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An Interview with:

COACH MULKEY BRITTNEY GRINER MELISSA JONES

THE MODERATOR: We are now being joined by the Lady Bears and Coach Kim Mulkey. Her two student-athletes Melissa Jones and Brittney Griner have joined us also. Coach, your thoughts about this afternoon's games. Okay, we'll just take questions for our student-athletes.

Q. MJ, first minute of the game, I think you had a three, a rebound, a steal. Did you feel like your old self out there?

MELISSA JONES: It felt great to get on the floor and play with the team. I think we were well prepared going into this game. Just everyone's mentality and just mentally prepared.

Q. How much better is your eye? Is it better at all?

MELISSA JONES: Actually, yes. I can see that there's like light. I don't know. It's still dark, but I can tell that there's light, if that makes sense?

COACH MULKEY: I do want to say something. Everybody in this room disclosure right eye. Disclosure right eye, not your left eye. And try to write on that pad of paper. Some of you can't write with two eyes, now try to do it with one eye. Can you believe what you just saw out of that kid today?

She hits the first three of the game, she gets rebounds, that's the story of the game. She can't see. She's gone from completely black seven days later to fuzzy black. And today she's a little

Catholic girl. It's Ash Wednesday, she'll be at mass at 5:15. She said Coach, I can see light. If I'm headed toward a light, I can see something bright. I don't even know if I described what I witnessed that kid doing today.

So that's what I want to say about Melissa Jones. That's unbelievable. I'm sorry to interrupt. Go ahead. Keep that right eye closed though.

Q. Brittney, it just seemed like today you guys had everything clicking really well. Even though you had this game in hand, I saw a lot of effort out there. It wasn't like your effort even let up. And I know you guys have really focused on that, and can you talk about how important that is in March to have every single possession effort?

BRITTNEY GRINER: Well, Coach always tells us never take a possession off, and today I don't think we did. Our intensity in the first half was amazing. It wasn't in spurts, it was all the way through. I thought with MJ knocking down those threes and getting us ready, just out there high fiving and chest bumping. So we were just -- we really raised it together.

Q. Brittney, late in the game you and destiny had a little fast break with her leaving the break. Talk about that play and were you thinking maybe a dunk on that?

BRITTNEY GRINER: I was definitely thinking maybe a dunk. I saw one person back, me and destiny out. I remember looking at it, she glanced over at me and I pointed up. She gave it to me good. Couldn't dunk it, so I definitely was thinking about banking it.

Q. Was it in the back of your mind that Kansas might want to come in here and get revenge since you guys had a lopsided victory over them over the year?

BRITTNEY GRINER: We really, you know, didn't think about that first game. We just

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came out like it was the first game we played against them. We just knew we had to come out and jump out ahead and keep strong. You know, when the team jumps on you hard in the beginning, and that's what we were trying to do is get out and have intensity and just not give up.

MELISSA JONES: Kansas is a great basketball team, so everyone possession we had, something good was going for us. We never stopped trying. Their effort was just outstanding. They have great athletes out there. They're very prepared going in. They're a good team. Just a couple good things going for us.

Q. I know it's hard to explain because it's hard for us to even imagine what you're seeing now. But the thing I'm even more impressed about than your shooting is you kept your rebounding totals up, and I know peripheral vision has to be part of rebounding along with instinct. Can you just talk about do you feel like just as stronger rebounder? Do you know where the ball's coming even though that part of your vision isn't anywhere near what it usually is?

MELISSA JONES: It is a bit awkward. I almost feel like I'm catching with my chest. I can't like quite catch it sometimes. But a lot of it is muscle memory. I still know where to go to get a rebound or something like that. So I can still read that, it's just I guess a little bit difficult to still visually see what exactly I need to.

Q. You might have addressed this in previous games. But how do the glasses aid at this point right now?

MELISSA JONES: The glasses are just primarily for my good eye, so heaven forbid something happen to that one, then I would be out of luck entirely. So it's just for protection for my good eye to make sure I don't get a poke or something scratched or something.

Q. Do you think she looks cool in the glasses?

BRITTNEY GRINER: Definitely, I think we all should get a pair. Same effort out there, you know.

Q. You've tried to put this into words before, but Jones really is a pretty amazing competitor. I wonder if you can kind of talk about how no matter what sort of obstacles she's faced -- I look at her numbers today, 8.7

assists, nine rebounds, how she's able to do things?

