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Texas A&M – 81
Oklahoma – 68

An Interview With:

**OKLAHOMA
COACH SHERRI COALE
DANIELLE ADAMS
WHITNEY HAND**

THE MODERATOR: We're now joined by coach Sherri Coale from Oklahoma and her two student-athletes, Danielle Adams and Whitney Hand coach.

COACH COALE: I'm proud of our kids. I thought we fought really, really hard. We didn't necessarily make a lot of great decisions. We did some dumb things and missed some open shots and failed to take advantage of some opportunities where I thought we could have just -- we were right on the edge and just couldn't quite get to the other side.

But I cannot fault their effort. I cannot fault their fight. I'm proud of them. Texas A&M has a very good basketball team. They have tons of weapons. And we at least made them go down the depth chart a little bit and try to find them.

Sydney Carter killed us in the second half. Obviously she went on a little terror there for ten minutes and couldn't get an answer for her.

But, again, they're a very, very good basketball team who had to play extremely well to get through us and earn the right to the championship.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Whitney, can you talk about what Griffin has meant to you guys, how she played today and how when she's able to play like that how it changes your team?

WHITNEY HAND: Yeah, Nicole, I think she stepped up tremendously. I was talking to her last night, and she said the A&M game at their place when we got just smashed is when she started to play, and she was really excited to get that opportunity again.

You saw what she did. Did she get a 3? I don't think she did. Oh, yeah, she hit one. No, she didn't. She hit one. Sorry.

I just felt like she really disrupted her rhythm a little bit. Obviously she got pushed under a lot on rebounds. But I just felt like her presence, she's just a confident girl. She wants the ball. She wants to go score. You can draw up a play for her and she's going to be in the right spot and do the right thing. I think that's a huge thing, especially around really experienced guards.

Q. Danielle, can you talk about what your -- your thoughts on where this team is? The last two years, I don't think you guys have won this tournament but you've gone to the Final Four. What are your thoughts now in terms of what you can do the rest of the way?

DANIELLE ROBINSON: I think we're in a great spot. We have enough support and enough confidence and enough leadership to get us where we want to go. And even though we came up short here in Kansas City, I think we're about to start with a clean slate, and it's one game at a time in the NCAA Tournament. And with the experience that we had the past two years, we have all the confidence in the world.

Q. Whitney, similar question, you guys have shown sparks these last five, six weeks trying to get some momentum. What do you think it's going to take to win two, three in a row and get going in the NCAA?

WHITNEY HAND: I mean, we talked about it a little bit earlier in the locker room that you take this week and you try to -- you improve. And I think the teams that improve at this point and take

advantage of this time that they have together do great in the tournament.

I think that we've traditionally done well in the tournament because we do that. We find out how to believe again. You find out how to just do the little things, I guess. Especially I feel like it's so much about bracket. And you find out those teams you have -- I don't know when you prepare for those teams earlier.

I just feel like it's going to take a week of work and a week of really enjoying playing together. And I think that's what the tournament's all about. It's a fun time. If you play well together, it's hard to beat.

Q. Danielle, can you talk about Carter? Coach alluded to that. Were you guys (indiscernible)? Can you talk about her and her game and what you guys were doing against her?

DANIELLE ROBINSON: I think we lost her a couple times. She got hot. And Colson's a really great point guard and she found her when she was open. And she just made plays. She got steals and came out of transition and hit open shots. And that's what great players do.

Q. Danielle, another question about Griffin. The thing that impressed me today is the way you throw it into her and then she's catching it easy, not fumbling the ball around. Has she improved on that or has she always been able to catch the ball and immediately do things with it? How has that progressed?

DANIELLE ROBINSON: She's definitely improved. She's become more confident the more minutes she played, and the more we challenge our teammates to get better, she stepped up to every challenge.

And I think you've seen that all tournament and all year that she's been playing, just her ability to gain momentum and take confidence into the next game.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Questions for Coach.

Q. Kind of following up on what Barry was talking about here, Coach Blair mentioned the idea that with Brittney now in Waco teams kind of have to have that big presence in the middle. Y'all for some time now have been developing these very good big players. Talk a little bit about how Nicole's fitting in with that

and do you think a team has to have that big player now to compete in the conference?

COACH COALE: Well, I'm really, really proud of Nicole. I think she's really grown over the course of the year. You can just watch her play tonight; her presence impacted the game.

She's figuring out how to get angles and how to finish. She's figuring out how to catch cleanly. She's not yet mastered the art of what to do when you're displaced. She's not figured that out, how to either -- you have to hold your ground or you have to fall. You can't just allow yourself to be pushed completely out of the play.

And she's got -- she's got to learn that and she's a freshman. And she'll develop even further. It's been fun to watch her grow over the course of the year, just fun to watch things sink in, light bulbs go off, and see her incremental improvement over the course of the season.

