

March 9, 2007



An Interview with:

**UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA
COACH SHERRI COALE
COURTNEY PARIS
JENNA PLUMLEY
LEAH RUSH**

MODERATOR: We're now joined by Coach Coale and the Oklahoma Sooners. Congratulations again, Coach. Now that you've had a couple of hours to rest since the game, your thoughts about last night's game and your upcoming opponent Iowa State.

COACH SHERRI COALE: Not much has changed. Proud of our team's performance, feel fortunate to be in a position to play in another conference championship.

Q. What are your thoughts about Iowa State beating A&M?

COACH SHERRI COALE: Impressive performance. Iowa State is playing very well right now. It's like they willed themselves to win games. You admire that as a competitor. You admire the way they're playing together and the things they've been able to accomplish.

It reminds me a little bit of our team that went to Dallas and ran through. We were the first ones to be able to be playing on the first day and end up playing on the final day as well. And we were fortunate enough to be able to win that.

So we know it can be done. And they're a formidable opponent. They shoot the ball extremely well. And Bill is just one of the best coaches in the business. So we have our hands full.

Q. Sherri, would you talk about how different this team is than maybe the one that everybody thought you were going to play?

COACH SHERRI COALE: The big difference is we feel like we spent the last month playing Texas, Texas A&M and Baylor. Feels like we play them over and over again. Different styles in those teams, Iowa State playing quite a bit differently than those guys. It will be an adjustment obviously. But that's what it's like in the NCAA tournament. You get one team that plays one way one night and it's a completely different story the next.

Just great preparation for that.

Q. Sherri, early in your career, first several years seemed like you couldn't get over the hump against Iowa State. Remember you playing them and that was the one team you couldn't beat. Now, fortunately, you've been able to beat them a couple of times. But for a while this was the team that seemed to just have it against you for some reason. Just couldn't get over the hump?

COACH SHERRI COALE: At least we're not playing in AMs tomorrow, thank goodness. One of those matchups for whatever reason. Our 2002 team lost to them up in AMs and Bill does a great job and many times they've set in that zone and we've been unable to hit shots. They don't play as much zone as they used to.

But they're offensively always going to be volatile. That's the type of kids he recruits and the way they play. You have to guard them every single night. And he always has them ready. So luckily we've been able to win a few of the last ones.

Q. Sherri, can you comment on being the marquee draw really downtown and the atmosphere you've had the last couple of games inside the Cox Center?

COACH SHERRI COALE: We're blown away by the crowd and not just the number of people but the way the people have interacted with us while we're on the floor. It's really been just an amazing thing to be a part of. You think you know what it will feel like. We played New Mexico here earlier in the year and got a taste what it would be

like to be in this venue with a lot of people, six, 7,000 people at that game probably.

But then once you're here, it's something completely different entirely. Our guys are like rock stars rocking around. And it's awesome for them. It's as much a taste of the NCAA tournament you can possibly get. It reminds me of the day when you got your home court, if you were a top four seed in the tournament, the way it felt that first year when we sold out the Lloyd Noble Center to be able to play. It's got that feel.

But you know I think the best part of it is the fact that for every game there has been juice inside the Cox center, and I think all of us as coaches can speak to the fact that we've played in early rounds, Big 12 tournament games in which there was no juice. And most coaches probably agree with me in that I would rather play in a hostile environment than a dead one. Nothing is worse than that.

I think our opponents have appreciated the atmosphere while not necessarily having us having so much fans in there. But they've appreciated the electricity of it all.

Q. Sherri, where did your confidence in Jenna come from to turn to her in such a critical time of the year?

COACH SHERRI COALE: It's always practice. Always. That's what earns you your time. To get on the floor when the lights are on and everybody is looking. And she just has battled day in and day out since the start of the year, with Britney and Kendra. And it's been a positive thing, in which they've really pushed and propelled her and taught her and given her absolutely no slack on any day. They've just challenged her every single day.

