

March 8, 2007



An Interview With:

**COACH BILL FENNELLY
ALISON LACEY
LYNDSEY MEDDERS
MEGAN RONHOVDE**

MODERATOR: We're going to go ahead and get started. We'll be joined by the players in just a moment. Coach, congratulations on your win. Your thoughts and assessment of tonight's game and your possible matchup on Saturday.

COACH BILL FENNELLY: Obviously we are ecstatic to still be playing, to be playing the championship game, such a great event.

Texas A&M is an amazing team. They are going to be a great NCAA team. So hard to prepare for. I've never coached against a team that make you earn it like that every possession. But our team continues to show the character and grit that they've shown when this thing started on February 14th and we won our last eight games.

We beat a great team tonight and did everything we could when we had to do it to make the plays. And great semifinal game and we're honored to be playing Saturday night.

Q. This streak started with the Texas A&M win. Just kind of talk about where this team has come from that game to this game and just both with Texas A&M.

COACH BILL FENNELLY: That's basically what we talked about in the pregame speech. Started on February 14th. Valentine's Day, and we challenged our team to show a little heart and soul on that day. We beat a great A&M team that started this streak.

And it's continued. It's continued because of amazing senior leadership from Lyndsey and Megan and Abby, and it's continued because our team has shown an ability to be resilient when at times we weren't earlier in the year, making big plays, making shots. People contributing.

That's what I told them before the game. We won seven games in a row before this game. Different opponents, different venues, but it's the same heart, the same team, the same everything. But every single person has contributed in a different way. And that's how you win at this level and that's how you win at the end.

But the bottom line is I have three great seniors. It's seniors that get it done at the end of the season and they're doing it for us right now.

Q. Bill, just talk about the three-pointers. I think you had your season low three-pointers against them the first time and they were 10 of 20 at one point.

COACH BILL FENNELLY: We had such a hard time getting into our offensive. We knew that. They don't let you enter the ball to the wing. We tried to do everything off a dribble entry to the wing. Try to spread them out. Drive and kick. We had a hard time getting to the basket.

So it's a part of our game but we knew tonight that it was going to be something we had to do a little bit more. They were switching a lot of screens. When we did dribble drive. We felt there was some opportunity to kick, and I thought we did a good job of that. And we made some huge runs at huge times. And sometimes you get lulled asleep and start shooting 3s all the time, but that's a big part of our offense.

Because their defense is so good, we couldn't get to the basket. So the shot that was available was the 3. And luckily we made enough of them tonight.

Q. Megan, the three-pointers were one thing but talk about the defense you guys played tonight. I think they scored one point in the last six minutes until their last basket. Was that as good of defense as you've played in a while?

MEGAN RONHOVDE: I think so. The K State game a couple days ago I think speaks to some of what we did. We struggled to score in that game in the first half. And it was the defense that won that game for us.

I think that's one thing that's really special about this team is that you know at certain moments of the game we can really tighten up and lock down and get some key stops.

And it really -- I mean that last six minutes, that was critical for us.

Q. Lindsay, I wouldn't want to imply it's a good thing you've gotten hurt a lot in the last two years, but because you missed so much time and Heather was forced to play so much point guard and Alison had to play a lot of point guard, when you went out with your fourth foul tonight, did you feel more comfortable about the fact you might be able to keep the lead?

LYNDSEY MEDDERS: I was confident with Heather and Alison. The three of us have a close relationship. We spend a lot of time looking over plays and talking and stuff. When I went out with my fourth and knew the ball was in their hands, I was the one with six turnovers, so it might have been a good thing that I was out for that last stretch in the end. I was completely confident in them. They made big plays down the stretch.

And I'll be the biggest cheerleader whether I'm playing, sitting or since I'm such a good defensive player, I had four fouls, whatever that may be.

Q. Lindsay, all of you guys, can you talk about the three-pointers, the confidence you guys had going. I think you made eight straight between the end of the half. Was it just feeding off of everybody?

LYNDSEY MEDDERS: Yes, I think so. We talk about it a lot even in drills and practice, when one person starts hitting, another person starts hitting, and we kind of ride a lot on that momentum.

