

March 12, 2011



Baylor – 61
Texas A&M – 58

An Interview With:

**TEXAS A&M
COACH GARY BLAIR
DANIELLE ADAMS
SYDNEY COLSON
SYDNEY CARTER**

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by the Texas A&M Aggies and coach Gary Blair and the three student-athletes, Danielle Adams, Sydney Colson and Sydney Carter. Coach, your thoughts about this afternoon's game.

COACH BLAIR: Great college basketball game. You can see why the Big 12 is like it is now. It's going to get harder when we go to 10.

The pace of the game was in our favor. We did a pretty good job on Odyssey. We were up 10-0 to start the game and running transition, forcing turnovers, and even then we missed a number of opportunities just on transition baskets, but we've missed them all year. So that doesn't bother us.

We're going to force turnovers, we didn't take advantage of Odyssey when she went to the bench, and they were able to hold with us until the halftime. We get 19 more shots than them. We get three more free throws. We get outrebounded by 14 because we don't make the commitment to rebound defensively with five people.

That's been a problem all year. We have to defensive rebound with five, like Colson did yesterday to get eight boards.

They're very good at the 3, 4 and 5 on offensive boards. But, folks, this is what Baylor and A&M have done for the last two years, every game has been just like this. Isn't it something?

People won't tune into women's basketball because they think it's like watching paint dry, and that's what you've got, a lot of male egos across the country and you've got 18,000 fans over in the other building that will not come over to see. If they would dare to come over and see our even-play pickup against Baylor or us, they will see what women's basketball at the highest level is all about, because that was as good of a game as you could see.

I appreciate the media, because you're here, not because they assign you, because you want to be here, and that's where the game has changed, because the media has been so good to women's basketball in the last few years. And we're going to continue to grow. Continue to grow.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Danielle, two questions for you: One, the last shot. Just talk about the look you had. You guys needed three, and there you were.

DANIELLE ADAMS: I thought it was going in, when it went out of my hands. I guess it hit the front of the rim and then the back and then just came out. But I thought it looked good when I put it up.

Q. Looked like the start of the second half you guys were kind of trying to get back into your hands. And, boy, you had four or five just off the glass, off the rim. How frustrating was that? Was that a little bit of Griner? Just talk about the first four, five minutes of the second half.

DANIELLE ADAMS: It wasn't Griner. It wasn't frustration. It was just I was missing easy shots. And I made the hard ones. So that's how I put it. I missed the easy ones and made the hard shots.

Q. Sydney Colson and Sydney Carter,

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could you talk about the 3-point shots today, your problems, and do you think you settled too much maybe for 3-pointers?

SYDNEY COLSON: I think there were just some of them, like when I was coming off high screens some were rushed and we probably could have got better looks. Other ones they were run off our sets in half court offense. There were looks we knocked down yesterday in the first game when we played Texas, and some of the shots just weren't falling.

So then we started trying to do some other things. But as far as 3-point shots go, I think some of them could have been taken back. We wish we had those back. But the other ones are shots we take within the offense, and we just happened to miss them.

SYDNEY CARTER: Just going off what she said, I think that at the end of the game I think I did kind of rush a couple of the shots and it was a bad shot selection.

And that's just something I've got to learn from and just get over and make sure that it doesn't happen the next time in another big game.

But overall I just don't think that our shots were falling. Most of them were good shots. We just weren't hitting them.

Q. Sydney Colson, I know you guys would never make this excuse, I'm not asking you to, but you're almost never going to have a turnaround quite like this and you won't have it the NCAA Tournament no matter what happens of playing the late game yesterday and having an 11:00 game in the morning. Did you feel maybe just when you see a shooting percentage like this, maybe a little bit of tired legs at all?

SYDNEY COLSON: I don't even think so. Like Danielle was saying, like for her, she was missing some of the easy ones and not making hard ones. For layups and stuff I don't think you can blame it on legs. Maybe some of our far shots. But I think when we get ready for a big game, you know, we get our adrenalin going and stuff and like our conditioning doesn't really come into play. We do such a good job throughout the year of being in shape and being able to run on people that our conditioning, you know, last year when we played the tournament we played three games in three days and we were just fine.

So I don't think it's our conditioning. But maybe on a few of the shots it was a combination

of some legs maybe, and then just forced shots, too. But you're right, we wouldn't use that excuse.

Q. Danielle, you've lost three close games to them. How tough has that been for you all, and what do you think? Is there a common denominator there as far as why?

DANIELLE ADAMS: I mean, it's real tough for us to lose three to Baylor. That's just like us having three wins against Texas. I mean, it's no difference.

I mean, we played Baylor in other close games where other teams are getting blown out by them. Once Baylor plays us, we play so aggressive. They always acknowledge our aggressive defense.

I mean, it's just two great teams playing each other, and today was a great game. We put our hearts out on the floor tonight and gave all our effort.

