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An Interview with:

**IOWA STATE
COACH BILL FENNELLY
MEGAN RONHOVDE
LYNDSEY MEDDERS**

MODERATOR: Coach, your comments.

COACH BILL FENNELLY: It's been phenomenal. It's why you play. It's why you root for your team, to have the opportunity to play in a championship game in the Big 12 and we're looking forward to it.

We know we're playing an outstanding team. We're really excited to have the opportunity to play tomorrow night and hopefully we can give the fans a good show.

Q. Bill, about last year's quarter final game with them, first of all, what stands out about that game to you still and can you use anything, can you take anything away from that game, translate it into this game?

COACH BILL FENNELLY: Erin Higgins, three point shot. I can see it in my dreams. And ironically the first night we we're here we go to dinner at Mickey Mantle's restaurant and this young man runs up to me. Coach Fennelly, my name is Patrick Higgins, the brother of Erin Higgins.

(Laughter)

That's how my week started. So that's the shot. I thought our kids played a tremendous game. We had an opportunity to win, and she makes an unbelievable three-point shot. So that's the play I remember about the whole thing, and decides letting Courtney Paris break every tournament scoring record there was.

Q. Coach, if you do win tonight, will you finally be willing to concede your team might just make the tournament?

COACH BILL FENNELLY: We're not playing tonight. So if we win tomorrow, then, yes, I will say we're definitely in the NCAA tournament.

Because the rules say if you win the conference tournament, you're in. So, yes, I will agree to that.

Q. Can you talk about your relationship with Sherri Coale?

COACH BILL FENNELLY: She's a very good person. Deb and I got to meet with her and spend some time with her and her husband Dane on the Nike trip. She's been in the league almost the same amount of time as I've been in it. I think we both try to run programs the same way, with classy individuals. I think both of us have tried to do our best to build programs, not just with the players but with the fan base, and what you're going to see tomorrow night is a tribute to Coach Coale and everything she's done.

Hopefully we've done the same thing at Hilton and the fans you'll see here at AMS, but hopefully we'll do it in a way to help our league. We've worked real hard to make the Big 12 a good league and expose it nationally. She's a tremendous coach.

I don't think she gets enough credit for the way she coaches. Really don't. They have great players. And sometimes they have to forget they have to be coached and put in a system. They've done a great job. She's a great person, great family and a great example of what a woman's basketball coach should be, in my opinion.

Q. What are your impressions of Jenna Plumley and the confidence at such a young age she brings?

COACH BILL FENNELLY: I don't think there's a question that when Coach Coale put her in the starting lineup their team changed dramatically. She's extremely poised, handles the ball very well, gives them another deep threat with the 3-ball. She plays an amazing amount of energy. And you have Courtney Paris who may be one of the best big players, tall, long, athletic, skilled, and then you have Plumley at 5-3 running around out there.

So she really, I thought, played great last night. I'm a big Angela Tisdale fan, and I thought she played really well against her. So her ability to

stretch the defense, her ability to handle the ball, her energy she brings to the court, and obviously being a young player from the state of Oklahoma will bring an additional fan base to their team.

Q. Lyndsey and Megan, what are the keys to winning tomorrow night?

LYNDSEY MEDDERS: We talked about how good their offense is, and something we'll need to improve upon the next 24 hours is being able to score better down here in Oklahoma City. They're too good to try and limit to 20-point halves like we did against Nebraska.

So I think a big key for us is going to be to try to score as many possessions as we can and then we try to get stops along the way.

MEGAN RONHOVDE: And just to kind of add on that, obviously you can't stop Courtney Paris from scoring. That's obvious. No one can do that. The biggest thing I think we have to do is eliminate the easy baskets that she probably does get with the put-back and the second-chance opportunities. And trying to be able to guard from the outside and limit the amount of outside shots that they get.

It's hard because when you have an inside player that brings so much attention to your defense, it really makes it easy for them to stretch your defense out, so you know you really have to be guarding from both ends of the court that way.

Q. Lyndsey, can you talk a little bit about Plumley, because you know what that's like being a freshman, trying to run the show. If you could talk about that matchup, what you've seen of her. And also tomorrow night you guys are going to be not the favorites of the crowd. It's going to be a huge crowd for Oklahoma. Can you talk about how you enjoy that? You're used to the Hilton magic, but do you also enjoy being the underdog in terms of facing the crowd?

LYNDSEY MEDDERS: First on Plumley, I've been extremely impressed with her, much like coach said. She's kind of sparked their turnaround when they went through that stretch where they had to play so many games in so many days, and out of that they got an obviously very successful point guard.