It made her progress so that when the opportunity came, she was ready for it.

Q. Going back to the bigger picture stuff, do you feel like tomorrow night you guys are playing for maybe a number two seed, maybe Austin, maybe Dallas? Secure something like that?

COACH SHERRI COALE: You know, I never ever get caught up in all that stuff. Somebody asked me the other day where they thought we would be. I knew that there was a regional in Austin and we could go and play there. But I haven't even looked at it. I looked this morning in the newspaper and I think one had us at a four seed and ESPN three. You have to be good enough to beat everyone once you get in that

thing anyway. I can't control any of it, so I'm not going to worry about it.

Q. Leah, Iowa State is a unique team in they shoot the 3 so well. Defensive tendencies are when the ball goes inside, you crash, you double up, against Iowa State, you talk about as a forward like that you play you have to guard somebody. You can't crash down on Iowa State. You have to stick on your opponent?

LEAH RUSH: I think facing Iowa State, I've become accustomed to three-point shooting, that's what they do year in year out. It's a different look certainly than the Big 12 south, who we've been facing a lot lately.

I think we'll just make a few adjustments and change the style a little bit. Still play hard, still pressure, all out defense, and I think it's a different team and just as with any team, you're going to play a little bit differently.

Q. Coach, do you enjoy hugging Bill Fennelly as much as he seems to enjoy hugging you?

(Laughter)

COACH SHERRI COALE: Yes, I have a season pass from his wife, Deb, she said I could. He's the best.

Q. Leah, you guys a couple of years ago were the No. 6 seed and were able to win. The only team that's been able to do that. Iowa State is trying to do that now. Can you kind of talk about that, reflecting back on that, how much sort of the momentum helps you but also how difficult it is to do? And, Coach Coale, if you could talk a little more about you and Bill. You're both incredibly competitive people and yet you're sort of, it's a very high class respect relationship between the two of you.

LEAH RUSH: I remember a few years ago we ran through, we get on a roll and there's just tremendous momentum and I'm sure they're thinking nobody can stop us right now. And so I think we have an advantage in that respect because we've been in their spot and we know what they're thinking right now.

At the same time we're going into this game with that same attitude. We're on a roll right now as well. And we're very confident and we're playing confident. We're playing hard. And we look forward to the matchup.

COACH SHERRI COALE: These two-part questions, we gotta concentrate to remember

these paragraphs. Sorry. I gotcha.

The thing I've appreciated about Bill from the time I came into this league, and I was fortunate, came from the high school rink right into college and everybody in this league could have just said, you know, what are you doing here and ostracized me, and they didn't. I had a lot of incredible mentors who treated me as though I had been in the business as long as they had. And Bill was one of those. The thing I've appreciated the most about him through the years is that it's just about competing for 40 minutes.

And he competes as hard as anybody I've ever met in my life for 40 minutes. When that game is over, he's the same as he is if you saw him on the golf course or at a football game, wherever he might be. Just always the same.

And I appreciate that so much, that he is who he is all the time. It's an honor to compete against someone like that.

Q. Leah, you've had a couple of very nice games and last night when Baylor took the 1-point lead it was Chelsea that had a personal run. So I'm just sort of wondering, I know there's a sense of urgency for everybody. Are you guys feeling, the seniors, do you think you're feeling it in a much greater way, perhaps?

LEAH RUSH: With our individual performances or collectively? Well, sure, I think definitely, there's six of us, and we have one more go at this and finals of the tournament tomorrow and we step into the NCAAs. And any game can be your last one. I don't think anybody wants to end before Cleveland.

And we expect to go far this year and so I think every game we have an experience factor and we have a determination factor that we plan to use throughout.

Q. Courtney, I want to ask you about what Jenna's play, such an important correlation between a point guard and center in basketball. What's her play done for you?

COURTNEY PARIS: Well, I think the coolest thing about Jenna is she's a great passer, probably one of the best point guard passers I've ever played with. But at the same time she has confidence to knock down a shot. I think last year a lot of times different teams have tried to pull off with the point guard spot that fell down. And get her to shoot like that, it creates more problems.

