



**2015 NCAA
WOMEN'S
CHAMPIONSHIP**

**DIVISION I
BASKETBALL**

First Round · UALR vs. Texas A&M
Wells Fargo Arena · Tempe, Arizona
Saturday, March 21

PRACTICE DAY PRESS CONFERENCE – Texas A&M

COACH BLAIR: It's good to be here. I had a chance to walk around the wall of fame and Hall of Fame in the concourse, and just see some great names. A lot of you do not have a clue who Oda Mae McDowell is or Barry Bonds played here, Phil Mickelson, or JoAnne Carner, the great golfer. But there are just so many great athletes and so many sports that have played here at Arizona State. This is my first time here. Of course, I've been to Phoenix or Scottsdale, but it's good to be here. Arizona State has had a tremendous year. It didn't take her long to take that year off sabbatical. The rest of us could do that and have a year off and be assured that we'd have a job. When we got back, we'd all do it. But give a lot of credit for Charli, because she served our WBCA very well as president. We're looking forward to playing UALR. It's going to be a great match-up. We know what Coach Foley likes to do. He's a Bobby Knight disciple, so that means man-to-man defense. That means motion offense. That means execution. So we're just looking forward to the game tomorrow afternoon.

Q. Courtney Walker, talk about on film and scouting reports what you've learned about Arkansas Little Rock, and what do you feel are the top two challenges for you ladies?

COURTNEY WALKER: We noticed that they run their offense very efficiently. It's not like a set offense that they have to do. They run off of a lot of screens, so defending those off ball screens and cuts will be one of our biggest challenges defensively. Also, getting back in transition. They force a lot of turnovers and when they get those turnovers they're able to convert them. So just not turning the ball over in the first place will be a big thing for us so they can't get those easy baskets, and getting back in transition off of a make or a miss.

Q. Courtney Williams, could you talk about how your role changes when you have to run the point with Curtyce, you have run some point, but could you talk about how that changes your dynamics?

COURTNEY WILLIAMS: I don't think it changes my dynamics because I like to touch the ball anyway. I just pick my times when I need to pass the ball. If I have a teammate open I'm going to get them involved. If I need to score the ball, then that just comes with the flow of the game, having instincts and just probably rebounding a lot more, getting the ball, pushing it up, and that will make it easier to go in transition and make a play. So I don't think my role has really changed much. Just playing off of instincts, passing the ball and scoring.

Q. I guess for each of the players?

THE MODERATOR: We'll go with Courtney Walker, Courtney Williams and Achiri Ade.

Q. If you could talk about how this evening has gone for you and how you look at your team right now, and sort of describe your team a little bit for us that haven't seen it that much?

COURTNEY WALKER: We are -- how would you describe us? One of our, I guess, points is we have a lot of guard play that can be very active and we're very deep at the guard position. We also have a lot of players that can get us up and down the court.

COURTNEY WILLIAMS: I describe our team as probably sharing with the guards, sharing the point guard roles between me, Courtney and Curtyce, because we know we have to help Curtyce out, because Jordan was the starting point guard, and she was very vocal, more vocal than Curtyce. So at the guard position I say we have to share and distribute even on the wings and everything. So the fours can run the floor, make the rebound and play hard like they do. And the fives, I guess they just need to be big in there, especially against University of Arkansas at Little Rock, because their biggest player is about 6'1". So if they're going to be big in there, I guess they'll make it better for us because it will make it easy on us, because all we have to do is get the ball inside. I think we want to press more this year in NCAA tournaments.

ACHIRI ADE: I'd like to say even though we're a veteran team, we accept a lot of challenges and we've been through a lot of challenges a lot of people have to step up and accept new roles and things that they do. Just because we play one position doesn't mean you can't play other positions. With the five position we've really grown a lot in the five position since the beginning of the year. They've gotten better each game, each practice. We're a growing team. Every day we learn something new.

Q. Courtney Walker and Courtney Williams, what are your impressions of the guards of Arkansas Little Rock after watching them on film? What do you think of that match-up?

COURTNEY WALKER: Their guards do kind of different things. You have the point guard, number 10 that is a very good three-point shooter. She has a lot of range and runs the motion offense. Then you have number 24 who is really good at creating her shot, getting to the hole, and really good step back jumper, so she's the main scorer out of the three. Then you have number 32 who can get to the hole and drive, but she's also the leading assist player. So you have to try to press with the ball while she's looking the floor over. So college paired to us, you know, we also like our three guards that we have, so I think it's going to be a good match-up.

COURTNEY WILLIAMS: I would describe their guards as very different players. Like you said, they all do different things, so we really have to study the scouting report on the bus and in the hotel so we'll probably match up with different guards coming in transition. I might be on number 10 coming down in transition, and we have to stay on the man number 32.

So we just have to know the scouting report. I have to get number 10 up the line, and Curtyce will have to push the ball, because 32 is like a facilitator in and same thing for number 24. She can score, so we have to play good solid defense on her.

