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An Interview With:

**BAYLOR
COACH KIM MULKEY
ODYSSEY SIMS
BRITTNEY GRINER
MELISSA JONES**

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Baylor coach Kim Mulkey, student-athletes Odyssey Sims, Brittney Griner and Melissa Jones. Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Melissa, can you talk about overcoming that 12-0 lead and why you all got down so far and just how you came back?

MELISSA JONES: Well, I just think we had a really slow start. We just didn't come out on top like we normally do. And one thing kind of led to another. And it just seemed like finally we were like, all right, it's time to kick it into gear, and at that moment we started to turn things around.

Q. How comforting is it, Melissa, to know that you could be 12 down but you got the players sitting there at your right going to get you back into it, and talk about that 20-minute period she had, the middle of the first half to the middle of the second half?

MELISSA JONES: You gotta give Brittney credit for just an outstanding game she played today. It was just great to be a part of it and have the experience with her.

We've been down before this year on several different occasions and we've been able to

fight back. We knew even though we were down we could still find a way to win.

Q. Melissa and Brittney, I know there's a politeness involved with not wanting to be too much talking about how we wanted something more than the other side did. But looking at rebounding numbers, how much of that truly is just a matter of effort and going after it a little bit harder?

MELISSA JONES: Rebounding is just one thing our coaching staff really does a good job of stressing on us to do. And both not just on the defensive end but on the offensive end, just that extra effort. And so that's something we work on every day in practice and something we try and pride ourselves on.

BRITTNEY GRINER: Just like M.J. said, we practice that a lot in practice and our coaches stress that to us a lot, boxing out and rebounding and keeping them off the boards because that one rebound could cost you the game. Our mindset is to try to get everything that comes off the rim.

COACH MULKEY: Let me interrupt there if I can. I don't know who votes on it, and it's why I hate awards. You mentioned rebounding. How can you explain Destiny Williams is not on the All-Tournament team? She plays three games and she goes 21 points and eight rebounds, 18 points and seven rebounds, and she has 11 big rebounds today and you're the champion and you only get the same number that A&M did, the same number of All-Tournament people? That's the kid you need to write about. Give her a little pub right there. Okay. I'm done.

Q. Brittney, as M.J. said, you guys have been down in some games, but only a handful of games where you've been down by that much at double-digit margin. Can a game like this in the long run be good for you, just because you know you can come back and dig back?

BRITTNEY GRINER: Definitely this game is going to help us when we get into the tournament. There will be times when you get down and you just gotta be able to fight back. So this game definitely helped us out and is going to give us some momentum going into the tournament.

Q. Brittney, starting off, it seemed like they were really diving in on you, double-teaming you. You lost the ball a couple times on turnovers. Did you realize you scored 20 straight for you guys there between the end of the middle of the first half through the middle of the second half? Did you realize you were doing that much?

BRITTNEY GRINER: Not really. I mean, I knew I was scoring, but I was just trying to help my team out and they did a great job and just trusting me and getting me the ball.

Q. I was going to ask about that. I think it was like 23 of 25 or something like that of your team's points during that stretch. Was it just the situation where you said, hey, get me the ball, I'm going to get us back on top of these guys?

BRITTNEY GRINER: I was just posting up stronger. I lost the ball and turned it over a couple of times trying to drive. So I just went to posting up and trying to get the ball deeper and going towards the rim.

Q. I don't mind telling you your Destiny was on my ballot.

COACH MULKEY: The ones that voted for her don't mind speaking up; I wonder how many of you here voted for Danielle Robinson who only played two games here. Speak up. Let me see you. Shame on you. Shame on you. She's not leaving here with a championship, is she?

Q. Brittney, I also voted for you. Question for you and M.J., who I also voted for.

COACH MULKEY: You voted for Robinson and you're the one that asked the rebounding question, man.

Q. Question for Brittney and then M.J., if you could comment on that. You had a basket, I don't even know if I can quite describe it, it was in the first half. You got the ball way underneath and you sort of reached back. Can you kind of talk about how you've developed

your footwork and your post moves, because you saw an example of all of this today. M.J., if you could talk about how that's developed for her this year even over last year?

BRITTNEY GRINER: Well, on that shot, I don't know, I don't know what to say on that. I just saw the backboard and I knew where to go, so I was just trying to get it in there and roll it in. So I was just happy on that. But Coach has me thinking about it more, facing in, and not posting up too early. That way I really don't have to do too big of a post move, because if I post deep, I'm right there at the rim.

