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Texas A&M – 74
Oklahoma – 67

An interview with:



PETER IRWIN: We're joined by Texas A&M student-athletes Danielle Adams, Tyra White, and Sydney Colson. Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. This is for all three of you. Could you just talk about shooting from the perimeter? Obviously you shoot well from 3-point range, but you also had nine shots between ten and 15 feet that you also hit. What defensively were they giving you that allowed you to get the looks and make those shots?

SYDNEY COLSON: I think a lot of times when we run our high-low plays, a lot of the time whoever was guarding Danielle up top or whoever the post was setting the screen up top, they were funneling towards me to try to almost get a trap in to take away the pass back to the top of the key. So I found Tyra about two or three times on that. She was hitting shots. I knew I needed to keep coming off looking at where she was if they were helping off and get the ball to her, and she would drain the 3. And Danielle, I mean, she's just an excellent shooter. We looked for her all the time. She's trailing in transition. They were looking to give her the ball for the 3 or she could take somebody off the dribble. But I think we did a

good job with shot selection today and people were knocking down shots and we really needed it.

Q. Danielle, when you came into the season, of course, coming from Jefferson College, newcomer, getting used to the program and so forth, when I talked to Coach Blair he said trying to get you into shape, getting you into the style as well as the shape they want, talk about your progression from the beginning of the season and so forth until now.

DANIELLE ADAMS: Well, at first I was hurt for like a month with a hamstring. So that made a downfall, but I knew I had to come back and work hard. So she just made this program for me where I had to work out each day after practice for an hour for three days, that's where it started at. I mean for three times a day.

And then it progressed on when I kept getting better and better. I knocked down it to down to 30 minutes a day. I owe it to her and my teammates and the coaching for just believing in me and me for myself just for working hard.

Q. Danielle and Tyra, first of all, Danielle, we talked about this yesterday. They forget about you in the first half, and just talk about what it's like waiting and waiting and waiting and then you come in the second half and explode.

DANIELLE ADAMS: I couldn't even tell you. I mean, I scored two points in the first half and then just became dominant in the second half. I couldn't let my teammates down. My coaches or the fans. That was the first championship that I ever had. So I couldn't let my teammates down or my coaches.

Q. Tyra, just talk about how cool this is for Danielle from Kansas City, her parents and grandparents and everybody down at that end when she was shooting. Talk about you two Kansas City kids coming here winning this title

here?

TYRA WHITE: Just come back to our homes again, you know, represent we owe it all to our teammates, getting up, having to walk through it, 7:00 at the time with the time change and everything. I mean, feeling's just explainable right now. I feel good.

Q. There was a segment in the season, basically about middle of the way, the team obviously was going through some struggles, some losses there. With the fact that you did take down Nebraska yesterday and you took down a very good Oklahoma team, do you guys see yourself as maybe a 1, 2 seed or what?

SYDNEY COLSON: I think just what ever seed we get, I'm not so sure that any of us are even really focused on that to be honest. We just want to go out there and wherever we end up going we're going to play hard no matter who we're playing against.

I think since the middle of the season, when we were having struggles, losing those games, and a lot of the time we were losing games that were close and we couldn't finish it out, and it was they were testing us. We had a lot of tests during the season that prepared us for situations like this. And I think people responded well to adversity today and yesterday.

We went out there against Nebraska focused and ready to play. And today we made sure that we didn't lack anything, like we did last year, when we played Baylor. When we played Oklahoma and played Baylor for the championship, we lost that game. We said we didn't make it to this point this far y'all to come here and lose it. So you gotta give it all you got and you can rest after the game is over. But for now we gotta get the W. So we're prepared for anything.

Q. This is for Tyra and Danielle. The last 30 seconds of the game Tanisha comes up with those two big rebounds and she knocks down the foul shots that ensures that it's at least a 2-possession game. I mean, as people who have been around her day in/day out and have been familiar with her in high school, what is it about her character that -- I mean, obviously something like this doesn't surprise you that you figured she can come through in the clutch like this?

DANIELLE ADAMS: I mean, I've been playing with Tanisha since AU. She never gives up. She's a hard worker. She's motivated. She

has the courage to do what she does. She just never gives up. That's what I like about her. She just keeps playing through anything.

