

**March 11, 2006**



An Interview With:

## OKLAHOMA

COACH COALE: I am so proud of our kids. I thought they competed together and showed their unit throughout the 40 minutes. It was a heck of a fight. They played really, really hard. We had to play through them in order to win this championship, so I am most proud maybe of our poise. I do realize that we probably set the game back about 15 years by our turnovers, but to win in spite of that, you throw them the ball 32 times and you're still able to win, there must be some other things that you're doing pretty well.

So just really, it's an amazing accomplishment to go undefeated in this league and then to be able to sweep the tournament as well, I think is a reflection of what these kids are made of.

**Q. Courtney, and Erin as well, the reason I don't bring you up in this, you're playing on the perimeter and I know it's physical out there to, too, but Courtney and Leah, could you talk about how physical of a game this was inside and the things that they got into?**

COURTNEY PARIS: I thought it was a very physical game. I'm a big girl and I'm scratched up, and I feel like I was stepped on. They played us tough. It was a very physical game, very physical on both sides. I mean, it just was what it was.

LEAH RUSH: I agree. The refs let us play and especially that second half, they were not calling a lot. So you're going to get the opportunity to play like that, I think you just have to get after this it.

**Q. Just the stretch of free throws at the end it looked like there was a point where you looked a little mad maybe or motivated?**

COURTNEY PARIS: Just the story of my life. I guess I like making them at the very end of situations and, I don't know, I try, guys. I don't know what to say. We practice and we run and my teammates are going to be upset about it in practice -- (laughter) at least we won, that's all that counts.

**Q. You hit four in a row, or five in a row, whatever, but before the stretch of you hit four in back-to-back possessions, any particular words of motivation from your sister or any other teammates?**

COURTNEY PARIS: Most definitely. I think they all aim to me and said: "Dribble, dribble, dribble, watch the basket and then shoot." That one really helped.

And also, on a serious note, I think the biggest thing, I probably missed about ten in a row and they said, "Don't worry about it, who cares about that, this one is what counts." Finally it was able to sink it and that was the best thing in the world. You can't do that without good teammates.

**Q. What was going on in the locker room considering they shot 19 percent and they were only down by four because of the 19 turnovers?**

COURTNEY PARIS: Well Coach Coale came in the locker room and said, "you have 17 turnovers," and our wise-guy assistant coaches said, "no, it's 19." That's pretty horrible when we are still up by four.

Coach Coale said, "Don't worry about it, start over and we can win," and that's what happened.

**Q. For Courtney and Leah, can you talk about Sophia Young, the way you defended her, it took a while before she really got going and talk about your defense**

**on her and maybe the team in general on her?**

LEAH RUSH: Personally, just the last couple of games, she tore us up. She's a great player, and the only way you can do anything on her is to prevent her from catching the ball. So into was the strategy all along, just to front and prevent catches. Laura came in towards the end of the game when I was in foul trouble and did a great job on her. Laura, she can get after it on defense. Just a team effort there.

COURTNEY PARIS: I think it says a lot for Sophia when our whole thing is don't let her get going and she still has 50 points or whatever, that's pretty big. As a team, Laura and Erin -- Laura and Leah -- not Erin, but Laura and Leah did a great job of fronting her and I just did a great job on the back side. Sorry.

LEAH RUSH: She's still learning our names (laughter).

**Q. Courtney, I'm sure people have fouled you before, but have you ever had a situation where people were just shoving you away from the ball and you were just begging the referee to call foul?**

COURTNEY PARIS: No. I've never had anyone play so physical. And, I don't know, I'm young, you know, it kind of threw me off a little bit. Kind of got riled up there a little bit.

You've got to do what you've got to do. Like I said, the refs were calling that way and we were able to do physical things and that's just the way it was.

**Q. When the refs are letting you play and letting it be physical, do you think that gives your team an advantage a little bit?**

ERIN HIGGINS: I think that Courtney being the physical player she is, it might be an advantage for her. She might not get into foul trouble, or the smaller players maybe not as much. When it gets physical, sometimes that's when it gets the most fun and I think Baylor might agree that this game was really, really fun to play.