Q. Sydneys and Danielle, yesterday you talked about having that -- I think you said 11 -- I think it was a nine-point lead over Baylor the last time you played them. When you got off to that 12-0 lead, were you thinking about that at all, that, hey, we've done this before against these guys but they came back?

SYDNEY COLSON: We weren't thinking about the previous game. We were thinking we needed to keep doing what got us the lead, and that was getting steals, helping each other out on defense, and giving help stealing from one another when people are penetrated.

And we stopped doing what was working for us. We started settling for 3s we weren't knocking down and some jump shots we weren't hitting. And I think most of the turnovers we forced, I think they had 11 in the first half or something or nine, and then that was in like the first few minutes, then we didn't get any for the rest of the half.

When Odyssey went out we didn't press their guards like we should have and made them create more. But we really should have taken advantage when she was out of the game and when we had a chance to go inside in the tech more and take the guards off, but we didn't do that.

Q. Danielle, can you talk about Griner, took over from the middle of the first half to the middle of the second half. Could you talk

about having to go up against her again?

DANIELLE ADAMS: She's just a great player. Her length is just so amazing to me. I think this is the only 6'8" player that I've seen that can actually play. She's physical down low. She's physical down low. She's a great player. That's all I can say about her.

Q. Danielle, the fact that you guys have played Baylor, a team that everybody thinks will be a No. 1 seed and a national championship contender, you've played them right down to the end three times now. How much confidence does this give you guys going into the NCAA Tournament?

SYDNEY CARTER: Well, just like you said, we've played them down to the wire every single time. So we know that if they can get there, we definitely can, because we're on the same level as them.

And it's nice to just mention us, you know, with a team like Baylor and all the other teams that are seen as national championship contenders. So we've just got to make sure that we play our game every game and that we come out here with the same intensity that we came in this tournament with.

And if we do that, we'll definitely get there.

DANIELLE ADAMS: I mean, it gives us a lot of confidence, just we're playing a No. 1 seed that's going to be in the tournament. Just gives us a lot of confidence and making it the Final Four and national championship game.

Like Syd said, we're just playing them down to the wire, and just us being mentioned as a national championship contender has given us all the confidence in the world and we just need to keep our focus and keep playing aggressive like we always do.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Questions for Coach.

Q. Gary, I obviously didn't get a chance to see the other games that you played against Baylor. Did you try to do anything different today against Griner one way or the other than you did the other two times?

COACH BLAIR: We ran a couple of spreads, shots to get Elonu the shot over in the corner. She hit the first one and then missed about six others that were wide open.

But other than that, that's just a tough shot. I wouldn't trade any of those shots Elonu had. I told her if she gets any offensive rebounds, take it

out, because she's not going to get the call and Griner's going to block it.

Q. Anything different on the other end, on defense as to how to play her?

COACH BLAIR: No, we just get after it. What works for us is pressure. We played -- Karla gave us some good quality minutes in there. Danielle was guarding her pretty well. But if you have better ball pressure, then the lob is harder to get to Griner. And a couple times that happened with Danielle. Their 4 player was able to make the pass very easy because we did not have enough pressure on the 4.

And they were able to get the ball in that way. I thought we did an outstanding job defensively on the guards, particularly Odyssey. But no changes. If it's been working and it gets us down to the last possession or two, you keep thinking things are going to change and finally go our way.

But when they go our way, we're going to have to make shots down the stretch, because we're not going to get the 50/50 calls, as you noticed.

So we're going to have to make shots, and you shoot 29 percent, that was the difference in the ballgame.

Q. What about that last play, didn't take a time-out, just figured you had a better chance for 3 in transition and that you wanted Danielle to take it?

COACH BLAIR: Exactly, we wanted any of our three guards over there to take it or Tyra to take it. We had no set play. I couldn't believe she missed the free throw and I couldn't believe that Melissa Jones didn't get the rebound.

But we got it. We felt like sometimes you can over-coach kids, and transition, let them go. I could have called some real cute play and looked real dumb if it didn't work and looked real smart if it did. But there was no play. We made the right pass. And that's -- a 23-footer to Danielle is just like a 19 to anybody else.

She had the look. We'll take it all day long.

Q. Danielle talked about staying focused and aggressive and Colson -- not Colson, Carter came out aggressive with her defensive prowess, especially the first five minutes. Talk about her defense and how that

spurred you guys. She had fire in her eyes.

COACH BLAIR: Carter is just a winner. The bottom line, she wasn't on the All-Tournament team. I don't know if you guys were voting or what, but my gosh. She's pretty damn good. And if she's the heart and soul of my team and guarding everybody else, where was your all's vote. I'd like to ask y'all.

But Carter is a hell of a player for what she does away from the ball with everything that she does on the court. Throw stats out the windows. Okay? Look at how do you play the game.

Melissa Jones knows how to play the game. A lot of other people have talent and they score. They rebound. They run fast. They make fancy passes. There isn't a coach in America that wouldn't trade for Melissa Jones or Sydney Carter, because those are the kids that know how to play the game. And that's what coaches -- we look for and we try to teach.