COACH MULKEY: I don't know how you do it. I catch myself driving down the street, closing my eye. I'm other thinking how is this kid doing this? I just think it's the make-up of her personality that, okay, I've been giving this little obstacle. I've been given the blessing that they tell me my sight is going to come back.

I can either choose to feel sorry for myself or say, Coach, I'll give everything I have. Just don't let me embarrass myself. If you see I can't help the team, just get me off the floor. That's kind of the agreement I've had watching games yesterday. I still hadn't made my mind up if I was going to play her. Because truthfully, win or lose this tournament, there is a bigger picture for our basketball team.

Yet, as I talked to her, it wasn't begging me to play or anything like that. She said, "I'm like you, Coach. I have mixed emotions, but if I do play, just don't let me be taking away from somebody else that could be doing it better." That is kind of the agreement. Watch her, observe her, get her off the floor if she's not helping on our basketball team. Well, I don't think I could get her off the floor today.

That's just an unbelievable story. It is ten days now that she's not been able to see. Each little thing that happens, a change, it's like we all start hugging each other. While we are very confident in what the neuroophthalmologist and many specialists have said that her vision will be back, not probably, not maybe. We believe them. But until you see progress, you just kind of have your stomach stay in knots.

So this morning when she woke up, she said she can see some light. She still can't see out of it, but she knows when the light is close to her eye. That's telling the optic nerve signals to the brain, the brain back to the optic nerve. That's all we want. That's good news. And time, like with anything in life, time is going to heal her eye. What a competitor.

Q. Destiny looked aggressive shooting the ball today?

COACH MULKEY: Destiny had one of her greater games. I didn't realize Destiny, Griner and MJ could have had double-doubles. I wanted to get them off the floor. Get them off the floor as quickly as possible, rest tomorrow, come back on

Friday and Saturday.

So, you know it was just I saw an intense basketball team that took that floor for Baylor. If they can do that a couple more days in the tournament, I feel good about our chances of winning it. Who knows, it's a basketball team that is so talented, but when that intensity matches their talent, it's special.

I thought our defense, how many shot clock violations, how many hurried shots did they have? How many contested shots did they make? The tone was set with Melissa Jones, but it was set on the defensive end of the floor very early in the first game.

Q. Coach, is there an added excitement for you and the team that has that atmosphere and how it changes this part of the season?

COACH MULKEY: I think it is for those players from last year that experienced it. But like Odyssey Sims, she's in there freaking out because she has to stay in the locker room for 30 minutes. What? The new rules with the media coming in. They've got excitement in there too. They don't know. They've never experienced some of this. And the ones that have experienced it have only done it for a year, other than Melissa Jones. They're excited.

They're basketball junkies. Some want to go to the men's game tonight. Some want to come back over here, and as long as they're watching basketball. I love it.

Q. Considering what you just said about MJ and your admiration for her, there was a moment late in the first half where she faked out a KU defender and it went up a three. Went in and turned to the crowd a little bit, shook your head and smiled. What was going through your head?

COACH MULKEY: That am I really witnessing a kid that ten days ago had two good eyes and she's putting on a performance like this with one eye. I don't know that any of us could expect that in athletics. I knew that she would compete, but to make shots, to get rebounds, to guard people and really, truthfully, look out there and it's almost like you didn't know it.

If you didn't know it and you were watching her play, you wouldn't know it. I just couldn't -- I still can't imagine that kid playing as well as she did today. I teased her after the game, as I said earlier. She's a little Catholic girl. She just smiles from ear to ear all the time, but she's human like all

of us. She's had her moments and her breakdowns within all of this. That's why you stay with her, and keep encouraging her, and her mother keeps encouraging her. She is everything a coach dreams of coaching.

I've said this many times and I'll say it again, if I'm a WNBA scout, I've got to give Melissa Jones a look. Now I'm saying that, and I've got a 6'8" kid that's a phenom. I'm saying that, and I've got a point guard that's a phenom. Melissa Jones is our glue. Melissa Jones' presence on the floor makes us better. I'll say that to any coach.

I was so glad she was rewarded with being all Big 12, because every coach in America should have the pleasure of coaching a Melissa Jones.

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