**Q. Do you think it's an advantage for your team when the refs let you play and be physical?**

LEAH RUSH: I think it can be. For the Courtney, she can create spaces for herself.

Our team as a whole, we'll play as hard as anybody out there. Baylor is tough, though. They are the same. They are strong and physical. So I think Erin nailed it, it was a fun game on both ends. Any time you can play and run, it's fun.

COURTNEY PARIS: Since I'm the biggest person on the court, I guess I should say yes, it's to our advantage. I don't know, like these said, if they are rushing you while you play and you're able to be physical and do some thing on both sides, it makes for a bit more of an interesting game and I would say a little bit more fun.

**Q. Erin, can you talk about how good of a team you guys are when you hitting from the three-point range, and how you felt throughout this tournament yourself?**

ERIN HIGGINS: I think when we can hit from the perimeter it's a huge advantage for us because they are forced to come out of whatever type of double-teams they are going to bring on Courtney, or Ashley, for that matter.

When we are not hitting shots, people can just sit back and that makes it harder for Courtney. She's got to work hard and she gets a bit more tired. Anything we can do on the perimeter to help her out, that's what we're here for.

**Q. Towards the end, you guys were pulling away and you were having fun out there, could you tell midway through that they were frustrated or could you just see that look this their face like nothing was going right for them?**

ERIN HIGGINS: We could tell just a little bit they were getting frustrated, just the way we guarded Sophia, it was frustrating but she didn't get as many touches as she's used to getting. Baylor is a great team, so you know that when they are down, you know they are that not out. We knew we had to keep coming and rebounding and making plays, and give them credit, they never gave up.

LEAH RUSH: I don't think there's anymore to it. I think basketball is just a game of run (ph) and whether they were having a low spurt or a high spurt, it's going to keep coming in waves. As our team, we never let back too much, just put it on repeatedly.

COURTNEY PARIS: I mean, I guess, like these girls said -- repeat the question, please. (Laughter).

**Q. Erin, three-point shooter, that's a nice NBA 3 that you shoot.**

ERIN HIGGINS: Thank you.

**Q. Courtney, I believe your sister did say, "Dribble, dribble shoot," I saw her motion that in the circle, was that really the motivating factor to get you back into those free throws at the end of the game?**

COURTNEY PARIS: I think so. It's days like these, I think it's special to have your family and my twin sister, who is one of my best friends as a teammate. She criticizes me a lot but stuff like that, that's pretty cool.

**Q. Leah, can you comment on, Courtney shows a lot of emotion and a lot of motivation on the court after every play, not only when she scores but when other players score, talk about what type of role she plays on the team as far as motivating?**

LEAH RUSH: Well, I think, you know, more than just her -- all of the emotion you guys see, the plays she makes, that's what motivates me. I can't speak for the rest of my team, but I catch myself running down the court over and over just shaking my head and laughing, the things she does. Because she not only can guard, this kid, but her blocks, it's just ridiculous. So that's something that I like to see. But certainly any time all of get-up kind of stuff, things fun and it brings excitement to the whole gym I think, our fans everyone and. We feed off that and we feed off the fans.

**Q. You've beat Baylor three times, and the other times you had to come-from-behind to do it. It felt like you guys took control from the beginning, maybe didn't pull away, can you talk about the dishes in the third game?**

COACH COALE: Yeah, you know, I was thinking, as heavily as we're playing, at least we're still ahead, which we had not been at the other two meeting. I felt like if we could just sustain at half-time where we could get in that locker room, I thought if we could sit down and look at each other and realize what we were

doing, how fast we were going at offense, and we did that at half-time and our second half was much better.

Again I credit our defense for limiting Sophia's touches and not letting them get comfortable. They so need the ball to go through her to generate offense and they made tough shots and they this made a few of them. But still to go in with a four-point lead with all of those turnovers --

**Q. How good is this team right now?**

COACH COALE: I think we are still getting better. Obviously we have some room for improvement. But they are just a resilient bunch. Sometimes at this time of year, it's obviously about how good you are, but it's also about how you are together, and I don't know if I've been around a team that's any better together.

And I mean that in never way, not just in passing the basketball, not just in helping on defense, but just the way they steer themselves together down the stretch. We needed to get out of their way, let them do it.

