

March 12, 2009



Kansas State - 68 Colorado - 51

An interview with:

Kathy McConnell-Miller, Head Coach, Colorado

THE MODERATOR:

Coach, your comments?

COACH McCONNELL-MILLER: Clearly not the outcome or the first half that we had wanted. We felt like from a preparation standpoint, we had come in and made good adjustments that were fairly effective for probably the first six or eight minutes.

From a defensive standpoint, we knew that Lehning was the one that needed the ball in her hands for them to get going, and we made adjustments of going under the ball screens, gapping a little bit more, which is what we felt hurt us so much a couple days before, five days before.

And with that -- players like Sweat and Kincaid, probably controlled them better than we did the first time, and they stepped up and made shots. We knew we needed touches for Kara to be effective.

We didn't have good movement with or without the ball, and I credit K-State, I think they're a talented team. They've got three players that are as dangerous as any in the league and they got the ball in their hands and made plays.

They're efficient with the basketball, and when the ball is -- which the shot clock is running down, they know how to make plays. This is a team where three years ago they were freshmen and sophomores, where we had handled and played probably the best basketball, but now they're seniors and now they're very experienced.

And they're players that can make plays, do make plays, and at times make you look like you don't know what you're doing out there. I think that was probably the biggest part of tonight's game is mentally I think we shutdown in the first half, but when we got in, we regrouped in the

second half, I thought with adjustments and a little coaching, a little encouragement, I thought we responded.

Q. Kara, it looked like you were ready to go from the opening tip. Were you disappointed that you didn't get a lot of help until it was too late?

KARA RICHARDS: I think offensively we did attack. Some of the shots weren't falling, and when they started to fall, especially for Spears, then it took a lot of pressure off the inside.

I think defensively, though, we really hooked up, we knew our assignments and we knew them very well.

Q. Kara, can you talk about playing your last game as a Colorado Buffalo?

KARA RICHARDS: Yes. I remember --

THE MODERATOR: Did you want to take a second?

KARA RICHARDS: Yes. The --

Q. The guards had trouble scoring, and you were chasing them around the wing. Was that because you were trying to play both ends?

ALYSSA FRESSLE: I don't know if it was chasing them around, but like Coach said, we knew we had to go into Kara to be successful, and that made us a little bit stagnant on the offensive end.

And I think I forced some things and -- early, and then probably played a little timid the rest of the game. And I think -- I mean, Spears stepped up, though. She did well in the second half.

THE MODERATOR: You want to try again, Kara?

KARA RICHARDS: Yes, sir. It was difficult going back into the locker room after the end of the game, knowing that it's not going to be there again. I'm surely grateful for all five years that I've been here, they've been really great.

THE MODERATOR: Ladies, thank you.
Questions for Coach?

Q. Coach, what do you think players like Alyssa learned this year and what do they need to do to be more like K-State players when they're older?

COACH McCONNELL-MILLER: I think her biggest strength and probably her biggest weakness and that's her will, how strong she is. And I think in high school she willed herself to be the best and to score and to get her team to where they needed to be.

And in saying that, I think it's sometimes her greatest weakness, and not allowing change in her game and change in some of the things that have been successful at the high school level.

I think transitioning for her was greater than she had anticipated it would be. I think she has learned a great deal from playing in the Big 12. She has played a lot of minutes as a freshman. We're excited that she was recognized as one of the top 5 freshmen in the conference, but we know that her best days are ahead of her.

And with a willing mind -- there is no doubt she is going to work, but at this point, I think she knows what it is she needs to work on. As a result of that, we are going to see a different player next year.

When you're thrown into it, it's hard to sit back and evaluate. We've tried a lot of different things with her from film to one-on-one meetings, to chalk talk, board talk, and even watching edits of players in the WNBA or top players in the country.

I know that the desire to get better is there. I think the will to learn and make some adjustments at this level, once she sits back, that will come with her.

Q. Kathy, that youthful exuberance from her and some of the others, is that why the sloppy turnovers, they're ahead of the ball and the ball goes out of bounds, trying to get back too much when you're falling behind?

COACH McCONNELL-MILLER: I think if we were deeper, and didn't lose what we lose when we go to the bench, lack of experience, the ability to pull players and have a tighter leash would help on things, but there is definitely -- all I have to draw on is Shalee Lehning as a freshman and her now, the rigors of night in and night out basketball.

We are young and our backcourt is young, and we're handling that very well, from Alyssa to

Kelly Jo, we don't have somebody that can control the tempo and that's a very difficult situation to be in.

You know, we've tried to manage it and hide it at times and, you know, find ways to take better care of the basketball. So I think with experience, with the return of Whitney Houston, with the addition of Chuckie Jeffrey, our backcourt gets very athletic.

Whitney does have two years' of experience and the year off is going to be the best thing for her. It wasn't the best thing for this team, but it will definitely be the best thing individually for her.

Q. You only got 41 shots tonight, and it looked like 28 of them were from Spears or Richards. Does that go back to the offense being stagnant?

COACH McCONNELL-MILLER: I don't think you're going to be very good with only two people scoring, and I think that evolved this year. If you look at our season, Bianca averaged 21 points and today it was 5.

We have needed more scorers all year long, we have not had a consistent third scorer, and it's evolved into that. And teams have changed the way they played us, you even have to watch film.

Statistically you look at a sheet and you know where the shots are coming from, so even though Kelly Jo Mullaney is probably one of our most consistent shooters, they were 15 feet off of her to try and stop Kara Richards.

And as much as we worked on this week, the skip pass, making sure that Kara is on the opposite side, these players can and have the ability, but you get to the point throughout the year when you know that Kara can do it and Brittany has done it, and they get somewhere inside themselves and they don't allow that to happen.

We need more scoring. I thought with Jackie gone, we would become a more balanced scoring team, and we were early on this year, and it's evolved into another two players.

I've got to look at myself and figure out how that's happening, and we've got to look at each other, too, and make sure that we've got the right players in there that are -- that have the ability and have the mental toughness to take a shot, and you know, we don't have that right now.

We were relying on two players. We knew

early on that Spears and Kara, they had scored 48 -- 40 of our 44 points at one point.

Q. Coach, can you talk about losing a player like Kara Richards, last year you lost Jackie and now Kara is done, can you talk about what she's meant to the program?

COACH McCONNELL-MILLER: I'm proud of her development, there is no doubt about that. She played quite a bit her freshman year, and her sophomore year she was injured. And when she came back, she took a backseat to Jackie.

Jackie had two years under her belt and her personality is "I want to take care of people", and she would do everything within her power to make sure Jackie got what she needed and she stepped aside.

And I think it wasn't until Jackie left that she realized she had the skill and the ability, and she continued to work on it, and once she had a little success, you saw the mental toughness, the heart.

And this is one thing I've said after every game, the one thing that we know is Colorado has Kara Richards' heart. Every game, every practice, every time-out she was the one that was pulling people together, she is a great leader.

I think lesser teams, as far as chemistry and leadership, would fall apart in seasons like this, when it's so up and down and inconsistent, but I think she, from a leadership standpoint, kept them together on and off the floor. So she'll be missed.

And, you know, just as Jackie left and left a spot for her, I think she'll hopefully have prepared Courtney and Julie and led the way for them, so it's a tough, young woman to lose in your program.

THE MODERATOR: Okay, Coach, thank you very much.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports