

Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament

Saturday March 3, 2018

Vic Schaefer Victoria Vivians Morgan William Miss. St. Lady Bulldogs

Mississippi State - 70, Texas A&M - 55,

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement from coach.

VIC SCHAEFER: I'm just awfully proud of my team, my kids. I just, Texas A&M came out and just absolutely punched us and floored us. And I was just really proud of how our kids responded. At the end of the first quarter and then in our time there before we hit the floor for the second quarter, there wasn't a whole lot of hollering and screaming, it was more of our seniors had to answer. And there wasn't any raised voices was there, ladies? We were accountable, give credit to Texas A&M. I mean they're playing as good as anybody in the country. They're scoring a ton of points. Coach has got them playing their best basketball at the right time of year, which is what a great coach does and a great staff does. And those guys have been playing at a really high level and it just -- for us to be able to kind of weather the storm, I mean they had 11 offensive rebounds at halftime, just kicking our butt and that's toughness, y'all. We talk about toughness all the time and try to pride ourself on that. And they just came out and really were punching and punching and punching and we were kind of staggering around.

Finally answered late and it was just from there on I really thought we competed and played like we're capable of playing. We shared the ball, pretty good offensive continuity in the second and third quarter. And good execution, we only had five turnovers. Morgan goes for 15 and five and no turnovers in 33 minutes. That is a great job by her.

So really proud of our effort. We have been here before though, we know what it feels like to be here, we would like to have it end a little differently and that's our challenge right now. I thought Tori's shots that she made today were very timely. I thought she made big ones when we needed it. And she was competing her



rear end off today with Anreil Howard, is a monster. That kid is such a competitor and she did a good job on her from a field goal percentage standpoint. But Anreil is just a monster rebounder, and she's a tremendous basketball player, plays extremely hard. And so did a good job on Danni, Ro guarded her again, held her to nine on 3-11. And we just had to compete with Chennedy, because that kid is an unbelievable competitor and loves to compete, loves to play, and we just had to compete with her. That's what you do with her, you're going to win some, you're going to lose some with her, and we tried to win more than we lose on possessions with her.

THE MODERATOR: Take questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Coach said that the seniors had the answer in the break between the quarters. What was said? What did you guys feel that you needed to do better individually, as a group, to help turn the tide?

MORGAN WILLIAM: We knew we had to play some defense. We've been starting the game off a little slow in this tournament getting punched first and we took it a little bit. We know tomorrow we can't do that, so we were talking about how we were going to stay with our offense and we need to guard and block out because we were giving up too many rebounds and they were penetrating to the basket. So that's pretty much what we talked about. Coach Schaefer said, things you guys, you know what to do. So that's what we did, went out there and played better.

VICTORIA VIVIAN: I agree with Morgan.

Q. You guys were able to force Texas A&M to 16 turnovers. How were you guys able to do that?

VICTORIA VIVIAN: We had to pressure the ball, we played defense four quarters. And I feel like the point guards, first of all, and the guards out there were out there denying and we just had to play defense like we do. So our defense leads to offense and that is how we forced them into turnovers.

Q. You got the steal on Carter and I think it started an 8-0 run. How big did you feel like that spark was there late in the first half? And what were you trying to do defensively against Carter?

MORGAN WILLIAM: I was just really trying to guard her, put pressure to her. And when she had lost the ball, I didn't hit it, so I said I might as well go get it, she's not going to foul me going to lay it up, so that's what I did. And they always say defense starts on ball and I'm the point guard so I got to set the tone. I feel like they fed off me and my teammates, so it got us going.

Q. Morgan, Chennedy is such a tough offensive player, but the previous game and today that seems to bring out the best in you. What was the challenge today in trying to guard her? I thought you did a good job, by the way. And trying to look for your shot and be aggressive to help give the team some offense?

MORGAN WILLIAM: I knew I couldn't hold her scoreless so I just tried to contain and do the best that I could. I know my teammates had my back on the screens and stuff, but thankfully I feel like they were just giving me the basketball and I can attack any time I wanted to, so that's what I did. I took advantage of it. They weren't going to foul me. If they fouled me I was going to knock down the free throws, so it was a win-win situation. And Chennedy, she had six turnovers, so that's good on my behalf. I applied a little pressure and she turned it over six times.

Q. Coach mentioned you've been here before, now getting a chance to play for a tournament title. What do you maybe need to do differently approaching it this third time around?

MORGAN WILLIAM: I feel like we have to go in and be focused and not just, just go out there and play, but not play basketball like coach said we came in the first two games and they punched us. I feel like coming in we, whoever we play tomorrow, we cannot let them punch first and we have to play great defense and play our game.

Q. Victoria, when Morgan's playing offensively like she did today, and maybe looking for her shot a little bit more actively, what dimension does that add to the team?

VICTORIA VIVIANS: It adds another scorer on the court. We already have four and when she's being aggressive, that's five. And I feel like we're unstoppable. Like I tell her to go score all the time.

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll take questions for coach.

Q. You said earlier in the season that you had to encourage Morgan sometimes to look for her shot. Today was that difficult, given how she seems to rise to the challenge when she plays somebody like Chennedy?