Q. Courtney, coach said your team's being treated like rock stars here in Oklahoma

City. Does that make you the lead singer? Steven Tyler or somebody like that?

COURTNEY PARIS: I'm definitely not the best singer, so I don't know. No, I think it's cool, even other teams it's the cool thing about it. Yesterday we went to the memorial, a Baylor fan said good luck, I hope you win and, hey, we played you guys today, but I just think everybody is really supporting us and it's just going to go out in the spirit of playing.

Q. Leah, as long as you've been around and seeing all types of guards in this league and the tournament and stuff, what do you think of how Jenna's been able to step into this massive spotlight and play?

LEAH RUSH: Jenna has been tremendous not only as a freshman but just period. Last summer when we started pick-up, I think everybody saw something in Jenna and knew she could be a special player here. When coach called her up, I think she was ready to go. And she brought a whole new feel to this team, I think, and really propelled us to the way we're playing right now.

Q. Courtney, Jenna, Leah, you can answer this. The way Ashley has played recently here inside, what can that do for this team if she continues to play like that offensively?

COURTNEY PARIS: She's been playing basketball for a long time. She's aggressive, not afraid to go score. She's as tough as anyone, I think, as another post player. Like I said, about Jenna, guards dropping, post players, if they want to drop down and double, they're aggressive, having the ability to score. It's just going to make the defense make things harder on our opponent's defense.

Q. Sherri, will you talk about Lyndsey Medders, and even if she's not scoring, which she has been lately, what she brings to that team.

COACH SHERRI COALE: Just toughness. I think she's their heart and soul. They revolve around her. And she's gutsy, and confident and a terrific shooter, obviously. But she controls the game because when the ball's in her hand she's going to make something happen and it's in her hand a lot. Late in the game, I told her after that Nebraska game, we're just going to foul you like at the bottom baseline because if you get a chance to shoot it, it's going in. I know it. So just

get ready; we're just going to foul you.

She just has that competitive will about her. If the game is on the line she wants the ball, and you almost kind of create your luck sometimes when you think that way; that you make something good happen. Then you start to believe something good is going to happen. It's a crazy cycle. But she's their heart and soul.

Q. Sherri, can you talk about the matchups between the two teams and how the two teams match up, so to speak?

COACH SHERRI COALE: They're just so different, and I mentioned that earlier, so different than the Big 12 south that we've been competing in lately. They love to shoot the 3-ball obviously. I think they shot 26 3s last night compared to 22s. So we'll shoot the 3 a little bit, but not that ratio.

So different styles, I think. We're probably a little more smash mouth and they're a little more spread the floor and shoot it deep. But both relentless defensive teams that probably don't get enough credit for defense. Both squads. Really get after you and compete hard. Maybe not a perfect puzzle piece match up. Maybe a battle of who does what they do best, best.

Q. Jenna, a lot of people have asked others here on the panel about you. But is this where you thought you would be? I mean I remember I asked you a question earlier this season. You said when I finally got my chance. You're just a freshman. It was not far past mid-season, but did it seem like that to you and is this where you always thought you'd be this season?

JENNA PLUMLEY: Well, it's been really overwhelming just coming in, coming into this year. I had two senior point guards ahead of me and Kendra and Britney have been so good to me, teaching me the ropes and being there every step of the way. And in practice is where I learn the most being able to compete with guards like that has made me so much better as a point guard.

And I feel like just having the players around me that I do, my teammates, it's just been a wonderful atmosphere and I'm just glad to be able to play for Oklahoma and be here with these guys.

Q. (Off microphone)

JENNA PLUMLEY: A little emotional. It's been a tough journey, like coach said, fight day in, day out and work your way up. And it's just all about, like she said, having confidence and coming in. And like she told Kendra last night, just coming

in and playing when your number is called, and I think that's what it's all about.

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