to congratulate Arkansas. They came in and battled from start to finish and outplayed us in nearly every aspect of the ball game. I'm certainly disappointed. We had a great opportunity in front of us and we didn't take advantage of that opportunity. Yet at the same time -- nobody likes to lose and we have great motivation going into the off-season to get better. Individually and collectively.

So, you know, we close the book on where we were this season and we move on and we look forward to taking our opportunity to get better as we move forward. I'm extremely thankful and grateful to our three seniors. They have really stepped outside themselves and grown so much. In the two years that we've been here PFRP particularly this year, when we asked them to step up from a leadership department and they did that. They did everything that we have asked from them all the time, and as somebody who has been through coaching changes I know that's not easy. We're just thankful and grateful we have had an opportunity to coach them.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Christa, you guys led, I think, early in the third quarter. What do you think happened that it got away from you in the last 12, 15 minutes?

CHRISTA REED: I think the biggest thing is that Arkansas was more hungry than we were. They outworked us, especially going toward the end of the third quarter and into the fourth quarter. We just didn't



have the desire that we needed to have to pull out the ball game.

Q. Kayla, the turnovers in this game seemed to be a big part of this one compared to the one on Sunday. Was that to you the biggest difference in those two games or if not what did you see between the two that made a difference in this one?

KAYLA OVERBECK: Yes, that, but also what Christa said, they were more hungry than us. Before the game we said it was a matter of who wants it more and they played their butts off the whole time and they -- we had ups and downs, turnovers that definitely were at points of the game that we really did not need them to be, but they really wanted it more in terms of their effort and hustling and doing whatever they needed to do. Yes, we had spurts of it but for a whole forty minutes I feel like they wanted it more than we did.

Q. Kayla, just looking at the big picture not just this game, I know the record isn't good this year but you just had one of your best games. Chelsie is the SEC All Freshman. What's the level of optimism with this program moving into the off-season?

KAYLA OVERBECK: We were just talking about the way that they're coaching us and loving us and being able to push us and challenge us, and I think that the underclassmen especially Chelsie, I think they can be the best point guard in the SEC. You can put my money on that. I know I can't bet, but she is something that I've never seen before, just from growing up and watching games, I just think that she is the one that you need to watch out for. For all the other teams, but she is the leader of the boat, I guess you could say, because I know a lot of people follow her even though she is the youngest on our team. She is a freshman.

Q. Kayla, to follow up on that, what about from you? What are you focusing on for next season just for your development as a player?

KAYLA OVERBECK: I think being able to be the best I can on the inside, because I know I'm not as consistent as I would want to be, you know, I mean we all root for consistency and rebounds and points but I think that being able to be more consistent down low can help me spread the game farther out, you know, just trying to work on not just myself but being able to flow with

the game more, I guess, with the basketball IQ as well.

THE MODERATOR: We will dismiss the student-athletes for the remaining time. Ladies, thank you very much. Questions for Coach White?

Q. Stephanie, I asked your players, but it seemed like turnovers played a big part in this game and rebounding as well. When you look at these games so close together, what was the difference between Sunday and today?

STEPHANIE WHITE: I think we had a lot of turnovers on Sunday, too, if I remember correctly. Certainly our ball security has to be better. We gotta be able to play fast but not just throw the ball away all the time. They had 9 3's in the second half and is this a team that typically shoots in the mid-20s percentile and they shot 36%. At some point when you are a team like ours and we're not as athletic as Arkansas, not as quick as Arkansas, so we have to play the percentages and in what 9 of their 12 in the second half. They knocked 'em down at key moments and those were big shots and high-pressure shots and you gotta give them credit for knocking those down.

Certainly we didn't shoot it well from three. We typically shoot the ball fairly well. When you're giving away 20 to 30 to 40 opportunities between offensive rebounds and turnovers, extra possessions that you could have that if you score on 40% of those, that's helpful.

We've got to make individual decisions to be better individual defenders, next year as well and really work on that, on that end of the floor. I feel like our offense got better. I didn't feel like our defense did.

Q. Stephanie, Chelsie only had six field goal attempts. Does she need to attack the basket more? Is there anything they did to neutralize her?