MELISSA JONES: I think B.G.'s just done a great job from last year to this year, just the fact she's been able to be smarter where like she plays herself in the paint, and I think last year she was more throw the ball up there, I'm going to get it and throw it up in the hoop. Now she's being more strategic this year of where she wants to get the ball and deeper and getting the higher percentage shot.

Q. Melissa, on Wednesday you told us that you had woken up and were able to see some light out of your bad eye for the first time. Has there been any progress since?

MELISSA JONES: It's about the same. I can tell that there's like lights and it's still dark like when I'm not looking at any light or anything, but I can see those bright lights out on the court like crazy. So when there's like bright lights, I can see them. Or if a light is up close to my eye, I can see it.

Q. Odyssey, you and M.J. both got into some foul trouble. When that happens, do you have to change your mindset defensively to be more careful when you're on defense?

ODYSSEY SIMS: Yeah, because we can't be as aggressive as we want to, so we have to watch the handshake and driving to the basket knowing they're coming for us.

Just gotta try our best to just keep them in front and just not pick up our third or fourth foul.

Q. Melissa, could you take us through that last block of Sydney Carter and how you did not bite on the fake?

MELISSA JONES: Well, I kind of did a little bit, I think. I just knew that they wanted a big shot, that they were so close that a 3 or just a big

shot would get them momentum and get them right back in it, if not tie the game or get it real close.

So I just knew that she wanted to shoot it. So it was just to try and stay as close as I possibly could on her.

Q. Melissa, can you talk about your last NCAA Tournament, how excited you are to get started?

MELISSA JONES: We're just thrilled. I think we couldn't have had a better game to play A&M like we did today, going into the NCAA Tournament. It just -- it's a good way to prepare us and to take us going into the tournament.

Q. Brittney, second time in about ten days you guys have been able to cut the nets down, put the hats on, all that, dance around. Isn't it an addictive feeling?

BRITTNEY GRINER: Definitely. It's a feeling that you want to keep having. So it's definitely something to look forward to and work hard to try to get that feeling again.

Q. Brittney, in the four games that you've -- I guess five games that you played against Danielle Adams, she's never scored more than 15 points --

COACH MULKEY: Credit Destiny Williams who didn't make All-Tournament.

Q. I voted for her.

COACH MULKEY: Once again, another stat that's -- I know, that's why y'all in the media and we coach. I know, I know.

Q. I just wanted to ask you about that going up against her. She's the league's leading scorer.

BRITTNEY GRINER: She guarded me a lot. Like Coach said, that's Destiny doing a good job on her and just guarding her. I was on her a couple times. I was trying to make sure she didn't get a 3 off. But credit to Destiny, though.

Q. Melissa, one of the other big factors, especially in the first half, was your bench coming in and really giving you a big spark, Hayden, Brooklyn Pope, both of them, and Coach Mulkey has talked all season about how important that is going to be especially in the NCAA Tournament. Can you address that, that when you guys got off with that slow start you

were able to go to the bench and get a lot of help from those people?

MELISSA JONES: That's just something special that we have on this team, is that we've got a tremendous amount of depth, and you could put any one of our bench players -- I know Coach keeps calling them bench players, but she could start any one of them. But just put any one with any five on the court at one time, and they're going to produce.

They just do an outstanding job in practice. Put anybody out on the court and we'll make something happen.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations. Questions for Coach.

Q. Two-part thing, first of all, to have 22 turnovers and have Odyssey have a tough shooting game, all that, the fact that you guys were able to win. Again, M.J., I had her down the stretch. She stopped Carter on the drive, she kept the offensive rebound alive, which Destiny converted on. She blocked a shot. She got a rebound on a free throw to give you another 20 seconds. I don't know if you remember those stretches of plays for her, if you could talk about that, and then just overcoming those other issues you had.

COACH MULKEY: Let me talk about what you opened up with. We've won a lot of games late in the season, when if you statistically look at it, you're not supposed to. The OU game there. You know, you come back and you see what you did there, and you're like how did we win that game? Looking at the stats here, we have 22 turnovers, guys, to 11 assists. How many of those games are you ever going to win? How many of the games are you going to win when you go down 12-0?

I thought that we battled after about the first five minutes of the game. I don't think that we came out ready to play. And if that falls on my shoulders, I'll accept responsibility for it.