Q. Gary, just looking ahead, can you just talk about selections tomorrow night? You feel so good about a 2 seed and --

COACH BLAIR: We'll be a 2 seed. I've said it for four years. And this will be the fourth year we'll be a 2 again. And we're proud to be a 2. Maybe the first time in NCAA. I don't know the stats. I know it's the first time Big 12, four straight No. 2 seeds. How did Stanford and UCLA come out today? Haven't started.

I think we're a 2. Where we go, it doesn't matter. We haven't gotten any favors the last couple of years, because the two subregionals we played at Notre Dame two years ago at their home court, they got upset. We played Minnesota, won easy. And last year we had to go to Seattle, play basically in Gonzaga's home court. That wasn't easy. Wichita, Albuquerque and Shreveport, I hope one of the three.

I hope one of the teams in there are the easiest ones I could possibly find. It doesn't matter because they're all going to be good. I really think there's only a few teams that could win the national championship. But I think there's almost 20 teams that could get to the Final Four. You gotta have breaks. You gotta have upsets.

The year in '98, when we came to the Final Four here, the 1 seed got beat by the 16 and we ran the gamut and got here. Didn't stay long. But faced Tennessee. That's why I think that there's maybe 16 teams that could get to the Final Four. But those four No. 1 seeds, they all deserve it.

Q. Gary, if you're a 2 seed, I'm guessing they would probably keep you away, but would you want to go to Dallas?

COACH BLAIR: If we would have won this ballgame today we still would be a No. 2 seed because Baylor had earned it and I would have wanted to go to Dallas because we would have had the confidence we had beaten Baylor. I don't want to just beat them in the trivia game, I want to beat them on the court. I was pretty good in that trivia game, by the way.

But what I'm saying, would the committee have done that? No, they wouldn't have. But we're so familiar with each other, I would have taken my chance one more time. I mean, I might be a fool, but the game preparation wouldn't change. Kim's wouldn't change for us. Our fans could have gone. I would have liked to have moved this game to Dallas and played it. We would have a sell-out. But Tennessee's playing awfully well right now. But point-wise, they don't have near the RPI, I think, that even Duke has. Duke will probably, with their ten wins against top 25, will probably be the No. 1 2 seed, and we should be the No. 2 2 seed, and Xavier, Notre Dame or UCLA will be the others. So you pick your four. I gave you five.

Q. I was going to ask you to comment on that a little bit. Both in today's game where obviously there was, let's be blunt, a pretty disappointing crowd out there, and just the weekend as a whole, what you thought how you thought things went here in KC?

COACH BLAIR: I really believe men's basketball, this is a great venue for men's basketball for the tournament, mainly for KU, Missouri and K-State. And you always have one of those three in the finals. But for the women, I'm not sure it is. But we're treated great. Everything is first class. I love coming here, and it's a neutral site. Why is it a neutral site? So unless you're playing Iowa State, which would bring the whole state down, it's a neutral site.

And I think Baylor had a few more fans than we had, but we had our largest contingent that we've ever had here, but it's still not enough, because Texas didn't bring people, look at the crowd last night in the men's game. How many Longhorns were there? Not very many. We had more Aggies than Longhorns, that's the first time ever.

And Baylor for their men's teams, Texas Tech for theirs, I don't know the answer. It's better for the men than it is for the women. If we go to Oklahoma City, it's better for OU.

But the crowds would be better because the state of Oklahoma will support high school basketball perhaps better than what they're doing here. Where are all the high school teams? I know there's a state tournament going on, but junior highs and all of that, okay. That's what we've got to get if we're going to be a girl's basketball power here.

Q. Flash forward now, it will be here the next two years, but then in '14 there's talk that it might move up a week later because the NCAA women are going to go a week after the men's. So that --

COACH BLAIR: That should help.

Q. You could be anywhere. You don't have to be tied to the men's tournament.

COACH BLAIR: I think we should go a week later. They're all worried about the Masters. But we play basketball at night, the majority of the time. The Masters is played during the day. And I think it's a great chance for us to try something.

Don't be afraid. Don't piggyback on the men. Go get your own crowd, get your own following, and who knows, because when the men's Final Four is over, as fans, as coaches, we live for it. And the women's Final Four is great, too, that's the only time that we'll pack a 18,000-seat arena, but if it went that next week we might be packing the regional arenas because the men's Final Four I think is usually on a Monday night. Is that right? And we could do the Saturday/Sunday and we could have that whole weekend.

So let's try something, because we have to grow our game. And what's happening across the nation, the top 30 teams are drawing. The 280 teams behind them are not drawing. That has not changed since I've been in the game. Somehow we got to increase those others. The top 30 are having great attendance, and we had our largest attendance ever this year, our fans really came out. We averaged almost 8,000 in conference play, and I think 6,100 for the year. And that's huge. Normally they're waiting around for spring football to start. But they were there.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much.

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