STEPHANIE WHITE: They sagged off her and challenged her to make shots which. They went under screens, which is going to be the next step of her development, she has to become a consistent mid-range jump shooter and work on her three-ball as she goes throughout her career. I felt that early Chelsie was jittery, loose with the ball, she wasn't where she needed to be defensively so first time on this stage it's expected plus we expect a lot out of her. We put the ball in her hands a lot and say, hey go make plays and by the way be a lock-down defender, too.

So from Chelsie's standpoint they did a good job of keeping her uncomfortable. She did a better job in the second half of finding her own teammates and she will have to continue to get better and we will work in the off-season on her shot so they can't play her like that.

Q. In your first two seasons here at Vanderbilt, you look at today, a lot of young players, given the growth on that start of the ball and looking forward how can you build off this season the take-away with the bulk of the roster that will be coming back?

STEPHANIE WHITE: I think we have to talk about certainly our habits, our daily habits, our practice habits. The expectation of success every time we step on the floor, the expectation of excellence in everything that we do.

We're graduating a senior class that hadn't had a lot of success and if I'm not mistaken, hadn't been to the postseason or been to the NCAA tournament, one of the two, so right now everyone in this program with the exception of Bree Horrocks, only knows no NCAA tournament, no postseason. So we're changing a culture and a mind-set that we have to step on the floor with some swag and confidence and we have to step on the floor expecting a level of excellence. You don't just step on the floor and expect that to happen. You build that every day in everything that you do. We have a saying, how you do anything is how you do everything.

When you're, um, showing up on time for class and making sure you are in the right place for your tutor and making sure you get all your study table hours, all those things and the way in which we approach those things is the same way that we will approach things on the floor.

So I think from a mind-set standpoint really changing -- continuing to work to change our mind-set, that's not something you do overnight. It's a process. That's how you begin to change culture and that expectation level. I think the competitiveness will continue to improve and has improved. Chelsie and Autumn really, but Chelsie brings just a joy of competing and you can see it on her face, a joy of competing, a joy of life, frankly and when you enjoy what you do and compete at a high level every day and challenging one another to be better then eventually the wins and losses take care of themselves. So losing sucks, and nobody wants to repeat what we've done. Now it's what we do in the off-season to make sure that this doesn't happen again.

Q. Stephanie, overall athleticism how much was that a problem this year and how much better can it be? I know you have a couple of freshmen coming in. How much of a jump can you make in that way next year?

STEPHANIE WHITE: Yeah, that's a problem for us. It's not just a problem for us in games I say a problem for

us in practice to simulate what our opponents do. It's very difficult for us. So that first five to seven minutes of the game, it's like, whoa, this isn't what we practiced against, yeah, that's because we practiced against each other. So it is difficult to simulate. So we will continue to be athletic. I think Chelsie and Autumn are more athletic kids that we brought in and Renee and Jordan are continuing to add to our athleticism and that will be something that we will continue to do through our recruiting, too. But it's going to take time. It's a completely different style system player than what was here before for a long time, not that it means it's going to be better or worse, it's just going to be different. So we have to continue to build for that and then all the while, continue to teach how we want to defend, how we want to play.

We said at the beginning of the year we wanted to be less robotic. We might be a little less robotic but not a lot so continuing to learn how to play and how to trust our instincts and understand what we're trying to do on both ends of the floor, so that's part of our process.

Q. Stephanie, LeaLea Carter has been hampered by injuries all year. Any general prognosis you can give of her future next season?

STEPHANIE WHITE: No, I can't -- from obviously from injury standpoint I can't discuss a lot of what's going on with that. I think the biggest challenge for LeaLea Carter is to be able to come back and be consistent every single day, to be able to come back and continue to grow and continue to develop. We talk a lot to our team -- so this is not just LeaLea this is about everybody, we build trust and you earn playing time and students every day in practice. That becomes our practice habits. That's what we have to do every single day, every player, honestly, included but building consistency and building trust ultimately determines what we do on the floor and who we feel comfortable with on the floor at certain times. And LeaLea unfortunately was hampered by a lot of injuries and had a hard time really coming out of that.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you very much.