I think Megan hit a very critical one in the first half. She kind of got the cobwebs off her three-point shot out here in Oklahoma City. That was a good sign for all of us. And Alison hit a big one. We each hit a big one. And so I think we just -- we relied so much on momentum and a lot of that does come from our three-point shots.

Q. Such a big part of their game obviously is the fast break, and you guys held the zero fast break points. Would you talk about really just kind of staying with them and playing their game a little bit.

COACH BILL FENNELLY: The two things we talked about defensively was obviously stopping transition. And even though we had 19

turnovers, there weren't many in the open court. Most of the turnovers were on the dead ball, the travel. We throw it out of bounds. We even told them if there was any doubt take a five-second count and go guard in the half court and offensive rebounding.

And they got 15, which isn't bad but we didn't foul a lot. So that was the big part of the playing, was do not let our offense become their offense. And that's so often two years ago when we played them at A&M, they scored 54 points, I think 41-43 we were offensive rebounds and turnovers.

The turn overs we had tonight 19 is too many. I don't think they were bad turnovers the way the game plan went. If you make them score in the half court we felt we had a chance if we could rebound and I thought defensively we were very good from start to finish.

Q. Bill, the first time you played zone against them and it really worked, did it two things, did it give you a chance to -- I hate to use the word rest, but to be able to take a little bit of time off in the zone seemed like it frustrated them again?

COACH BILL FENNELLY: I don't think there's any question that playing zone kept our kids' legs underneath them. If they don't score in transition they run a lot of really good stuff, but it takes some time to run it. They reverse the ball and they screen.

So, yes, you're not technically rested but you are a little bit because you're not running through screens. You're not chasing people around screens. So I do think it helped. And offensively you know we didn't try and slow the game down. Might have looked like it. We were trying to get it into an offense.

But the zone allowed us to keep people in front of us and try and stay out of foul trouble. But I don't think there's any question that that's the way we felt we had to play them but at the same time it allowed our kids to keep their legs underneath them because we were subbing a little bit more, had some foul trouble early. I do think it impacted how we could play. And luckily for them, that's a good preparation for us.

Q. Bill, without question the three-pointers was a huge impact, but once you get the league, they catch you, you don't get another three-pointer the rest of the game. Do you think the three-pointers maybe set up your inside game because they had to come out so

far and they did help you in the lane down the stretch?

COACH BILL FENNELLY: I don't think there's any question because we weren't getting anything in the post. Nicky made three baskets, Toccara got a couple good looks at the free throw line, a great back cut on a play there, probably nicest play of the night. You never know when someone breaks the game open, but that was a great play.

So yeah, when you're trying to stay in the game and people are making 3s on you, you want to extend your defense. You want to extend your defense. When you do that, obviously you're going to have a little more options in the post.

Even though we didn't get a lot, you're right, we got them at the right times. And I think the 3-ball made a real difference for that.

Q. Bill, would you talk about last night. You needed everything Lyndsey could have as a player, dramatic and everything. But tonight the entire team, everybody had something in this one?

COACH BILL FENNELLY: You're exactly right. And during the timeouts, a couple of the timeouts, Coach kept telling them, Lyndsey did it last night, we need to help her. I believe that honestly. She kept telling the kids Lyndsey got us to this game, now got to get her to the next game.

That's what good teams do. That's what teams do that are still playing. I think that's exactly how it went.

Alison and Heather did a great job in keeping us in offense and we made enough big shots to impact the game, but that was a big, big part of it. And Lyndsey only played 28 minutes. If you would have said to me before the game she's only going to play 28 minutes and be in foul trouble, I would have been real concerned about us winning the game.

But we were able to stay fairly efficient offensively and allow us to score enough points.

Q. Bill, when you have to play three games in three days, there's no doubt you need a productive bench. It was Nisleit on the first game and Ezell and Rachel Pierson these last couple days. In general how big was that for you?

