

March 8, 2011



Texas – 79
Missouri – 66

An Interview With:

**MISSOURI
COACH ROBIN PINGETON
RAESHARA BROWN
SHAKARA JONES**

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by the Tigers from Missouri. Coach, your comments about this evening's game.

COACH PINGETON: Last games are always tough. A lot of emotion in our locker room right now. But, first of all, congrats to Gail and the Texas team. I thought they played real well, shot the ball real well tonight.

They're an outstanding team. They've got some tremendous perimeter players. And I've got a lot of respect for them. We knew it was going to be a battle this time of year, new season. It always is but I'm proud of our girls. I really am. I think our seniors have been outstanding this year.

The leadership, the foundation that they've helped us lay for the future of our program, and, you know, we finished what we started. And I thought we went down fighting and working hard. And together. And that's something that I think these girls can be really proud of.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for our student-athletes.

Q. Rae, let's talk about the emotion of the game. I saw more frustration in your face through the course of the second half than I think I ever have. It looked like just you were having a real difficult time of it. Talk about what was going on at that point.

RAESHARA BROWN: When you're talking potentially the last game of my season and you want it so bad and you know how important every possession is, and it's -- it's disappointing because you can't get those back.

I always want to do more for these girls in the locker room. I put such a heavy weight on my shoulders, whether I'm making a mistake or thinking I can do something better. And these girls have done a tremendous job of having my back and helping me out through the course of this year. And you just want it so bad.

And I think that was more my feelings throughout the game.

Q. Shak, let me have you talk about the same thing, the frustration of the second half, because you guys were pulling closer and they're pulling away again.

SHAKARA JONES: It's kind of like Rae said, when this could potentially be the last game of your college career, and you want everything. You want every loose ball, you want every rebound and every shot to go in, just those type of emotions.

I wouldn't just say all the way frustrated, I would say more of just fighting out there, fighting for everything.

Q. Either of you, what kind of changed defensively. I know you fell behind 32-15 and seemed like you guys finally found that defensive energy, maybe you guys would have hoped to from the start. What kind of changed at that point?

RAESHARA BROWN: I think we just decided to play a little harder. We were I think a little timid, a little soft with our own ball defensive. I think in the second half Coach challenged us to dig in deeper and give it everything we had.

And we were more determined that they weren't going to beat us one-on-one. We weren't going to keep giving them uncontested layups.

And as we made a little run, we were getting defensive stops and making them take tough shots.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, ladies. Questions for Coach.

Q. Could you just talk about Flores's toughness? I mean, late in the second half, if memory serves, she hit the deck hard. She obviously looked like when she was in pain she was getting up, but she was able to get back and keep playing.

COACH PINGETON: I've seen so much growth in her throughout the last 10 or 11 months, and that's a kid that's actually thrown up at halftime and comes out and continues to compete pretty hard in the second half.

I think part of it, she's still starting to understand really how much she can impact the game at both ends for us. And it's not uncommon to see her on the floor for loose balls and making those effort plays.

And I think pretty consistently she had a couple of games after she hurt her finger kind of in the middle of the season. But I think consistently I can say she's been one of our hardest workers this year and not afraid to make those hustle plays and extra-effort plays.

I thought she did it again tonight. I think she was a great player. I think she can score from the inside, has the ability to step away from the basket. Defends well. Changes shots. Pretty versatile for her size.

But somebody that will certainly be an anchor for us next season.

Q. Could you talk about RaeShara, just the fact that she seemed to kind of do everything for this team this year?

COACH PINGETON: Well, it's hard to talk about our seniors without having some emotion, just because you know where our program's at and really where this team was at 11 months ago.

And I think when you're a new staff and you're a senior it's so hard, and the buy-in from that senior class has just been outstanding. And consistently for the last 11 months they've done everything we've asked of them.

And a lot of it was they didn't know what they didn't know and maybe never been challenged at this level before for one reason or another.

But the season's gone so fast. It really has. That's a pretty unique statement to be able to

make when you haven't won at the level that you're used to winning or would like to win at. And a lot of times it drags out a little bit. But it really hasn't. This season's flown by and it's because of our senior class. And Rae's been a big part of that.

She's such a strong leader and a great player. And still until the final horn sound wanted to be the best she could be for her teammates and for Missouri women's basketball.

And I think it's pretty admirable, a player like her, with her abilities, to continue to be a sponge day in and day out and just trying to get better on the court, off the court, with her leadership style.

And she certainly -- they all have, they've surpassed my expectations. Am I satisfied, absolutely not. But they've certainly surpassed my expectations.

When you look at this group, when you look at the lack of experience and depth and maybe skill level that we had and for us to be able to beat three top 25 programs this year, and early on I think we had the reputation that we kind of quit at the end of games.

And just the growth that we've had has been -- it's been pretty amazing and fun to be a part of. At the end of the day winning's important and I'm a bad, bad loser, but at the end of the day it's so much bigger than that.

And these girls have grown, and I'm proud of it and happy to be a part of it.

Q. I wanted to ask you about the game, three, four minutes into the second half, it was an eight-point game, you guys had a layup that just hung on the rim, they come down and hit a 3. Instead of it being six it's 11. How big a stretch was that?

COACH PINGETON: Huge. There were a couple of huge plays like that in the second half that we found a way to keep battling back and giving ourselves a chance.

But give Texas credit. They hit some tough shots. Hit some big shots when they needed to. They're a talented ball club. Nash does what she does, knocked down 3s on us. And just a tremendous player. And they've got some very skilled perimeter players.