So the pressure of this position, and it seems like Coach Coale in a sense runs her team a lot like we do here at Iowa State. And so I've been very impressed. Just the pressure that goes along with it, being able to score and being able to drive, and it seems like she finds Courtney Paris better than anyone on that team does.

So that seems to have helped them a bit. Part two of your question, we've had a couple of big road wins this year earlier in the season. Some of our nonconference games at U&I, at Iowa, and I think maybe two of the bigger games all year leading up to this tournament. A win at K State and a win at Tech, which I think it's going to be good for us, we'll have 9,000 people cheering for them and a thousand for us.

So it's still a 5-on-5 game, 94 feet and it's still a 28.5 size ball. Nothing changes out of that. And does that mean that a lot of people aren't going to be in red and gold, yes, but it's still a basketball game. It's still 5-on-5 and we have to just play.

Q. First meeting with Norman, you guys did a great job on Paris, she had 13 and 14. Obviously last year you let her do what she wanted to do and guard the rest. I don't want to give away the game plan, but is there a way you can contain her with containing the rest of the team? Do you have to give up something with them?

COACH BILL FENNELLY: I think you have to give up something. They just have too many weapons. They're so talented offensively, and as we talked so much about Plumley, and I'm a huge Leah Rush fan, and I think Ashley Paris has added to them. So they're a team that defensively you have to do the best you can.

I think you have to hope they help you a little and miss. You have to hope that maybe you get someone in foul trouble or tired. But I think this is one of those games you go into, we're going to have to outscore them. I really believe that. And that's just the way we're going to approach the game. And we want it to be entertaining.

We're going to try to play the game the right way. But we don't have the capability like a Texas A&M to get out and pressure the perimeter people and take them out of their offense a little bit. We don't have that ability. We'll have to be smart defensively, hope they miss a few, maybe change our defense a little bit. But as Lindsay and Megan said, we have to be as efficient as we have been all year to have a chance to win. I really believe that. It's not the NBA play-offs. We don't have to play them 4 out of 7. We have to be better one time. That's what we gotta do.

We talked this morning about all the teams that won conference championships that didn't win the conference tournament. There's a long list of those people. So that's what we're trying to do and we understand what we're up against, and that's

the way it should be. It should be this kind of game at the end of the Big 12 season.

So if the game's as we hope, I hope it's in the 70s and hopefully we'll get one more.

Q. Bill, you guys came into this tournament playing really well. Five straight wins. Do you think having to play three games over the last three days you've taken that disadvantage and turned it into an advantage by keeping the momentum going and getting it before anybody else could get it in the tournament?

COACH BILL FENNELLY: I think it's a big game, and Lindsay made a good point. After we left the coliseum after beating Nebraska, if we do our business, we'll never play another game at Hilton. We'll go on the road for two, K State at Tech and the Big 12, and if we are fortunate enough to play in the NCAA tournament, we'll be on the road again.

It gave our team a lot of confidence to play in tough environments, to play in different ways. We came from behind from K State, hung on at Tech. The big game is obviously the first game. The 5-12 game is scary. You don't know what's going to happen. We won that. And obviously the Nebraska game was a tremendous basketball game. But our kids are playing with a lot of confidence. They believe in one another. The runs they've had over the last three weeks is unlike any team I've ever been around.

And I hope it continues, because they've done everything we've asked them to do and then some. So whatever happens tomorrow night, we will walk out of here with our head up and very proud of what we've accomplished, looking forward to hopefully hearing some good news on Monday the 12th.

Q. Kind of a similar question. You a few years ago went through the tournament playing the first day and then winning the championship. Is there a way that that has given you more momentum? Do you look at what they did, anything?

COACH BILL FENNELLY: To be honest with you, not a lot. I think it's just, you just want to keep playing. There's no big secret to it. You want to find a way to win the one game and get to the next one.

It's just so much fun to be here. You wake up this morning and you're thinking, you know, there's 12 teams that came here trying to live out a dream. There's only two left. And the environment here, the way that the whole thing about it is just

something that our kids will always remember. Always.

And all of the coaches, the players, the fans, it's just been -- it's been one of the greatest experiences of my life to be here with this team and coaching them and just enjoy watching them enjoy what they've done here.

So, yes, sure, it's possible. It's a hard thing to do. And it's not that we're playing four games. It's that we're playing a very, very good team in the fourth game.

So, sure, we have a chance. We're going to show up and play. So there is a chance.

Q. Coach, talk about Megan's defense the last few days.

COACH BILL FENNELLY: Megan is, and I said this back home, and I was extremely disappointed when they picked the ALT defensive team in our league that Megan wasn't on it. I thought that was wrong. I don't know why she wasn't. But she's defended that way for four years for us.