Q. Each of you played in an NCAA tournament previously. Can you just talk about how that experience comes into play when you get to this time of the year?

COURTNEY WALKER: I think that's a good thing because you know I could probably describe my freshman year as being very big time, which it is the biggest tournament of the year. I think far younger players and players that don't have as much experience, having these older players that have been here before and kind of a little more calm and not so much in awe

at the moment can help them relax on the floor. Also, the fact that we've been deep in this tournament and have people on our staff, coaches and former players who have won the whole thing before also helps us keep our head in it, keeps us focused and gives us good experience knowing exactly what we need to do to go far.

COURTNEY WILLIAMS: Us in the past having NCAA tournament experience is really good for us for a lot of the younger players like Khaalia, we have to tell her this is the regular game. It could be your last game, but you have to go out there and give it everything you have because you never know, this may be the end of your season and we don't want to have a short spring break. But I think last year we got to the Elite Eight. That really helps us out because we've seen what we need to do to beat the big teams like Connecticut, which we played in the Elite Eight. Me and Courtney's freshman year we played Nebraska. And we can't understate that team because Nebraska had a real good game against us. I think we're ready to play. Every team's going to be ready to play in the NCAA tournament, no matter who they play during the year in non-conference. I think for us, we just have to go out there and be very calm and play as hard as we can.

ACHIRI ADE: Having the experience, we know what it takes. We know we have to seize the moment. Not every NCAA Division I team makes it here. So we know each game you have to give it all you have, leave it on the floor, and most importantly have fun with it. That's basically it.

Q. Courtney Walker, Coach was talking about how you guys were getting on a roll and hitting a stride and Jordan Jones goes down. Where are you guys at in trying to get back to that point? Do you think you're close to the team you were when you went down or is that something you'll be chasing the rest of the year?

COURTNEY WALKER: I want to say we're a completely different team because we have all our players except for Jordan. But Curtyce is a different kind of point guard than Jordan. She can score. It's just what she can do. She's naturally very quick and has good defense just like Jordan.

But Jordan was more of a facilitating point guard. So that gives us a different feel as far as running our offense goes. But we still have been working on that since the SEC Tournament. We've had a lot of time to continue to get used to Curtyce at point. She's a great point guard, so we've been doing very well with that in practice. We just have to go out there and execute and keep the composure and do that just like we did in practice these past couple of weeks.

Q. This is for Courtney Walker, how do you think your play as changed?

COURTNEY WALKER: I think since we've both been running point guard, for Jordan, it's also a chemistry thing. Jordan kind of knew exactly where I'd be in transition and stuff like that. Just because we played longer. That's because we played longer. Curtyce is the point guard and she also can do the same thing that Jordan can, finding open people and reading the defense. So that would be the main difference, just more experience with Jordan. But I've also played the one time now that Curtyce is taking a break or something.

COURTNEY WILLIAMS: The biggest thing, I think is chemistry. Because she knows where everybody on the floor is going to be. We know at the end of the game if she needs a steal, she's going to get there. When she does get the steal, we know we're going to Leak out in

transition and go get an easy lay-up or something. But the biggest thing I think is transition. But I don't think my game has really changed because I just play off of instincts.

So, I mean being it's a little bit easier because Jordan knows that she can get me the ball anywhere and she can get Courtney Walker the ball anywhere. Curtyce, we look for her to score a little more and be a little less vocal. But I mean, she's vocal in her own way. She comes up to us and tells us you're not going to go in front of everybody, like Jordan does. But the biggest thing is chemistry. But I think we're getting that chemistry with Curtyce. Especially this last week in practice.

Q. You and I talked earlier this week about your past with Coach Foley. When you used to go, and you were at Arkansas and at Arkansas Tech, you'd watch him practice. What did you take from that? Are there still things that you take from some of those that you still use nowadays?

COACH BLAIR: He executes. He's a perfectionist. They just run the same drills over and over and over. A lot of times it's not five-on-five basketball, it's three on three basketball making sure the pin screens are good and everything. I'd like to know where Coach Foley was this morning. He missed the first meeting. Isn't that a \$10,000 fine by the NCAA? He's probably playing nine holes of golf and trying to get ready for my golf tournament.

What else I learned about Coach Foley is it's not about Coach Foley. It's about a team, it's about a we. He is the most low maintenance, great coach that there is. I mean, you're talking about a guy that most people around the country could not even tell you where UALR is or who Joe Foley is. But the coaches that know the game realize he's one of the best. He is one of the best at putting X's and O's together. She's always in the playoffs. I think you're going to see him there for a long time. As long as he stays there, UALR is always going to be in the playoffs.

Q. You heard your players talk about chemistry, trying to create chemistry. How do you create chemistry in such a short time period when you have to play two and a half games without Jordan?