And she's going to get better even in the next week. That's just the kind of kid she is. She's very conscientious. She comes to work every day and takes games in and -- or takes the game in bite-sized bites, I guess you would say. She doesn't try to improve on everything all at once. She just takes one little thing at a time and tries to get better at it.

I thought she was fantastic today. She almost had a double-double against great, great experience and a post player who is an absolute conundrum to try to defend.

I thought she did a fantastic job. That's a very, very experienced A&M team against some pretty green players. So I just think that Nicole, she did a great job, and I'm proud of her, and I think she's going to continue to get better, because it's important to her. When it's important to them, they do.

Q. You said her improvement's been incremental. But her playing time really wasn't. She's playing barely, barely three, four minutes, then all of a sudden you played her 28 minutes and she's been playing a bunch ever since. What happened at that point in the mid-season when you said, hey, we're just going to play her?

COACH COALE: We weren't getting any production from any other post players. We had to get somebody who could produce, get rebounds, score baskets, at least get fouled and go to the free-throw line. And when she got her opportunity

to play some extended minutes, she did that. And she never stopped doing it.

Q. If someone tells you at halftime that you're going to hold Adams without a field goal in the second, are you feeling pretty good about things, or are you still worried about the players around her?

COACH COALE: A&M is a basketball team. They're a top five team in the country for a reason. They have more than one player. And we knew that.

And we game planned for the whole crew of them. Just you don't imagine that Sydney Carter is going to come out in the second half and have 19. That was unexpected. Did we think she could score? Absolutely. She's hurt us before. And we even talked about it in pregame, the deadly spots on the floor if she catches it, it's points. You can just count on it.

But, again, at halftime I felt like we were in a really good spot. And we came out in the second half and we did some really good things, and I think it was 43-41, and we had the ball and we got a 3 and we missed it.

You watch games on TV. I do it just like you guys do. If this goes in, and if it goes in, then this game goes this direction, and if it doesn't it might go the other.

We had several of those I felt like. I felt that way a lot this year. If we can just get that break, that one shot to go in for us, or maybe not go in for them, maybe it goes a different way.

Q. You guys have proven you don't have to win a Big Eight tournament to get to the Final Four. Could you just kind of look towards next week and how is your team primed for a run at the NCAA, where you think you'll be in it, et cetera?

COACH COALE: We're young. Again, we're fortunate we have great leadership and three seniors who have been to two Final Fours, and we have a couple of sophomores who, all they've ever done is gone to the Final Four since they came to college, which is pretty bizarre.

So they understand what we're getting ready to do. Vegas, Morgan Hook, Nicole Griffin, they've got no idea what we're about to do. They have no idea. And I look back at the game tonight and, boy, there were those little plays that we were just talking about that can send it one way or another. A couple times it ended up being freshmen who have been in a position they've

never been in before against seniors, juniors and seniors, at all spots.

So they're learning and progressing, and it will be important that those older guys on my squad who have been there and done that try to prepare them as best they can. That being said, sometimes you just gotta go do it. You gotta go through it to know what it's like. They've never played in a game where if you don't win it you don't get to play anymore at the collegiate level. So that will be new. We'll see how we handle it.

Q. Talk about it has been win one, lose one for quite a while now, and this is the time of year you have to win two or three in a row to get somewhere, scheduling and those issues. Talk about what you've been through and why you maybe have confidence that next week that train can end.

COACH COALE: Let's talk about that. Let's blame the Big 12 computer system. I'm all for that. We had no opportunity to gain any traction in the second half of the Big 12 schedule. That's the way it felt.

And at some point you gotta be good enough to beat somebody maybe you're not supposed to beat so you can get some traction, and we couldn't quite get over that hump.

That being said, the best thing about our basketball team has been our resilience. We tend to bounce back and figure out a way to regroup and get better. I do think we're getting better.

I think we're better now than we were a week ago, but we have to understand the sense of urgency that we'll be in the middle of next weekend. The great thing is, I think it's great, in the first and hopefully the second game we shouldn't have to play anybody in the Big 12 South, and that will be fabulous.

Q. I think Danielle reached that milestone today. She got the one steal that she needed for 300 for her career so she becomes the third player in history. I know you answered a lot of questions about her in glowing terms. But that's rare air right there with the two that she joins in that category.

COACH COALE: It's unbelievable. Nancy Lieberman and Dawn Staley and Danielle Robinson, whatever she does for the rest of her life, she's a part of the club. None of the rest of us can even get an invite to a pre-party to that club.

To me, I look at it, I got to coach this kid. I got to coach this kid who is mentioned alongside Nancy Lieberman and Dawn Staley. Are you kidding me?

Special. Special stuff. And yet if you talk to her right now, she just wishes she had won that game. And that's what makes her unique.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

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