

**March 13, 2009**



Texas A&M – 65  
Kansas State Wildcats – 63

An interview with:

**KANSAS STATE WILDCATS  
COACH DEB PATTERSON  
SHALEE LEHNING  
MARLIES GIPSON**

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Coach Patterson and the wildcats from Kansas State. Coach, your thoughts on this afternoon's game.

COACH DEB PATTERSON: Well, we certainly saw, I think, three of the best post players in the country today line up and just play tremendous basketball, starting with Marlies Gipson and Danielle Gant. Just absolutely unbelievable. Big-time plays during the course of that game by both of those two. And both of them I thought were just absolutely huge in keeping their basketball teams competitive. Every possession of the game on both ends.

And Shalee Lehnning, I thought just for us, did a tremendous job keeping us in offense, distributing the ball, giving us opportunities on an inside and outside, and unfortunately for us today, we weren't able to drop down the three-ball and that intensified the game for us on the inside even more. So the scores that we saw from Ashley Sweat and Marlies Gipson to me were even more incredible because we really weren't getting that 3-ball to drop for us. And so, they were scoring with one and two on them most of the night, as was Gant. She draws a great deal of attention defensively. And really asserted herself big-time on the boards late in the game.

But just a great Big 12 basketball game. A tremendous effort by our basketball team. And you know, again, very much deja' vu, the last-second shot that I think all of us felt was in, you know, popped out. So, you have to be glad you got the

look and great, great play by our basketball team in a scramble situation to complete the position out and get a quality shot. And unfortunately for us, it didn't drop.

THE MODERATOR: Okay, questions for the student-athletes.

**Q. Shalee, can you kind of compare the last see Wednesday consequence to the sequence that Coach Patterson mentioned last year against Iowa State? Did you feel that karma owed you guys a good bounce on the last shot this time?**

SHALEE LEHNING: Yeah, I mean it was the exact same emotions, you know. Running down thinking, you know, we have got to get a shot off. The ball got knocked loose. It was running all over the floor. And when I saw that I had the ball and Ashley was there open, I mean I wouldn't want anybody taking that shot, the four-foot shot than her. She makes those continually on a normal basis. So we got a great look, and I'm telling you, her shots always seem to hit that back rim in practice and they always fall. In practice they always hit the back rim and fall. And it was one of those, yeah, I thought it was going in. The same emotions. It hits and you're like, oh, my gosh, this is great. And it rolls out. At some point it will fall away, the ball will go in, and we are just waiting for that day. We just have to keep fighting.

**Q. This is for both Shalee and Marlies. It seemed like to me -- it seemed like for a while in the first half you were taking off, and Marlies it seemed like you took over the second half. Did it feel like to you guys, that you owned your irrespective halves?**

SHALEE LEHNING: I think you take what you are given. The first half, on balls and everything, things were opening up for me. And the second half they adjusted to stop that and things opened up for her. And that's what makes us a dangerous duo. If we both play our game and play to our strengths you have to try to stop one of

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us. It is unreal to play with her. She makes my job a lot easier. If they try to stop her, things open up for me.

MARLIES GIPSON: And Shalee, she is a great point guard and play maker out there. I know when she has the ball, she will make something happen. And my teammates did a great job of finding me and there was just a great team fight.

**Q. Marlies, what was A&M not doing I guess in guarding you in that second half? I mean tell me the different things that you saw coming from them to stop you.**

MARLIES GIPSON: I mean, we were all just fighting out there. And I mean I don't know, I can't say what they weren't doing, but it was just a matter of team play and we were just finding the open person. And I mean it just happened to be me and I am just glad my teammates have enough confidence on me to get the ball inside and they were falling for me, so.

**Q. I guess, Marlies and Shalee, if you can both talk about this. I have a feeling that everybody in the building knew that Danielle Gant would have the ball in her hands when they called that time-out. Having faced her so much, can you just tell how tough it is, even though you know she will have the ball, how tough it is to stop her? You played good defense and she still had such --**

MARLIES GIPSON: Danielle Gant, is a great player, I mean a great competitor, and I consider it a blessing to line up against her and play against her for these four years. And yeah, we knew she was going to take the shot, and the great player she is, she stepped up and knocked it down.

SHALEE LEHNING: That's what good players do. Good players find ways to make it in the crunch time, and that's exactly what she did. We knew it was going to her, and she still managed to find a way to score. So, all credit goes to her, she made a tough shot.

**Q. For either player. Can you just talk about how the strength and competitiveness of the Big 12 has prepared you now for the NCAA tournament?**

SHALEE LEHNING: You know, I think that the Big 12 has just provided so many different match-ups for us. Top to bottom, any given night it was anybody's game. So for us, to know we played a top 10 team like tonight, as well as we

did, I just don't know if there are a lot of teams in the nation that can defend quite like A&M.