And I think in this tournament she's made some really big stops at key times. She made a great -- made back-to-back defensive plays at the end of the Texas Tech game when the game was in doubt.

That's something she's done for us all along. She's long. She's athletic. We've had her guarding a lot of different people a lot of different times. And I said this after the Kansas State game, when we walked off the court. I told my staff, I would not want Megan Ronhovde guarding me because it's hard to get a shot off.

And she loves to play defense. She plays it hard, she plays it right she's played as good a defense as any player I've ever had.

Q. Megan, how different is Oklahoma from all the other Big 12 north teams that you saw twice and what did you take out of the meeting in Norman the first time this year?

MEGAN RONHOVDE: I think the biggest thing, the difference between Oklahoma and really any team that we've played from the north, the first thing that obviously stands out is Courtney Paris.

And it's just the kind of, to touch on what I talked about earlier you really can't concentrate on one player. Courtney does draw a lot of attention. But they have so many offensive weapons that it's very difficult to try and guard.

You almost have to guard perfectly. You really do. And you know the meeting that we had in Norman, you know, obviously it wasn't one of

our better games and we were having kind of a rough stretch there.

But the way we've been playing the last three weeks, you know, I really truly believe tomorrow night you're going to see a completely different team going up against them.

Q. Megan, coach has talked several times about how special this senior class is, particularly as much as you and Lyndsey have given to this program. What does it mean for both of you to have a chance to win a Big 12 championship as seniors?

MEGAN RONHOVDE: You know, Lyndsey and I, we've been talking about this for the past couple of days. And each win we get, it's almost -- it's almost hard to believe still. Coming in here as freshman, you know, you hear stories about the great teams that Iowa State has had with Angie and Megan Taylor, and to kind of be put in that elite group is something really special. It's something that no one can take away from us, and you know five or six years from now, when we're in the position they're in today and people will be able to refer to us, I think that's something that the two of us are really proud that we've been able to get to this point and accomplish what we have and you know it's something that we'll always remember.

Q. Bill, this is your fourth time taking the team to a championship game now in the Big 12. Are there any characteristics between, similar characteristics between this team and the other three that you've had?

COACH BILL FENNELLY: I think this team is probably better defensively than some of the other teams we've had. I think that the ability to find different ways to win is similar.

We haven't, those other teams, you know with Angie, we probably had a little bit more, I don't know if dominating is the right word, but a little bigger post presence. But I think this team has a greater ability to find different ways to win.

Those teams, we could outscore a lot of people. And we were very efficient offensively. I think this team has found every way possible to win and whether it's been close, we've come from behind in a lot of games at half time.

We've had to guard people. We've had to outscore people. This team seems to have a little bit more balance that way. And to be honest with you it's probably been a little bit harder for this team and the competition is greater. Top to bottom than it's ever been.

So I think to get to the championship game in this league this year is a great accomplishment,

because I think our league is one of the best in the country, top to bottom. All you have to do is look at the scores.

So I think that that is something that really is special for our seniors and our entire team.

Q. Bill, Courtney is just kind of other worldly in terms of her physical presence and these crazy numbers the double double she puts up. How do you sort of prepare, especially a younger post player especially like Nicky to deal with Courtney and not get overwhelmed by just facing Courtney?

COACH BILL FENNELLY: Get a massage this afternoon. Get ice baths, rest up, do the best you can, don't get hurt. I guess stay in front of her when you can and do the best -- I mean actually Nicky didn't play her too bad in Norman. She really didn't. She stayed in front of her. Nicky is long and she'll compete. Foul trouble becomes an issue. We're not real deep. We have Nicky and Rachel. And then when I said to Nisleit and Toccara in practice, you may have to guard them, their eyes were real big. They weren't really excited about that.

Megan is not looking because she doesn't want to hear her name to have to guard them.

MEGAN RONHOVDE: I'll guard 'em.

COACH BILL FENNELLY: Yeah, right.

(Laughter)

But I think that everyone knows how good she is. And we played against her a couple times. No one's found a way. I mean no way has found a way.

She's the best player in the country. That's what you have to -- that's the very first find on our scatter report. And the challenge is are you willing to accept that challenge to go up and say I'm playing against the best college player in the United States, whatever I do well against her I'm going to tell my grandkids. I'm going to tell everybody this is what I did against Courtney Paris, whatever. So there is no way to prepare them. You just say go play as hard as you can, try and get them in the right position. Try to help them smartly.

And just go out and do it. And I really -- I think Nicky will compete hard. I know Rachel will too. So if we can keep them out of foul trouble, they'll do the best they can and hopefully she won't go crazy.

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