TYRA WHITE: Tanisha, she's one of the kids that does stuff on our team, if you tell her she can't do something she'll show you she can do it. Even when the coaches are out there yelling at her, she may have a little smirk on her face like, yeah, whatever. But she just has heart, and that's what a lot of us like about Tanisha. She's going out there and giving it her all. She has a lot of heart, and I've been knowing Tanisha since we were little. We just found out we're cousins. Everybody on the team loves her. She keeps us cracking up.

SYDNEY COLSON: Has a lot of heart.

TYRA WHITE: She does.

Q. How emotional were you at the end of the game? What does this mean to you and what was it like to hear your name called as the most outstanding player?

DANIELLE ADAMS: I was very emotional. I was very happy. I've never won a championship in my life. Just to win with this team was great for me and to hear that I was the most outstanding player was an awesome award. But it's for my team. I couldn't have done it without my team. So it's a team award, the Big 12 championship.

Q. Sydney, kind of about a minute left, they steal the inbounds from you and then the next play you kind of take a layup. Talk about how pivotal the sequence that was for you guys and then also how important was it that you guys never allowed Oklahoma to get the lead? I know you tied it a few times in the second half but you never allowed them to get the lead?

SYDNEY COLSON: That play down there, that was stupid of me I shouldn't have called it that low. That was basically it. I knew the next play I needed to make up for it.

We knew they were going to come out at us in the last minute put the pressure on us, which they've been doing for the last six minutes or so put the pressure on us, get easy baskets. We made sure if they got a steal or layup we didn't foul, make two mistakes out of one. And I think that it was really key for us to not let them get a lead. We had to get scores, get a stop, get another score. We practiced that in practice.

Score, stop, score, just to ensure you're doing your job on the defensive end, the offensive end. And I think that we were going tit for tat in the end but we were hitting some 3s and crucial free throws, a lot of people stepped up tonight that we needed to. I'm happy with the effort we gave and I'm glad we came out victorious.

Q. Sydney, you mentioned about the whole energy level. Last year you guys weren't happy with Baylor. But it seemed like today you guys had constant energy. Can you sort of talk about the difference between this year's team and last year's with the depth and also the fact Gary Blair said you guys are harder than ever to guard now because of all the offensive options. Do you think that also helps just because of all the depth you have?

SYDNEY COLSON: For sure. I think in situations when you're playing a team like Oklahoma who will get out there, they have such fast guards. Robinson and Stevenson are ridiculously quick. We know if they're coming out to try to trap us, we can pass it to one of our posts and they can knock down a shot or pass it to one of the guards and pass it off to someone to get a dribble as well. It's important that we have such good depth this year, because people get tired. What we try to focus on is people going into the game giving it all you got. If you get tired, raise your hand, somebody will come in and sub for you, and we know that we're not going to lose anything when we sub people in.

I think that's a key part of our team. We're really deep and it helps us out a whole lot.

PETER IRWIN: Thank you, ladies. Congratulations. Good luck in the tournament. Questions for coach.

COACH GARY BLAIR: We saw a great basketball game by two very, very good teams. We saw execution on the third day, one team shooting 51 percent, the other team shooting 48 percent in the first half. Both teams powder got a little dry in the second half, but that was because the defense picked up. We made adjustments at halftime. They made adjustments and all of a sudden we didn't get what we normally get.

They took our transition game away because they did such a great job on the offensive boards, particularly in the second half. We played a lot of zone again. Not necessarily to save our legs for the NCAA tournament, but they're not a great outside shooting team except for Stevenson,

and so we had to play to what necessarily was not their strengths.

We did a pretty good job except with the pick-and-roll with McFarland and Thompson in the first half. We adjusted in the second half. They didn't get that action. But they sure got a lot of penetration and dipping it inside. Thompson showed she's a -- Thompson and Smith showed first round WNBA draft picks, they played very well. Tanisha, where is your points, did you see the play she had with three minutes to go, tipped the ball over on a missed shot. Huge play. Nobody ever writes about that.

But I told her in the game I said, "You're setting the table. Keep going in setting the table. Do a good job." She was on Stevenson the majority of the game. Hartman was doing a good job on her as well.

And so sometimes we have other options. This is what makes this team so special. But look at the role players. Look at what McFarland did for them. Look what Assarian did for us. Look at my bench again, what Colson can do.