So for us, we are going in with a lot of confidence because we had to play any given tight. You have Iowa State that shoots the threes, and A&M that is really physical. So for us, we are definitely very happy with the progress that we've made, and at this point we seem to be getting better towards the end of the season, and that's where we're going to carry confidence into the NCAA.

**Q. Marlies, do you want to comment?**

MARLIES GIPSON: She got it.

**Q. Shalee, I know you haven't talked very much about this, but Danielle Gant said the difference in this game was you were obviously still feeling the effects of mono the last time you played and how different it was. Can you just tell us how do you feel now? How much different?**

SHALEE LEHNING: I do feel much better than -- you know, A&M was really the first game back since I got diagnosed with mono, it was a really rough game for me. I get better each day and I consider it a blessing to be able to finish out my senior season and I am glad I will be able to step on the floor. At this point it is do or die time and I will not let this illness slow me down anymore. I made up my mind I will play and finish it out and it hasn't been affecting me the way it did self weeks ago.

THE MODERATOR: Okay, ladies. Congratulations on a great season. Questions for Coach?

**Q. Was there any thought after Gant made her basket of calling a time-out instead of a play? Or did you just kind of want to keep going and go through the flow of the offense?**

COACH DEB PATTERSON: We had a time-out prior, so we already had our play calls set. And ran what we had intended to run. So, really we had that opportunity before the possession in which they scored.

And I think what's challenging is, you have a great player like Gant who is stepping up late in the game and making great plays, but the reality is, Texas A&M has matured into a team offensively that if you give them an opportunity by throwing two at somebody at just the wrong time and the

wrong place, they're going to, you know, crush you with the three.

So, the three that Colson hit, when we had the lead, you know, those are big plays that they're making, that great teams make. And so, Gant is a great big-time player who steps up big. But those other players put a lot of pressure on your defense as well. Coming up the floor, we already had our play call set.

**Q. Coach, yesterday you said this was going to be a huge challenge. It seemed to me that you met that challenge. Number one, do you agree? And number two, what does that say about your team that two weeks ago it was night and day to what we saw tonight?**

COACH DEB PATTERSON: Well, it is just a compliment to their toughness and resiliency. It is a senior-led group that as you can see when you interview these two, in Sweat -- excuse me, in Lehning and Gipson, that you have two very, very mature players. And mature personalities. And they're great competitors with a disposition about and a commitment to winning.

And we have continued to get better. I am very proud of their fight. We went through a little rough spot in late February and then they got themselves on track. They're a team that had to make a lot of adjustments in losing their point guard for a period of time, and everybody tried to step up and adjust. And I just think it's just very typical of their character, it's typical of the great leadership that we have for them to have bounced back and to be playing great basketball. I'm proud of the effort and the fight that they brought to this game and really the quality of game that they brought to the floor today.

I think the game was in question down to the final possession, and that's how you want it to be when you're playing a top-10 team. And that's what our kids brought to the floor. So, it's just a real credit to them, and especially to those two, to Gibson and Lehning, that are just relentless competitors and great, great people and leaders.

**Q. Deb, Gary Blair kind of brought out this theory, so don't kill the messenger. But he said that if if you guys had gone on to play four games in four days, it may have affected how you played in the NCAA tournament just based on your depth. Is it in any way a blessing in disguise? Now that you can go back and rest? I know that you wanted to win the title, but.**

COACH DEB PATTERSON: Well, you know, you have to take the good from whatever situation you're faced with. And I think our players are really good at that. I think, obviously, it's hard for us to accept that we don't get an opportunity to play OU tomorrow, but it will certainly give us an opportunity for rest. At this point in the season, I am not sure that any of us really want to rest, you know, but it is probably prudent that we look at it that way. And maybe that is the silver lining. But it remains to be seen, you know. It definitely would have been a push for our kids.

You could see how dependent we are on that core group of five. You could even see it in this tournament. But, we would have liked to have had the chance to test it out, I think. And if the silver lining is that we were able to spare ourselves, you know, some extra rest and if it makes us better in the NCAA tournament, then that's fantastic. But, we'll just see how that plays out.

**Q. On that question, you also start thinking about seeding now, where you might like to go in the tournament. Where do you think you guys fall in the realm of seeds in the tournament?**

COACH DEB PATTERSON: I honestly have no idea and I really haven't thought about it much. I think I will say this in a general sense. That I think every team in the Big 12 that is selected to the NCAA is a legitimate, you know, top four or five seed, hands down. This league is unbelievably filled with power and talent, and everybody's played tremendous schedules. So, I would think in the big picture, in the big scope of this league, that we would all fall somewhere between the first and fifth seeds, I would hope.

THE MODERATOR: We have time for one further question for coach. Coach, they let you off easy. Best of luck to you the rest of the season.

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