But you just keep coaching, fighting, and I think the kids really did that. It wasn't a game that I say is one of our better games, but I'm not sure A&M, it was one of their better games either.

I think the game boiled down to players making plays. It wasn't going to be me outcoaching Gary or Gary outcoaching me or us even executing anything great or them executing anything great. It was no new schemes out there.

It was just kids playing basketball and making plays.

Late in the game, and I'm not sure which plays you're talking about, but I thought two key things late when the game was still on the line was when Odyssey Sims missed the front end of the one-and-one, who got the rebound?

Q. Melissa.

COACH MULKEY: When Odyssey missed the baseline jumper, who got the rebound? Destiny Williams. Those two offensive boards gave us more time on a new shot clock which allowed us to milk the clock even more. We were up five when Odyssey missed the front end, then they go down and score. We were up three. So those were big just -- in football you call it smashmouth football; in basketball, you just call it tough, grit it out, get in there and make a play.

And I thought those two plays were big late in the game.

Q. I asked Brittney this, but what do you think may be the long-term benefits of a game like this where you had to come back?

COACH MULKEY: We've had a lot of those. First of all, I think the regular season championship is the most important, the 16 games. That's your body of work. That's what you want first. Anybody can get on a roll in three days and win a tourney championship. So for us to do both, not many teams probably really do that. I knew that if we played A&M in the championship, that it would be this kind of game.

I also knew that you know what, it's going to be the best championship game of any conference in the country. And Stanford will probably play UCLA in the Pac-10. That's the only one left. It is the best championship game, I said it all along, I said it at halftime, in the entire country. No SEC game has the No. 2 and No. 5 team playing each other. Not the Big Ten, not the ACC. The game itself, you got to see the two top 5 teams in the country.

You got to see some serious defense on both ends of the floor. What a great preparation for the NCAA Tournament. It has to help both of us as we head into the NCAA Tournament. I do not think that either one of us will be tired and fatigued. You have a week to get ready. And win or lose, if we had lost the game, we were going to be a No. 1 seed. Had Gary won the game, he was still going to be a No. 2 seed. And I think that

makes the game -- just go enjoy it. Go play it hard for the fans, for the TV, and for you guys.

Q. Can you talk about you usually keep players off the floor when they get two fouls. You put Odyssey back in there. Kind of rotated her. The confidence you had with her late in the game when she obviously struggled shooting the ball but you still let her handle it and control it?

COACH MULKEY: I didn't want to put her in. You know I don't like to do that. It goes against all coaching principles that I have. But Nae-Nae is the back-up point guard and she was gassed. We had a fastbreak one time, three on one, and M.J. had it and kind of made a bad shot. She couldn't go. So my other alternative was to put Condrey. But I want to say I might have subbed Condrey at that point because Jordan Madden had two fouls. I can't remember exactly.

So I just looked at her and I said, Whatever you do on the offensive end, don't drive to run over somebody, don't push off, just go and get us into an offense and I'll get you off the floor on the defensive end every time, and I was able to just buy a little time there when Nae was gassed.

Q. You made it really tough for Danielle Adams all three games. Was it mostly Brittney or good team defense?

COACH MULKEY: You all answer it for him. Destiny Williams. Write an article about Destiny Williams and her ability to stop the leading scorer in the league every game. But she couldn't make All-Tournament.

Q. Can you talk about the way that Brittney took over those 20 minutes, number one?

COACH MULKEY: You want me to answer it now. We worked with B.G. We have always worked with B.G. But I thought Brittney has such a soft touch and can shoot it facing the basket and can do all those things. She can elevate above you and just shoot it.

It's now time for Brittney, when she's not doubled and triple-teamed and you're in a one-on-one situation, you need to establish the power game for us right now. And we've really, really pushed her and worked with her to not allow people to push you off the block.

And she's such a coachable kid. She's

trying to bang in there and she's trying to push and back up when they're pushing her off the block. So does that answer your question with Brittney?

Q. Now I want to look forward to this week and beyond, two questions here. One, just talk about your readiness for the NCAA Tournament. You'll be at home and then probably Dallas, you could get to the Final Four without leaving Texas?

COACH MULKEY: I hope so. I would hope that if we're a No. 1 seed that obviously you'll be in Waco for the first and second rounds in Dallas, and it's my understanding, correct me if I'm wrong, I know a month ago we knocked the NCAA socks off with how many tickets have been sold both at the first and second rounds in Waco and in Dallas.

