

March 15, 2009



Baylor – 72
Texas A&M – 63

An interview with:

**BAYLOR BEARS
COACH KIM MULKEY
JESSICA MORROW
JHASMIN PLAYER
MORGHAN MEDLOCK**

PETER IRWIN: We are joined by the bears from Baylor. Coach, your thoughts on this afternoon's games.

COACH MULKEY: I'm just ready for questions.

Q. Jhas, Jessica, yesterday Jhas said you hit shots that seniors are supposed to hit. Is that what she did today?

JESSICA MORROW: I think y'all saw for yourselves she did, you know. Everybody on our team came tonight with a winning mentality and everybody was just thinking score. We hit some great shots tonight. I'm so proud of everybody.

Q. Jhasmin, after what you went through last year with you being hurt, would you talk about what it has been like for you to lead this team to a championship considering what you guys lost with Danielle.

JHASMIN PLAYER: It has been extremely easy because I haven't had to lead this team by myself. We have two seniors and they do a great job of taking over leadership. I do know that I had some sleepless nights when we lost here last year, and I packed for three days and I wanted to be here three days.

Q. Morghan, talk about what was going through your mind. You pretty much were in

the zone at some point in the second half, especially in the first half you got things done and got the team going.

MORGHAN MEDLOCK: Well, the biggest thing I told myself is that I wanted to send my seniors out on top. They told me prior to the game that they had never won a Big 12 championship, so I just thought, well, we'll win this for them.

As for myself, coming from USC I had never been in this situation, so I was just hungry to win as well as my team.

Q. Y'all's bench outscores A&M by, what was it, 24-2 and that was obviously a really huge factor in this game. Talk about the play of some of the guys that gave you a break every now and then.

JHASMIN PLAYER: We know what our bench brings. Melissa Jones has been playing well all season, Jessica as well as Morghan. Morghan has been playing well in this tournament. M.J. will bring us rebounding and getting extra shots and making free throws down the stretch.

Like I told you guys yesterday, Melissa Jones does all the things nobody else wants to do and all the things that don't show up on the stat sheet, and she did that today.

Q. Jhas, two-part question. How does it feel? And, secondly, can you please explain that dancing at the end of the game.

JHASMIN PLAYER: I can't even put in words how I feel. The last time -- we had to think about it yesterday. The last time Jess and myself have been here is freshman year with Sophia Young and Jordan Davis and Chameka Scott. That's the last time we played in the championship. We also talked about how we never won anything. Jessica, Morghan, we never won anything, high school, anything. It feels good, but it is not over. We have six more games and we want to continue to work hard and continue to well. Jessica and Melissa taught me those dances.

Q. Jessica and Jhasmin, you guys played a lot of zone and that's unusual for you guys. Can you tell me what kind of impact and how much of that seemed to frustrate A&M? And did it give you a little bit of a break as far as not having to play man?

JESSICA MORROW: I think it did have a big impact because they were probably expecting us to play a man-to-man the whole time. We were having trouble defending their quick guards and keeping them from penetrating. So we had to switch it up a little bit. I think that helped and it rattled them and made them shoot outside shots which they are not that comfortable with.

I think it was effective.

Q. Morghan, can you even begin to describe how you feel right now after everything that's happened to you?

COACH MULKEY: Hang in there, girl.

MORGHAN MEDLOCK: Not at all. The main thing is I have my teammates. If I didn't have anybody else, my dad couldn't get to games and my little brother couldn't be here, I had my teammates. And they have -- I don't even know how to say -- kept me up this entire way. Thanks to them and along with the great support staff and my coaching staff all the way down to the managers. I think everybody at Baylor, fans have just rallied around me and makes it hard to be sad or anything of that nature.

But, no, I can't -- I can't even explain the feeling.

PETER IRWIN: Ladies, congratulations on a great season and good luck in the NCAA.

COACH MULKEY: I wish Rachel Allison was up here. Let me say this before you leave. Jessica used the word "perseverance" yesterday. With Rachel Allison struggling like she has all year and to play as well as she is playing now, that's why you coach.