**Q. Did you consider taking Courtney out, I think with about 3:41 left, and it's obvious they were going to start to attack her, did you consider taking her out at that point?**

COACH COALE: We did but we needed her to defend and rebound. You know, she had four fouls and we had her out for a little bit and things just get a little shaky sometimes when she's not out there down the stretch. So we felt like her presence was a tremendous factor and I have to credit Chris Reid (ph), our SID at the end of the table, he says, "Why don't you throw the ball inbounds?" Hey, that's a real good idea.

"Hey, Courtney throw the ball inbounds." We were yelling, stay out-of-bounds. Stay there, we'll go.

**Q. You talked about how much Courtney has improved this year; how good she can be?**

COACH COALE: I think that's the thing about Courtney that may be we don't step back and realize, and maybe everybody will after the season is over, but as good as she is, she can

get so much better. And there are so many little things, she's a conscientious kid and we have already been through the whole apologetic thing she did when she comes out of the game. She says "I'm sorry for the 26 rebounds." But she doesn't like to do things wrong and as a result of that, we pick on her like crazy and she does continue to get better. Her defense tonight, I think instinctively and the principles she's been taught and the I think sting of when to go and when to shade and when to recover, it's extraordinary. You just give her a little bit, but she's going to be something math he is tinge.

**Q. Is a game like this more of a statement or argument for *Player of the Year*?**

COACH COALE: Oh, I don't know about that. ***Sophia Young*** is a terrific basketball player and she's had a terrific season, she's had an amazing career at Baylor. ***Courtney Paris*** is special. She might be a once-in-a-lifetimer. She got her MVP at the tournament, we won the championship, let's get on to the next thing.

**Q. Can she stay out-of-bounds, and -- inaudible -- just how you're playing at the he end of the year?**

COACH COALE: Yes, she can stay out-of-bounds if she wants to. I suppose if they ran over there and tackled her, that would be an additional -- but as far as the final four, I've been asked a lot of questions about this team and the similarities to that Final Four. Player-for-player, strategically, not really many similarities. We didn't have a big go-to post. We lived and died by that perimeter shot and our ability to get to the free throw line. It's just a different makeup. We still try to play fast but it's a completely different team.

That bunch that went to the Final Four, they were so good together, the smartest thing I ever did was -- inaudible -- throughout the NCAA Tournament and this bunch is a lot like that. They are a little younger, don't have that experience of the Final Four group and the two Sweet 16s and it was their time and they were going to make it happen. None of these guys have been past the first or second round. Experience is a little different but I tell you what, they are something special, when there's

something on the line, there's something special there.

**Q. On the seed, 1 or 2?**

COACH COALE: In my gut I think they will give us a 2. I think if we can win this conference tournament and go undefeated in league play, you deserve a 1. But they didn't really ask me and I don't figure they will call. So we'll go play wherever they tell us to play.

**Q. You talk about your aces and your 3-point shooters, Courtney is obviously going to play well, but when they are going, how different are you?**

COACH COALE: I felt like tonight's game was boiled down to the people around ***Sophia Young*** and Courtney Paris. In the first half, we're not even in a position to fight for a championship in the second half. Erin kept us in the game. There's no doubt about that. I think that was the big difference in that game in the second half. She was hounded from baseline to baseline, to hand the ball to Courtney, to get us some sets, she made some transition baskets, she guarded, she came up with rebounds, she managed the guard, she did all the things a premiere point guard can do, and nobody ever talks about her. I tell you, she runs the show.

**Q. Do you think that because they were shoving Courtney away from the ball like that, do you think she concentrated more down the stretch on dribbles?**

COACH COALE: Free throws are about repetition and certainly about concentration. With Courtney, she does whatever she needs to do to win a game, and her will is incredible. She realizes that, hey, to get this thing over with, I have to make a couple of free throws. Her passion, you go through a season and you have this moment that you hang on it, I will never forget her face turning around and looking when she made that first free throw. I just sat back and thought, gosh, I have a great job.

**March 11, 2006**



An Interview With:

## **BAYLOR**

SOPHIA YOUNG: Credit to Oklahoma, they have great tradition.

