

March 12, 2009



Texas - 62
Missouri - 59

An interview with:

COACH CINDY STEIN
JESSRA JOHNSON
ALYSSA HOLLINS

THE MODERATOR: We're now joined by the Missouri Tigers, Coach Cindy Stein is here. Coach, if you would make comments about tonight's game.

COACH STEIN: I think it came down -- I was proud of our team and the way we fought and scrapped. And it came to the end where you gotta make plays, and unfortunately we didn't, Texas did and that's the name of the game.

I've talked to a lot of coaches in the last couple of weeks, and a lot of 'em are struggling to get their teams to play hard. And I wasn't struggling to have our team play hard, they were ready, they played hard and the key for us is figuring out how to win.

You know, it's unfortunate to lose like that but, you know, you've got to give the credit to Texas. They did a great job and came up with some great plays.

Q. Let's start by asking about the last couple of minutes, y'all had a seven-point lead, and it was one of several times in the second half where it looked like you were taking control and over. But it seemed like a few seconds it was just gone.

Can you talk a little bit about how that happened, was there something that Texas threw at you defensively or was it just mistakes getting made?

ALYSSA HOLLINS: They were on the nine very well. We were all up on the base line, we weren't spaced out like we needed to be. They would finish the layups.

Q. Were you in disbelief that a seven point lead could go away in three seconds?

JESSRA JOHNSON: Personally, I felt like I had the ball in my hands literally, and I take responsibility of not getting the ball to the right person. And we didn't do well on inbound. Yeah, disbelief, I guess.

ALYSSA HOLLINS: I think everybody had a hand in it. I don't feel like we panicked, but we didn't come -- we knew better, like we let them get in their place. We should have spaced out and do what we knew how to do, and it was happening so fast.

But you have to give credit to Texas because they didn't die, they didn't give up, and they kept the pressure on and sometimes that's just how the ball bounces.

Q. Jessra, how much of a motivating factor does this become going forward for next season?

JESSRA JOHNSON: As of right now, just it motivates you because I don't want to be done playing, and my team doesn't want to be done playing. We want to be playing tomorrow, but it's not a reality, so motivated to do better next year.

Q. Alyssa, talk about your emotions at this point. It's been a great career for you, and at the same time it's got to be a disappointing way for you to finish it.

ALYSSA HOLLINS: This isn't how I would write it in my book, you know? You know, I'm proud of my team, the way we came out once again, everybody fought hard. I don't think you could ask for much more out of a group of girls.

It's one of the best experiences of my life, and even this, like I look back on this and it's a blessing.

Q. There must be so many conflicting emotions right now. What did you tell your kids after the game?

COACH STEIN: There is not a lot to say, it's tough. Honestly, it's tough. They knew how many time-outs we had, they knew we needed spacing, they knew we needed to get the ball in. It's tough and it happens.

The plays happened quick, and just trying to keep your kids up and it's tough because this team has fought so hard. You know, it's tough to go in, and you talk about next year when you have Alice sitting there, because that's not fair to her.

There is so much we can learn this year, I felt like our kids deserved more than what they got. But at the same time, we reflected a little bit on what we've got to take from this game for next year.

But the main thing that we wanted to say is, you know, Alyssa was a tremendous player for us, and we need to prepare what she's going through and enjoy the moment of this team being together, because every year your team is different. We've got to embrace where we are right now and we've had a tough road, and they need to be proud of the way they fought.

Q. (Away from mic.)

COACH STEIN: This was a tough one, a winnable game. But, again, Texas got themselves into a position to do it and we didn't.

Q. Cindy, talk about the incredible evolution that this club has made over the last couple of years. Last year y'all were going out and getting thumped sometimes, and there were nights it seemed like where you really were almost concerned about effort level. All year there have been games where you came in with just disappointing losses and came in so proud of the team and the effort that they were showing and that was very genuine, obviously. There has been a change in the program and the way the team has come along, at the same time, "L"'s are still coming. Is that frustrating?

COACH STEIN: It's frustrating coming off a couple of years ago where we had the talent and couldn't get them to play hard all the time, and that was frustrating. We knew we were going to be young these two years, last year and this year, we knew we were going to be young.

It was probably the worst two years to be young in the Big 12. It's probably the two strongest years ever in the Big 12. It's one of those things

that you take a chance on in recruiting and all those things.

We had seven seniors, if you remember, and we didn't want to have seven seniors again, so we tried to space out our recruiting, even up our classes and you take some hits. But I would agree, last year we were so young, trying to teach them to work hard all the time.

Obviously the lesson was learned. Go into this year and we fought and battled. We've only probably not been in a couple of games. But we still have to find that way to win with this young team. I felt like we were putting the ball in the hands of the most experienced people, and it didn't work. It comes to the point where you've got to make plays. Unfortunately, we were unable to come up with them.

Q. Talk about the play of your young'uns tonight, because it seemed like -- (Away from mic.)

COACH STEIN: If you look at four in particular, Bekah and Christina is a freshman playing well, and Shak and Rae as sophomores, and those four get a lot of minutes. You know, I like the way we scrapped.

We have to find a way to score, and that's the frustrating part, they shutdown our offense in the last 10 minutes of the game, and we have to work better together in those times and not panic.

Q. (Away from mic.)

COACH STEIN: I would agree, Rae gives us a lot of energy, and I think she was so relieved that I wasn't playing her at point guard this year, that she had a lot of energy. But I'm real proud of all of 'em.

They all lead in different ways and they all work hard. Even in the huddles, when they tied the game up, they were very positive with each other, and we haven't always had that. They were like, "we've got to figure out how to score here" and we had the shot, you know? We scrapped for the ball.

Again, it comes down to -- they talk about it in every sport, you've got to have playmakers, we got the ball to our playmaker, it just didn't drop.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you very much and we appreciate your comments.

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