COACH BILL FENNELLY: Our bench people have been very, very good. That's why you win games. It doesn't look like -- Nisleit plays 14 minutes. I put her in the position in the middle of the zone. She hadn't practiced it ever, ever, but

she went out and did it because we were in foul trouble, Megan turned her ankle.

Our kids are doing everything. We have six starters, seven starters on this team. I really believe that. And Nis is getting to that seven and a half, eight spot.

So you don't win at this level, you don't win in three games in three days. You don't win 25 games without a lot of help from a lot of people.

So I appreciate you asking, because it's nice that those kids get a little recognition, too.

Q. Lyndsey, are you going to work on the chest bump a little bit? And then, Alison, if you could kind of talk about -- you're obviously from Australia. I know you spent last year in the United States. But this is your first Big 12 tournament, playing with a couple seniors. If you could talk about what it's been like for you and just playing with these guys.

ALISON LACEY: Probably just completely new experience. This team has taught me a lot of what the Big 12 is about, what Iowa State is about. And I think they really emphasize on how special this team is and how special our fans are. They've done everything toward the team and me.

Q. Lyndsey, what do you have left for Saturday and who are you rooting for tonight?

(Laughter)

LYNDSEY MEDDERS: I choose not to answer. Can I say no comment?

(Laughter).

LYNDSEY MEDDERS: I'm not rooting for anyone. What do I have left for Saturday? I played 28 minutes. I'm only 21 years old. And at this point in the season, it's about adrenalin. It's about knowing that I have however many games left and I'm playing in maybe the biggest game of my career.

So I'll have everything in the tank and I'm excited about it. And I'll be fine.

Q. Bill, I was going to ask, you were on the receiving end of another hug from Sherri Coale tonight?

COACH BILL FENNELLY: Yes. Yes, I was.

(Laughter).

COACH BILL FENNELLY: She doesn't hug as good as my wife, I'll guarantee you.

MEGAN RONHOVDE: Smart man.

(Laughter)

Q. Coach, just your thoughts, compare and contrast what you'll face on Saturday, first Baylor

and then Oklahoma, in your experience with both those teams.

COACH BILL FENNELLY: Our experience with both teams was a disaster. We were not in either game. I think both teams present different challenges. I think Oklahoma obviously with Courtney Paris, and they've changed their lineup with Plumley and Thompson for the first time.

With Baylor, they shot the 3 ball great against us. They hadn't shot it great, but they did. Bernice Mosby is I think one of the best players in the country.

They both present challenges similar to A&M as far as their athleticism their ability to defend.

Oklahoma, obviously Courtney Paris is unique. If it's Oklahoma, it's a road game. If it's Baylor, it's a neutral court game. So that's the way we'll approach it.

But we're excited to be playing. And whoever that is, we're going to do the best we can and represent our university and see what happens.

Q. Megan, was there any time where you guys -- there was a lot made about third game in three days. Were there any times where you were worried the legs were going out? Or did you always feel you had enough as a team to get to the end of this game?

MEGAN RONHOVDE: We talked about that last night after the game against Nebraska. And at this point in the season and what's at stake and what we have to play for, I don't think you can use fatigue as an excuse.

Minus this game, Saturday's game, Lindsay said it's going to be the biggest game of our careers. How you cannot be ready to come out and play as a basketball player at this point in the season and what we're playing for, that was really kind of a nonissue for us tonight.

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An Interview With:

**COACH GARY BLAIR
TAKIA STARKS
A'QUONESIA FRANKLIN
PATRICE READO
DANIELLE GANT**

MODERATOR: We're now joined by the Aggies from Texas A&M. Coach Blair, your comments about the season's game and your thoughts about upcoming opponents in the post-season.

COACH GARY BLAIR: Folks, this is where we were last year when it was a little different feeling. We came in here and lost 53-52 to Baylor. Top 10 team. And we felt we gave a great account of ourselves and the ball would have bounced another way maybe we would have won.

Tonight we got outplayed. I don't think we got outplayed last year against Baylor. It's just one team scored one more point than what we did. And this ball game here we got outplayed and a lot of it was the last four minutes of the first half. I think we went 0-6, something like that, we're three shots inside, bunny shots that we didn't convert. Three jumpers that we either forced or didn't make.