**Q. Can you talk about the shooting, shots not following, particularly in the first half?**

CHAMEKA SCOTT: One of the worst offensive games ever. Just shots weren't falling. We were getting open looks and they were shots we've been practicing but they were not going in for us tonight and that's hard to deal with.

**Q. Did you try to rebound against Courtney?**

SOPHIA YOUNG: Courtney is a great player and she's big and she is physical and she uses her body very well. Sometimes it's difficult to get around her. She's a great rebounder and give her credit.

**Q. You guys seemed a little rattled at the beginning of the game, do you think that first play of the game, that fast break pretty much set the tempo for the game?**

COACH MULKEY-ROBERTSON: No, I don't. I didn't think we were rattled. I just thought we missed shots. I mean, gosh, we shoot 79 shots, that's special. Look at what we shot from the field. Always give credit to the opponent. Some of those that we missed were great defense, I would say the majority of what we missed were wide-open looks and that was probably their game plan was to make other people beat you besides Sophia, and we didn't get it done. You can go from top to bottom, everybody that played got wide-open looks. At this level, you've got to nail shots. We didn't do it.

**Q. Chameka, when they are hitting 3s like they all seem to be daggers, how hard it is to defend them?**

CHAMEKA SCOTT: With them having three-point shooters, it spreads the floor a lot but at the same time you just want to help inside the three-point game which is good for them I guess. And once they got hot, you know, they were on a roll and the shots were falling for them, and they kept going in that aspect of their game. I guess we were just not getting out far enough and they were hitting.

**Q. Particularly in the first half, did frustration start to set in, and did you feel like that affected your game at all?**

SOPHIA YOUNG: Yeah, I would say that. I was feeling a little frustrated, not anything they were doing, just like not hitting my shots.

**Q. You shot like 23 threes and I know some of that was late, but was there a lot that you did have to maybe match their threes or anything?**

CHAMEKA SCOTT: Well, no, I just shoot 3's all the time and, you know, just as a shooter you don't want to let the first couple go. Like I said they were giving us looks. We kept trying, but they just were not falling. I don't think there was pressure in that sense at all. We were still trying to play Baylor basketball.

**Q. Can you talk about just the physical nature of play in the lanes today as far as toward the end of the game, it was really evident that it was a very heated match-up?**

SOPHIA YOUNG: We knew that the game was going to be physical coming out because that's always been the type of game that we played. Courtney and Leah did a really good job of trying to keep the ball away from me and, I don't know, it was just a difficult game and we knew it was going to be like that.



**Q. Can you talk about the last minute, you were maybe wanting to get Courtney to the foul line and see if you could come back on the offensive end and get something going?**

COACH MULKEY-ROBERTSON: We were trying to foul her, maybe her shoot free throws, hope she would miss, come down the offensive end and get a bucket and get the lead. We started doing that early in the six-minute mark and you didn't want to wait too long. I thought we cut it nine, I wanted to play good defense and Tisdale and went and fouled. I didn't want a foul.

But they are the better team. They are better than we are. So to elaborate on your question about losing three teams, you beat somebody three times, you're better than they are. So they are better than we are. We are both going to go to the **NCAA Tournament** and hopefully going to make a run and hopefully represent the **Big 12** well.

**Q. As poorly as your team shot in the first half, you were still in the game?**

COACH MULKEY-ROBERTSON: That's unbelievable. That's unbelievable to shoot 19 percent. Not only did we shoot poorly, Oklahoma had 19 turnovers at the half. Just wild that you would even think we would be in the ballgame at that point. I think that's just the guts and the will to win and the effort that they gave on the defensive end of the floor. It's just we couldn't buy a basket from the perimeter.

**Q. Can you talk about the difference of this year and last year, last year you were on the big winning streak and run?**

COACH MULKEY-ROBERTSON: Well, you want to win the Big 12 Championship outright, and we didn't do that. We came in second.

So we are going to erase all that have from our minds and we're going to take tomorrow off and we are going to get ready to practice on Monday. In a lot of ways, leaving the conference is a breath of fresh air. We don't beat up on each other. When we go to the **NCAA Tournament**, it's really a breath of fresh air for all of us.