And so frustrating on our end, but, really, I think you've got to give Texas some credit, because Gail's done a tremendous job with that program. And they hit big shots when they needed

to.

Q. Doing some big picture stuff here, I'm sure when the season started you did not come into this and go, wow, I sure hope we come out of this with five wins. That aside, it still sounds like you were very pleased with the amount of progress that's been made toward the ultimate goal. How much do you think you've taken towards where you want the program to be in this first year and is it as much as you wanted to get out of your first year?

COACH PINGETON: Well, you've gotten to know me pretty well over the past couple of months, because I certainly didn't go into this season thinking five wins would be great.

Losing's hard. There's no doubt about it. And when you're in the trenches with your players and really trying to help them grow on and off the court, and you face the adversity that we faced this year, which was the challenging times. There's not an easy day. But that's the cool thing about what we do. There's so many teachable moments.

And like I said, you know, in the big picture that's what's most important. And I think there's so much that happened in that locker room and on that court and individually and collectively that people on the outside, they wouldn't have any idea. And they shouldn't. They watch us play the game and it's Xs and Os and a scoreboard.

That's been neat to be a part of. And it's laying the foundation, and you've got to do that. It was the same at Illinois State seven years ago. There's a certain way. There's certain standards, there's certain expectations that you place on your team.

And I think the groundwork that we've laid and that these seniors have laid, there's no doubt in my mind it's going to be so beneficial for years to come. And one day down the road hopefully within the next couple of years we're going to look back and say this is a class that laid that foundation. And I am proud of them.

And, again, I'm a bad loser. But I think when you're in this position and in the trenches that we're in, I think you've really got to -- you've got to take time to acknowledge those small victories, and we've certainly had some big ones this year.

Q. You had some struggles defensively there especially early. Do you think maybe

your team came out a little flat or was it something else?

COACH PINGETON: Absolutely I don't think it was flat. I'm going to give our girls more credit than that. I think there's -- just throughout this season it's been amazing. Probably more emotion than usual just because of so many changes that took place in this team individually and collectively. But maybe it locked up a little bit. Maybe afraid of failure, afraid of this being it, the last game that they play.

I think more of those emotions than anything. There's a fine line, and our girls are still learning that between playing to win and playing not to lose. And that's just not something that changes with the flick of a switch. That's a mindset. That's a mentality. That's a mental toughness that it takes a lot of time to continue to grow in that area.

So I don't think it was flat. I think it was more just maybe just having it right between the ears and playing not to lose and maybe a little tight rather than just letting it all hang out and saying, hey, let's just put it out there and whatever happens, happens.

Part of that, again, I'm going to tell you Texas is a good team. They're a bubble team. Out of the gates they were shooting about 80 percent. They didn't miss a lot of shots early on in the game. In the first half they shot over 57 percent. They were hitting some good shots, so we have to give them credit, too.

Q. And after that early stretch, what did you kind of say to the team to maybe challenge them? I know Texas was lights out, but seemed like the defense was uncharacteristic in the sense that maybe not closing out as well and they were blowing by you guys one-on-one. What did you kind of do to challenge them?

COACH PINGETON: Well, they've been so resilient all year long. And it's constantly getting them to understand that there's more in their tank. They can play harder. At halftime I just said there's absolutely no doubt we can play harder, we can guard harder, we can contain. We have to roll up our sleeves and dig in and really just try to get to the innards, and they're still trying to understand what it is to be successful.

We haven't had success. They've had very little success for the last few years, and so

they're still understanding what that takes. Have we grown? Yes. But does it happen overnight? No. So it's a constant battle to get at the innards and really challenge them to dig deeper and play harder.

Q. Did it ultimately seem you guys were playing catch-up the whole game after that stretch? Did it ultimately seem that one run was ultimately what kind of tilted the game?

COACH PINGETON: I thought -- again, I was proud of our girls. I thought we could have thrown in the towel, and we didn't. We kept making some runs in the second half.

Again, credit Texas. They hit some big shots, and every time we made that run they responded. And that's what good teams do. That's what experienced players do. That's what great players do. And they certainly did that.

So we had fight in us. I thought we fought. We competed until the end. You saw players on the floor for loose balls and whatnot. Yeah, the better team won today. It's the bottom line: The better team won.

We've got a lot of work to do. We have a lot of work that has to take place in the off season and a lot of growth that has to continue to take place, and we're excited about the challenges ahead. I can't tell you, me and my staff, we're ecstatic about just the challenges and the opportunities that we have for the future of this program.

Q. Rae really came out in that second half, all over the court. How did her play set the tone for the rest of the team in the second half?

COACH PINGETON: You can only do so much. She's a veteran ball player, she's played a lot of minutes, she leads the conference in steals. She's been where some of our other players haven't been in regards to these kind of situations. And so she wasn't going to go down without a fight.

And I think you alluded to this earlier, just the emotions, the frustration that she was playing with. I think there's a lot of things that went into that. You know, it's hard when you're a senior and you've really -- the buy-in's there and your passion about the game, and I think you've seen so much individual growth in yourself.

A lot plays into that. But she's been our anchor all year long, and she's done a lot of great

things for us on both ends of the court. She had a tremendous career.

I think this year she's been a tremendous leader. And she's someone that we're going to remember in our program for a long, long time, along with the rest of the seniors.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports



...when all is said, we're done.®

visit our archives at asapsports.com