And then they made their little run at the end and hit a couple of key shots.

But we still went into half time. We felt we could make some corrections. I put in a new zone play. It worked to perfection. Danielle just got her shot blocked from behind. It was wide open. We came back to that play later and TK scored in the thing, and I thought we were right in it.

Then we were not forcing turnovers on the press, so we gave that up for a while and tried to play half court defense but we kept coming off of the 3s.

We were told to stay with your girl, make them score to highlight them, the shot. Invariably

we had to come off and come over here and try to help on Peter. And Paul was shooting 3 from the corner.

But they're kids. They know what to do. You don't give those kids those shots. It doesn't matter if they shot 10 out of 28. It's the shots that they took were good shots and wide open shots, and eventually they were going to shoot enough 3s and all they had to do was make 33% of them and it was hard for us to catch up. We didn't do a good job of attacking the zone at times. When we did get it inside, they double teamed us and our post players didn't kick it out and they traveled.

We've got to work on that. We've seen it before. We did a better job. We've got 15 offensive rebounds, we converted one. We were 0-3 first half in transition opportunities where we could have had the easy basket, 0-3 we had nine in the second half. It's a game of numbers.

If a team shoots 45%, 38 and 83 from the line, and we shoot 36, 33, and 37, we get outrebounded by one and we only win the turnover battle by five, even sports writers can figure that out, the best team won.

And that's just the way it is. But we're going to regroup. We're going to look ourselves in the mirror and the head coach will look in the mirror first and figure out how to teach this game a little bit better, how we can play a little bit better, and how we can play and be a little bit smarter as we play.

I've got a great ball club and I've got great young ladies right here, but tonight we got team -- beat by a team, we knew exactly what they were going to do, and they just executed better than us. Give them credit give me an inch in your paper and give them nine inches and the story is done.

Q. You talked about regrouping in this game, basically the season you won six games, now you're the national champion. A'Quonesia, this will be for you after Coach Blair answers this. Is that what you tell them, it's a bad taste in your mouth after losing in the Big 12. All we have to do is win six in a row, we've done that so far, the attitude forward?

COACH GARY BLAIR: We're resilient. We can bounce back from anything. Won 19 at Texas, came back won 11 out of our next 12. We got beat at Iowa State, came back and won all ours down the stretch against the Bayers and the Oklahomas and the Texas down the stretch.

We got beat by a team that just played better today. So we will bounce back. And I'll tell you what you look at these girls right here, they might not be ready to see me in practice tomorrow, but they're ready to go practice and correct their mistakes because they've got tremendous pride.

We're not Cinderella. We're a top 25 team that's on a mission, and we plan on going pretty far into the playoffs and we will see a 3-2 zone the very first game that we play, just like we did against TCU last year, and we will find a way to beat it.

AQUONIA FRANKLIN: As coach said, we'll take it from this experience, did a great job on the defensive end keeping us outside, not letting us penetrate. We'll go to practice and work on what we need to work on and be ready for the NCAA.

Q. When you look at the Big 12 conference, this shows the NCAA how tough this conference really is because you got really six or seven strong teams and your team is right there in the thick of everything.

COACH GARY BLAIR: I think you definitely have six teams that should be in the NCAA playoffs, and hopefully the committee realized this wasn't an upset tonight. This wasn't an upset.

And it's just they're that good. When Iowa State beat Nebraska, that wasn't an upset. When we beat Oklahoma and when we beat Baylor, those were not upsets. And that's how good this league is and that's how good the coaches are in this league. So we're just going to, we're just going to go back put our heads up high, not point fingers and look ourselves in the mirror and we're going to go to work. And we're going to get it done and we're going to have a hell of a ride. Monday we'll have a selection show because we know we're not a bubble team and everybody will come pat us on the back again, tell us how great we are and we're going to start all over again.

And I guarantee you, you will make it past the first round this year.