**Q. This game had a Sweet 16 type of feel, do you think it's like a game you could see a few weeks down the road?**

COACH MULKEY-ROBERTSON: Sure. Hopefully you can draw upon the fact you don't like sitting up here losing so you get in the gym and shoot some shots and make some buckets.

**Q. The 20 out of 79 shots, do you think their defense was obviously --**

COACH MULKEY-ROBERTSON: Their defense was good on **Sophia**. Very seldom do you see a team where someone steps up when **Sophia** is not doing good; then you have **Chameka** that steps up, but to have the entire team, the entire team offense, it's a mystery to me, too. If I could bottle it up and tell you what happened, I'd sell it to every coach in America. First of all, I always give credit to the opponent. I thought their zone defense made us take those threes, for a reason. There was a reason they were playing zone defense. So give those guys credit.

But at this level, you've got to nail wide-open shots. And we've got pep people on this team, we go to Iowa State and played zone before, we go to different places in this league and we've hit those shots. Didn't hit them tonight. Not a person on our team did.

**Q. (Inaudible.)**

COACH MULKEY-ROBERTSON: Sure, it's called good coaching.

**Q. What is it about your team this year as they have tried to forge their own identity as opposed to last year's team what makes you feel good about this team?**

COACH MULKEY-ROBERTSON: Last year when we sat here, we were reigning conference champs and we won a National Championship yet. We did not have anybody on the team that went that far to the **NCAA Tournament**. We have four or five that have been to the NCAAs and understand what it's all about. I think that they will lead and guide the younger players and we'll make a run and be as tough as we possibly can. How far we go remains to be seen.

**Q. Can you talk about the role Jasmine played in keeping you in the game the in the first half?**

COACH MULKEY-ROBERTSON: Well, Jasmine, she did a very good job. She tried to generate some offense. Jasmine is very good in the Open floor. She did her job to keep us close in that ballgame with Tisdale in foul trouble, I thought jasmine did just fine. She made a few steals defensively. She tried to generate things in the Open floor for us to create some excitement. I thought that she did just fine.

**Q. Are you surprised more teams haven't tried to send Paris to the line that much the way you did today earlier this season?**

COACH MULKEY-ROBERTSON: I don't know. If we had not been behind, we wouldn't have done it. It's just the flow of the game and coaching and trying to cut the lead. You've got to do something. You've got to make some changes. Our best option was just to put her at the line. She was 6 for 15, so it worked in a lot of ways.

**Q. You guys played two really good games that you guys seemed to have control of for large part of. Wonder if you can talk about what kind of improvement you've seen out of them or maybe whether they are peaking, just seemed like a different game than those first two.**

COACH MULKEY-ROBERTSON: Well, I think you want to play well when you're heading into the post-season and I think now that they have got their freshmen and they have played this many games, they probably understand the Paris's strengths and weaknesses better, as older players do.

The more you play together, the better you get. They are playing very good basketball right now. I hope that they and all of us that go to the NCAA tournament can do very, very well.

**Q. When they are hitting 3-pointers and when they have their perimeter game going, how good are they?**

COACH MULKEY-ROBERTSON: How good are they? Well, you've got to take your poison. Do you double-down in on **Paris** or do you go out to the three? Very difficult to guard

both positions, and that's what they bring to the table. They have a big presence inside. Yet if you double-down in there, they are going to kick it out from the three. You know, I thought **Abiola** defended as good as she could. She has a lot of skills and banged in there as much as she could until she fouled out. I thought **Higgins** hit some big shots for them. That's what you do when you are heading into the playoffs, you've got to have players make plays.

**Q. Sophia called this her worst offensive game ever, but it wasn't like they took a shot without three players on her so, what do you tell her now?**

COACH MULKEY-ROBERTSON: I go and tell her and all the team, this game is over with. We are going to go back and we are going to get rested tomorrow and we are going to come to practice Monday and we are going to go to the selection show and we're going to play the last part of our season. And our season is broken down in four: Evaluate what you did non-Conference, what you did in Conference, what you did in the Conference tournament and now let's see what happens in this last part of the season.