Jessica Morrow starts the year shooting very poorly. Look where she is today. Jhasmin Player is so the player I was not. Look where she is. Morghan Medlock goes through the terrible tragedy in her family and look where she is today. That's why you coach. That's why you hang with kids, and that's why you persevere and that's a story that needs to be written. Thanks, guys.

Q. Kim Mulkey and zone defense are two words I didn't figure you use in the same sentence.

COACH MULKEY: You didn't see that today. That was a man-to-man. What game were you watching?

Q. Can you just talk about that adjustment.

COACH MULKEY: Well, we were about to be behind by double figures. I think they had gone up ten. And I thought both teams are fatigued. You have played three games in three days, and the style of play that both teams play, something has got to give. We are not doing very good guarding them.

And so you just make gut decisions. It was not something planned. It was not something I discussed with any coach on that bench. It was something I called as I watched the game.

It worked. It worked.

Q. Coach, just touch on what you just said about Morghan and what she went through. It just seems amazing that she has come through it like this.

COACH MULKEY: We have tried to help Morghan move on and not keep talking about it, and I understand it is a story to be talked about. But I said this when it happened to Morghan, Morghan is at the right place. She is at a school and a university around people in a community that can help her, not that there aren't other places that wouldn't.

But we gave Morghan as much help as we could. We continue to give her as much help as we can through NCAA rules. I'm sure the biggest hurt for her is she doesn't have her mother to call. I'm a mother, and I feel for her.

But the thing I told her is we can't dwell on it. We have to move on and each day find something positive to talk about her, have your teammates talk about her. Don't drag them into your grief. Have them lift your spirits into "We can move on and we are going to be okay."

That's about all I'm qualified to help her with. Counselors can help her on a professional level and the kid is a player. The kid is a player and she came to Baylor for a lot of reasons, and I firmly believe she's where she's meant to be at this time in her life.

Q. Kim, you just heard the players up here say they hadn't won anything, you have. You have won. What were you feeling for this

group knowing that they really tasted winning a conference championship for the first time?

COACH MULKEY: Let me say this about the seniors that hasn't been said. I was reading a story on the Parises and the seniors at OU. Their seniors are like 120-something -- somebody help me. I don't know, 120 -- I don't know, it was a great record. And I thought, let me check the record of our seniors.

And I think I'm right in this. Before you write it, ask Julie Bennett. These seniors are 103-27 in their four years at Baylor. They just missed out a little bit on those championships. They finished second and second and third. They've had a great four years.

What better way to go out than to have a tourney championship if you couldn't have a regular season championship and to have all three of them playing as good as they are playing right now.

Q. Following up on Vince's question, last time you did this, you got together that led to a Final Four. Have you got another Final Four team?

COACH MULKEY: Man, you never know what this business brings, Chris. You just play and you work hard. I know what we've had -- now two tourney championships in four years. We're proud of that. Whatever happens in the play-offs happens. It is just like with the selection. I had one of my administrators say it best about the selection committee. Jody Conrad a while back, they asked her about what she thought the seed would be. And she said a camel is a horse designed by a committee. I don't know what's going to happen. All I know is what more can we do? If we're the No. 1 RPI conference in America -- and y'all have written that. Everybody in this room has read it. Then why can't we have two No. 1 seeds? I don't understand why you can't. I have said that from day one.

I certainly will be disappointed if another conference has two No. 1 seeds.

Q. I think you said after the game on television that your team isn't like some teams that might lose their top player.

COACH MULKEY: That's correct.

Q. You have got scorers at all positions. Can you talk a little bit more about that.

COACH MULKEY: Well, losing Danielle Wilson, you lost your 6' 4" center who is having a great year, leading scorer, leading rebounder.

But if you have followed our team, Danielle Wilson, guys, was a sub in a lot of games last year. She wasn't in the rotation every time we played. Danielle Wilson developed into the player she is now this year.

Always look at the team that we've had. There is not a dominant player like a Courtney Paris. If you lose a Courtney Paris, you see what happens. It is very difficult to adjust because she is that good.