Q. Gary, do you think you ran into one of the hottest teams really in the country?

COACH GARY BLAIR: Sure, I started that streak, okay? All right. I know good and well, I'm

going to be at their homecoming game next year, I guarantee you. But I don't have to go to AMs next year. That's the best thing; the north doesn't like playing the south twice. I don't like going to AMs twice particularly when it's zero degrees. Sorry back there. It was zero degrees, 10 degree wind chill factor. That is a great atmosphere. I really enjoy playing the larger the crowd, the better our team plays. Good crowd here tonight.

Q. Just how hard are they to defend when they're hitting on all cylinders like that from really four or five different players on the court can shoot the 3?

COACH GARY BLAIR: I think they're hard to defend because they can dribble drive whereas a couple of teams that we played recently could not dribble drive and attack us off the bounce.

They can attack off the bounce and maybe not finish, but they'll free somebody up and they will continue running their offense. They are a great 25-second offensive team. We're playing great defense. You're seeing us going all over the floor. The crowd is getting up to them. We're denying this. We're doing this. We've got ball pressure and then all of a sudden they're still running their stuff and they make a shot at the end. That's coaching, and that's discipline on a team knowing what their limitations are and what they do they do well.

What they don't do well, obviously we hadn't exploited it.

Q. Coach, could you talk about the number one target, I guess the target on your chest being the number one seed here and then for Danielle, could you kind of address I guess particularly at this point in coming back to your hometown here and those two questions.

COACH GARY BLAIR: I don't think a target is on us because I don't think we've earned the respect yet to be saying we're the number one seed. We just happened to fall in it. Oklahoma playing at home was basically the number one seed. 11,000 fans there last night.

We're a damn good team, but I don't think we had the target on us, but I think people have prepared better for us this year, and that -- I got everybody back for next year again. And we relish that opportunity. I'd rather finish number one every time.

But I'm really going to miss not playing Saturday because we wanted to make that next step. This is a step where we got off the bus last

year. When you see that big wall out there that's blue and all the teams up there, I had the marketing guy ready. I had the TV guy ready I said, hey, I want that wall shot. That's a great idea.

The trouble is they've already printed Iowa State on that wall.

DANIELLE GANT: Like he said, I guess they out hustled us the whole game; but other than that coming back playing in front of my family and friends was just something that I loved to do this year.

Q. A lot of times you guys win the hustle point, loose balls, rebounds, things like that. Did you all feel like you were winning those tonight?

DANIELLE GANT: At a point in time. The first half, I think Iowa State wanted it more than we wanted. I think the second half we improved, more the hustle plays.

Q. A'Quonesia, you said they took away the penetration. What were they able to do differently these last few games against you?

A'QUONESIA FRANKLIN: They were pushing from a 2-3 to a 3-2 zone. It was hard to penetrate from the top of the key. So the one thing you have to do is keep moving the ball, reverse the ball, try to get it inside.

Q. Coach, you talked about the press working and you talked about them having a 25-second offense wasn't that kind of slowing down, they couldn't run that offense for quite as long and it seemed like you came back a little bit during that time?

COACH GARY BLAIR: We did. We came back, and you're right they did have that long run of their offense. And you know I think that's what makes sometimes the men's game so good because they have a 35-second clock. And they're able to run a lot of stuff even if they're first stuff.

In the women's game, if you come straight down, it really changes up your offensive scheme if something doesn't work, because that's when you gotta have creators and screeners against the zone, and we didn't screen the zone very well today.

If we would have dribbled attack and got A'Quonesia and TK through those gaps, I think we could have converted or made the pass. But we tried to go east and west and pass around it a lot, or try to run the perfect play. Well, the perfect play is not going to beat a zone.

You have to be consistent. When we went to the triple post, that's the offense that's been working the best for us this year against the 3-2. And we didn't get the ball in the hands of Gant enough.

Then when you look at my two starting posts, they got seven rebounds between them. That's a telling sign, because those kids are very athletic and pretty doggone good. But seven rebounds, when there's enough misses out there, that's not enough either.

I'd like to thank Oklahoma City first for what they've done with this tournament. You've got an area here that will be into the rotation. And it's a very good place. And hopefully we'll get back to Dallas pretty quick, too. Thank you, y'all.

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