VIC SCHAEFER: No, I don't think so. Again, I think Morgan has adapted to our team. And this year's team has more scoring options so it takes a little pressure off of her. And when teams do guard her a certain way, she knows she can have a lot of success. Her mid-range shot was good today. I thought she just ran our team extremely well. Again, five assists, no turnovers, 6-11. 3-3 at the line. Had a steal. Just was really good. I pulled her, I think once during the course of the game just to encourage her to try to bring more pressure on Chennedy. I thought we were soft on her a little bit early. I just wanted her to do a better job.

Jazz came in and did a great job on her and was able to show kind of Morgan what we were looking for.

Q. Can you talk about maybe not screaming and yelling in the huddle? That's not your MO, but?

VIC SCHAEFER: It's not? Come on man.

Q. Most of the time. In a setting like this, semi-finals against Coach Blair, what gave you the confidence to say that that was the right way to go, especially with the way that they came out and floored you like you said?

VIC SCHAEFER: Well, I just think that the accountability piece, I'm constantly, constantly coaching and teaching that with our kids. Whether it's in basketball or life, we just, we talk about that and that was an opportunity. I think that was a teaching moment and for them, and I'm really proud of how they answer that bell. They really answered that and came out and were really good from that moment on. Even late in the first quarter we finished it off right and then the second quarter we really played well. But those kids are veterans. They don't need any coaxing. They know what's going on. I think sometimes you got to, sometimes it's better to get out of their way and let them figure it out. And we had a good break between the first and second quarter, we talked about some things on offense that I thought we could get, and we got it.

Then defensively I thought we were just so much better. They only had 10 points. Like I said, we should have been up 12 at half, we were only up eight. Chloe misses two free throws and we let them make a shot there late, so I was more mad about that, mad at myself than anything. Again, me being accountable. But we had an opportunity to have them down 12 at half and I felt like they kind of, we let them off the hook. So, but again, I thought we played really well.

Q. You said Texas A&M's playing their best basketball at the right time. Where are y'all at? Where do you think your team is as far as your best basketball?

VIC SCHAEFER: I think we're playing well. I don't know -- I think there's some best out there for us. That's the challenge this time of year. We're in March and I keep talking to them and preaching to them about, can we get better every day? Can we get better in practice? That's, to me, the challenge with a team like this, are we getting better? Because if you're not getting better, to me you're getting worse. That's just the only way I see it. You're either getting better or you're not and therefore you're getting worse. So that's the challenge for me coaching this group right now is really encouraging them and teaching them and breaking down film with them and showing them and then going to the practice floor trying to get better. We're pretty good, I mean we're playing pretty well, we have great chemistry. Defensively, again, we held a team to 55 points again today. I can't -- in the Southeastern Conference, I mean that's pretty good.

Is there things we can do better? Man, absolutely. 11 offensive rebounds, are you kidding me? Getting out-toughed for a quarter, are you kidding me? Kentucky kind of did that to us yesterday a little bit.

So I think we have got to grow from that and, because as we continue to play this time of year, teams are going to get better and better and you might not be able to afford to have that bad quarter. It might be the quarter that gets you. So, it's a good teaching moment for them. They will be able to see that first quarter. Victoria, she doesn't need to see a stat sheet. She's in there, she knows that she, Anriel was a load today and Anriel won a lot of battles with her rebounding, rebounding. I thought Victoria was really good defensively most of the day. And then she's down there battling her tail off. I mean she's just competing. But Anriel's a monster, man. That kid is a monster when it comes to rebounding. So she had her hands full.

But Tori made some big shots for us and some big big moments and I was really proud of her.

Q. You mentioned Victoria was battling for those rebounds. There was actually one play where I think she dove for one of those loose balls. Do you think that's a maturity factor there, as far as her maturing and staying with Anriel on those plays?

VIC SCHAEFER: I definitely think she's competitive now. You and I both, we've watched her grow up and we have seen her score 60, I've seen her get 67 with three people, so she's competitive. And today she knew she was going against one of the great rebounders in the country. So she knew that was where her competitiveness was going to have to really, her toughness and physical play was going to have to match her. So even though she was losing some of those battles, it wasn't because she wasn't competing

and trying. So I definitely think her maturity, again, I walk in the locker room and she's pointing to her rebounds and then she's point to go Anriel's rebounds. That's maturity that you love to see in your kids. So those kids are, they get it, they understand it, and that will be another teaching moment for us and for her and she will get better from it.

Q. You said after last night's game that you were able to get some of the starters some rest. Today you played all of them at least 33 minutes. Any concern going into tomorrow with a quick turnaround?

VIC SCHAEFER: Nope. We are built for this. Our kids are -- we've trained for this moment. These kids are built for this. I am not worried about it. If it doesn't work out it's not going to be because we're tired or we were sore or whatever, it ain't going to be that. We are built for this moment, we have proven it over time, we have played in tournaments where you've played back to back to back and you had your toughest game. I mean we do things for a reason and we are built for this, these kids are built for this, they believe it, I believe it, so we'll be ready tomorrow, no matter who it is, we'll be ready to go.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you.

VIC SCHAEFER: All right.