She's going to make some turnovers that just make my hair blond again. But at the same time she creates offense. And she's got a no-fear attitude. I know Danielle stripped her a few times. That hurt. But the missed layups at the last eight minutes that Oklahoma missed, I'm sure Sherri probably talked about that.

Because they had a couple of point-blank ones that they just flat missed. Now, the rebounds, the zone defense that we play -- hold on just a second -- the set plays that we ran, the well-officiated ball game by three Final Four officials, they never get any credit. But neither coach had problems with officials all night. When you don't notice officiating you know you've got a good ball game and those are three of the best.

Folks, I'm going to lobby here for just a little bit. You just saw 2 No. 2 seeds play. Now, whether or not they give us 2 No. 2 seeds that's up to the committee. But doggone it, we've earned the right not to be in Geno's region. We've earned that right. And hopefully with our strength of schedule and Oklahoma's strength of schedule, one of us deserves to be in the Minneapolis region.

Since I won 2 out of 3, that's me. And I know that means Oklahoma City, where Sherri's from and the whole nine yards, but I've got relatives everywhere, too. If not, send me somewhere but I think both of us deserve No. 2

seeds, and I think both of us deserve not to be the last No. 2 seed which I have been the last two years. And it better not happen again, committee. Questions?

Q. These are two questions. First of all, this is the second time in three years you guys have won here in Kansas City. Talk about the fact obviously another title here in Kansas City. And then the next question, talk about Danielle Adams, the beginning of the season, I know she was injured. You had to get her somewhat in shape. Her progression through the whole season.

COACH GARY BLAIR: Kansas City has been good to me my whole career. As I stated before. '98, '94, we recruit well in the Kansas City, Missouri, area. I eat well in your great restaurants in town. We stay at not one of the fancy places. We stay at the Courtyard Marriott by the plaza, one of the older places. It's where we're comfortable. We don't have to have flash and dash.

Just get my wife close to the plaza and she'll be as happy as can be. Danielle Adams, she made the hard decision to come to us versus going to the team that finished second in the nation last year, Louisville, who wanted her bad.

But she said our system would get her ready for that next level. And that says a lot for a young lady to say, "I'll lose the weight to play the up-tempo style that we play." 35 pounds during the season from October on. Not in August and September.

And she has been everything that we asked her. A lot of times we did not need to bring her in. And when I bring her in, she usually never goes out. But I'm able to monitor fouls this way. And I'm able to give Tanisha Smith her shots early on that she needs.

When we started running the J series, what we call the high post series where I ran one down for her and she took that high post shot out there, she's got creativity. The only thing she was about that much late on getting that shot before halftime.

Now, that would have been finally an ESPN highlight shot. The shot that should have been on ESPN yesterday, they showed some other shot in the girls' game, when she scored on one end, went down, blocked the shot, gathered the ball, slid on the floor, knocked the thing forward, what's ESPN thinking about? That was the play that should have been on Sports Center. That wasn't a guard knocking it away blocking the shot.

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That was a basketball player that did what our team needed at the time. So that's my long-winded answer.

Q. Your KC trio, including Danielle, those three, just what did they give you guys today and do you think it was playing at home, it was a little more special for those three, do you think?

COACH GARY BLAIR: Look at what Tyra White did in the first half. All of a sudden, who are you going to stop? You're going to stop the penetration. We reversed the ball. We knew they were going to trap our high ball screens.

They knew we were going to -- they were going to send the girl over, Hartman, to try to take away. And what does Carter or Colson, I can't remember, she skips it all the way to the other side and Tyra hits a dagger. Then she hits another one. I think she didn't score in the second half. But this is the way this team is. All right. We will find your weakness and we will exploit it, because we have weaknesses, too. Tanisha Smith did the little things.

She had -- when we were in man, she was on Stevenson. Or she was switched off and sometimes would take Robinson. Danielle Adams has just got basketball IQ. And that's what a lot of times in the women's game players are missing sometimes, is basketball IQ. Danielle Adams has that.

Q. You mentioned Tanisha Smith doing the little things. She also did some big things within the last 30 seconds of the game. Could you talk about the rebounds she got and the foul shots that she hit for you to seal this?

COACH GARY BLAIR: Did you say Tanisha Smith or who?