And you've got to love that. That shows the NCAA that we appreciate women's basketball in Texas.

Q. That leads me to my final question. Gary brought this up as he does every year about playing here and you guys are treated well, you're just overshadowed by the men, and he obviously would like to play elsewhere. So in '14 the talk is that the women's tournament is going to go a week later, which would not have to tie this to the men's tournament in Kansas City. Can you just talk about the future as far as playing the women's tournament a week later and how that might move this tournament?

COACH MULKEY: No, because I may be dead -- that's Gary having too much time on his hands. Here's what I will say. Kansas City is awesome. Lots to do here. It's been a joy. But if this tournament and this game was played in Dallas, Texas, today, you people that cover us, how many people do you think would have attended?

Q. 10,000, 12,000?

COACH MULKEY: That's probably mostly what he's referring to. And that's not to take away anything from the people who bid on this tournament or the people who work their rear ends off to make it a good tournament.

Just parts of the country, you can look at teams in parts of the country that are ranked in the top 10. And they don't draw. You can look at conferences outside the Big 12, they don't draw, and they have good teams in it. I think a lot of that

is attributed to the personality of the coaches, how good the league is, and we work really hard at selling our sport to our fans. And I would love for this to be somewhere in Texas before Griner graduates. Who wouldn't?

Q. To follow up on that, Coach Blair mentioned the fact that there are also really strong teams that we're talking about, teams that have won a lot, and that's why the attendance is here. Do you think that there may be something to that as far as what's going on with the sport here in this area, because I've been covering it in Columbia for a long time and they're still really struggling to get people in the seats there. If KU, K-State or Mizzou was really able to get a team together that's winning games, that that's maybe part of what's going on here with the attendance?

COACH MULKEY: I don't know. I can remember when Iowa State was winning it, they'd bring everybody from Ames here. Kansas State back in the day when they had (indiscernible), those fans came too. It could be. You could be exactly right. I don't know.

Q. You are kind of like the lioness who is very protective of her Cubs and you are very complementary of your athletes, and you don't shy away from telling us what you think about what we've written. And I love that about you. And I am just wondering where that comes from and is it from being a former athlete yourself or why do you feel the need to be protective like that?

COACH MULKEY: Protective as in?

Q. For example, you come up here and you go to town on us about Destiny Williams.

COACH MULKEY: You're protective of your athletes when they do right. I will never protect an athlete that gets in trouble and they're wrong. Look, honey, I've dismissed starters for missing class.

Okay. So be careful when you say I protect them. I don't protect them. I make them do right. They're held accountable. I think it's a personality that you're born with, but it's also who you played for. Have you ever met Leon Barmore? Have you ever met Pat Summitt? I got to cherish the moments I had with them when they were my age. I got them in their prime. And I am a

pussycat compared to either one of them.

But the thing I always loved about them is that I may not have wanted to hear what they had to say, if it was particularly critical, but it motivated me because I never wanted to disappoint them. I never wanted to disappoint them. And I knew that if I gave them everything I had they would be that protective person for me and they would fight for me.

And it's so funny, I think some of you have written this in your things, and my children even laugh about it, my kids, Mackenzie and Kramer, you say, Mulkey, and then you all put in parentheses, who is brutally honest or honest to a fault.

Since when is honesty a fault? Since when is honesty a fault? I have never ever turned anybody down for an interview. I have never lied to anybody in this room. What you see with me is what you get. And I guess it's my personality. I guess it's who I played for. It's like why am I intense and some coaches aren't. That doesn't make me a better coach than those that aren't. It's just who you are. There's a realness to me.

Bernice Mosby, I don't know if you followed her career, she said it best. She said, Coach, you've got everybody fooled that doesn't know you. And I told her, Shut up and keep it that way. She said, You are nothing like what people think. And I said, I don't want those people that aren't in that locker room or those people that don't know me to know any different. It gives me my competitive edge.

Those kids play hard for me. Those kids laugh with me. They cry with me. Melissa Jones, I can get emotional still talking about that kid. It's just real. And it happened long ago, and I have two of my own children, I have Mackenzie and Kramer, be real with these kids. Get in their face when they need to be gotten on. Hug them when they need to be hugged.

I hope I've given you the best answer I can give.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.
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