Danielle Wilson is good, a big loss for us, but our scoring, our rebounding, it is distributed throughout the lineup. We had Morghan, McDonald's All-American coming in off the bench. You have Melissa Jones, sixth player in the league that started some games for us.

I know if you don't follow my team, you think I'm being partial, but I think you now see we're not going away. What we lost the most when Danielle went down, we lost a kid that had the ability to alter shots, to block shots, and we lost a post-player that I believe in this league runs the floor from foul line to foul line better than any post in our league. That's what we lost.

How did she become the leading scorer and rebounder? As she developed and you watched your team grow, you go "This kid is ready for this" and so you run things for Danielle. But you still have that balance on our team. That's why I kept saying over and over, we're not going away.

Q. Would you talk about Jhasmin, obviously this time last year she was watching you guys stroll without her and tonight had to be probably one of her best games of the season.

COACH MULKEY: Well, Jhasmin went down in early February, and we were in first place at that time in the Big 12. And I think we were 20-1. After that game we were 21-1 because it was at the Kansas State game that she went down.

Just like all athletes that had never been injured before, you're hurt, you're angry, you're mad, you're sad, you cry, do all of those things. But then reality slaps you in the face when the season is over that I can sit here and feel sorry for myself or I can get myself ready to play my senior

year.

Jhasmin just has the work ethic to get it done. It wasn't by herself. We have a tremendous staff and our trainer, Alex Olson and Shaun McPherson worked tirelessly to get her back on the floor.

When you deal with any kind of injury that requires surgery, the physical part sometimes comes before the mental part. And Jhasmin has just done a tremendous job to become the senior leader you want her to be and to play with a lot of confidence.

Q. You weren't like Jim Valvano, you didn't have to find somebody to hug. Rachel came right over there. Can you talk about that? Is this emotional for you to win this conference title this way and to beat a team like A&M?

COACH MULKEY: Well, you always hug somebody and seniors -- Rachel and I just happened to be the first ones to hug. And I made sure I hugged all those seniors.

The second part of your question, I don't know if I understand it.

Q. Does it mean more because of the way A&M plays? It was a tough game.

COACH MULKEY: It probably -- I keep it in perspective. I said before the game, win or lose, the Big 12 tournament, we are still a pretty good team. It is hard to beat a team three times in one season, particularly since we played each other a week ago to close out the regular season.

I don't want to overdo it. It is a championship, and I'm happy about it. Yet, at the same time, if we had lost the game, I would come in here and still be fighting for a No. 1 seed. That's just the competitor that I am.

I don't know that it means any more now, next year, two years from now or five. It is a championship.

Q. Kim, you talked about it a little bit there, but you made your opinions vocal about the Big 12 tournament. Has that changed any here? And then also can you talk about M.J. and what she gave you the whole game.

COACH MULKEY: Rick Barnes feels the same way I do, you know? I guess because there is not an exact science to seeding, teams that know they're going to get good seeds feel like sometimes when they go to conference tournaments, that if they should be upset or lose out they can only hurt themselves.

Teams that don't feel like they have good seeds need it to better themselves. And I just -- again, I'm a competitor. If I feel like my team has a good seed, sometimes going to conference tournaments, winning it, did it help our seed today? Can anybody stand up and tell me if winning it helped our seed today? That's what I was trying to say. Don't know. Don't know.

Now, if we weren't in the tournament, we were the eighth team in this league, I would have had been praising, yep, let's go to those tournaments, we need them.

I feel our program is at a level now where sometimes you got to protect your kids. And I just feel like that's a way of protecting them.

Q. And M.J.

COACH MULKEY: Melissa Jones, good grief, I hugged her neck and I just told her, what a joy to coach. She's low maintenance. She does whatever she's asked to do. She is just "Okay, Coach, you want me to guard a four player, I'll guard. You want me to rebound, I will rebound. You want me to block out and dribble up the floor, you want me to play the three, I will do that." She is just a young lady that takes to heart the game.

As we say in the locker room, she is just a baller. Thanks, guys.

PETER IRWIN: Best of luck in the NCAA.

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