Q. Tanisha Smith.

COACH GARY BLAIR: That's who I wanted to have the ball. When I saw Roethlisberger on her, we knew where we were going. That was about like her brother throwing that touchdown pass, that's Danielle Adams. We all of a sudden knew that's where we wanted to go because we didn't want to take the chance of losing the ball underneath. I've run that press breaker for years and years. It's called northeast. Why? Because I stole it from Northeast Louisiana, because they used it to beat my press when I was

coaching at Stephen F. I always give the other school credit. But it works. It's hard to defend. We never lost the ball yet in about 15 years from that same press breaker, whether we go deep or sprint up, hand it off, give it back to the throw-in girl.

Q. On Danielle, it's kind of a plan. You sit her on the bench, plays five, six, seven minutes in the first half. Not everybody can respond to that. Then she comes off in the second half and just knocks down everything?

COACH GARY BLAIR: Jason Terry is doing it for the Mavericks, except last night. All of a sudden, you don't want all your scoring options out there. You want to start the game with defense. Damitria is our best post player. Take shots, sacrifice her body, whatever. Adaora Elonu needs shots early. She drives, shoots the ball well. She needs her shot. Tanisha Smith is going to penetrate, make things happen, and my guards are going to read. And then everybody is going to forget about Tyra White and she's going to eat you alive.

That's what we have. And then when I bring in, if I can ever get Colson healthy, which I will next year, I'll be able to bring Carter off the bench again. If I do not start her at the 2 guard next year and move Tyra to the 3.

Q. Danielle just has an ability to sit for 30 minutes and then come in and light it up. That's rare?

COACH GARY BLAIR: It's her personality. She is the most easy-going kid I've ever coached in my life. And it's just the way she is every day. Nothing gets her excited. She just plays steady basketball. And she's such a lovable kid.

Q. You sort of made the case for you guys and Oklahoma. Yesterday you made the case for Nebraska. Still maintaining a No. 1. What about the rest of the conference?

COACH GARY BLAIR: I think seven teams need to be in the top four. Now, obviously somebody will be pushed down to the five, maybe. And that would probably be, who knows, Texas and Oklahoma State, but how do you push them down? We've got the top conference in the country. We've got great coaches. We've got great players, great assistant coaches. We've got great fans.

We're willing to risk reward by playing the schedule. A lot of conferences, if they knew their conference schedule was so tough they would play a lot of guaranteed games, but we're willing to go out there on the road and play the big-timers if they'll play us.

And eventually this conference for us to get to do, we need two teams in the Final Four one year and one of us win it. That's going to happen sooner than later. I didn't say Sooners, did I? Sooner or later.

Q. What are your thoughts about -- you haven't necessarily, from what he was saying, been as thrilled about the change in format, the playing three or four games without having that day of rest. What are your thoughts now? This is the right setup for the tournament.

COACH GARY BLAIR: I think it is. It gets you ready for the NCAA. That doesn't bother me. My only problem -- and please take it to heart, Kansas City, I love Kansas City -- but we have to have this tournament back in Dallas at least one out of three years, somehow, some way, going on different weekends, try it. Administrators, if you're listening out there, try it. We didn't write the book on everything. Other conferences are doing it. Try it, recruiting particularly for the north schools that are recruiting great Texas athletes to come down and play.

We need to build a base, then you would not just have 3100 people out here, have one of the best games around on a Sunday afternoon. Okay. Now, you've got a great home court advantage with Kansas and Kansas State here. Oklahoma City you've got a tremendous advantage. We're three hours away from Dallas. Texas is four hours away. Texas Tech is five hours away. And Waco is an hour and a half away. So it's not that much of an advantage. But if we want to grow our game, we need to spread it out like they're doing in the SEC. It always used to be played in the state of Tennessee.

Well, spread it out, and you will grow your game and now maybe the fans that come to Dallas will start traveling up here to Kansas City and to Oklahoma City and it would be better for everyone. And then Ohio State fans, they're going to travel to Alaska. Those are good fans. They'll travel. So let's get 'er done.

Is this the local station? Here the local station doesn't even give the scores of the game

last night on 10:00. Now, come on folks. And we get one page in the Kansas City paper for our team. Come on. You got a great newspaper and great TV stations, but this is top teams, all right. We need the media coverage from Kansas City as well and then that crowd will go up, too. Thank you.

PETER IRWIN: Thank you, Coach.

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