COACH BLAIR: It's hard. That's why I avoided chemistry in college. I took biology. Didn't do too well there either. Chemistry, Jordan's not dead, okay first. Get that across. She's going to be back with us next year and have a chance to win Defensive Player of the Year for three times in a row, and that's never been done in the SEC. She's going to be leading from the bench and practice. She'll be in Curtyce's ear, but she'll also be in all of our ears, because she, even though she's not on the court, you've got to listen to your point guard. We might see the Xs and O's of it, but she feels it. She's always constantly coming up to me now while she's sitting over there with her crutches saying, hey, Coach you he need to stay in this a little longer or this. She is so good at acknowledging the game, and that is what a point guard is all about.

Now, Curtyce is learning. The chemistry, she's getting better at being able to take me. That is the most important thing. Can a point guard take a coach that is getting on her, because I always will get on the point guard harder than any other player out there on the court at all times because they're an extension of me. And she's learning to handle it a little bit better. She started in her safety net about always being behind Jordan. She started her senior year after Jordan graduates, and she was very comfortable with that. Now we're trying to get her out of that element and go on and take charge of this team.

Courtney Williams is doing a great job leadership-wise with her voice, because she knows the game very similar to Danielle Adams who played for us before. Danielle Adams knew everybody's position on every inbounds play, sideline play, the whole nine yards. Well, Courtney Williams is filling that role for us, and we want that voice to be heard. A lot of times we'll play Courtney Williams in four to five positions in this tournament because she's the kid that is a nightmare for match-ups. Particularly if she's at the point guard position. Because she's got the 6'1" size. She can take you down post-up, shoot the three or take you on the drive. So chemistry is coming along. But the best thing about chemistry is you start winning and the kids enjoy themselves, what a place to come during spring break. Right here. Your attitude is better all of a sudden. The sun is out. The kids are out having a good time. You feel good instead of going up to New York or Boston where it's snowing right now.

Q. Gary, going back to host sites for the regional sites instead of predetermined sites, what is the channel for your team? Can you play in the second round in Arizona State? What is the challenge of playing on someone's home court?

COACH BLAIR: We've hosted for three straight years because the NCAA knows we put butts in seats, and we've averaged 6500 for three straight years. We know how to host championships. Aggie sports supports winners and we've always been able to draw well even though that's our spring break weekend. I'm not sure where Arizona State is on their spring break. But Charli has done a good job. I think they average around 3,000 fans a game. But I'm sure for an NCAA tournament that should go up. It's better for the top 16 seeds. I was all for it because we were picked fourth or fifth in the nation to start the year. We also almost had a chance to host, but the NCAA I really believe in the committee room, even though Charlie Creme had us in bracketology for four straight weeks hosting. Even though we were going to be a 6 or a 7, it wasn't going to be fair to Louisville who was going to have to come in as a 2 or 3 and play in front of 6500 because the NCAA was using their facility for the men's regional. So you've got to feel a little for Louisville. Send them to South Florida where they might put a thousand in the stands. I think that had a lot to do with where somebody was going to go. I think we were going to Florida State first, Corvallis second, Arizona State third and we ended up here. I love it here.

Q. How much advantage do you feel since your team's been in the playoff, the NCAA tournament the last three years as compared to a team that hasn't been in the NCAA tournament last year?

COACH BLAIR: UALR has been in three out of the last five; is that correct? Four out of the last six. So there's no problem there. Joe has been there. Lot of times you're looking at the jockey, not the team. So I'm looking at Coach Foley, a veteran coach that knows the game, nothing upsets him. Nothing upsets him. So he'll have his team ready. The guards are SEC style guards. They can play in every league, particularly gulf. She's one that the rest of us, all in the SEC, well, in the Big 12 then, all missed out on. He did a good job of keeping her at home. She could play or start for most SEC teams. The little junior college kid, Dobbs, they just fit within his flow of the offense. To be able to take post players like he takes and say, hey, you're going to be a screener in my offense. Then you're going to go get offensive boards or we're going to give you your points on the scores, but your primary thing is you're going to be setting screens, like Bobby Knight set screens. We're not going to call -- you've got to have the right

type of mentality to come in here and say I'm going to play for UALR and I'm going to be a post player and I'm going to set screens. That is my number one job. Then I'm going to get the rebounds, I'm going to run the break, and I'm going to play good defense. You have to have the right person to do that. There is a whole lot of all SEC post players that wouldn't do that. They want the ball more often.

Q. What would you say was the biggest weakness for your team over the regular season that you'll be focusing on for the tournament?

COACH BLAIR: The biggest weakness? Well, I found out really quick when Jordan Jones went down five minutes to go in the first half she was more valuable than I was over there on the bench. When you take out the heart of your defense, because defense is created -- creates a lot of offense. You can take chances behind her. She had 37 charges already. Okay, because she's in your shorts. In particular, we were playing Little Rock, that 5'4" guard might not be able to see those wings getting open and the post setting the screens. That is how much pressure she could put on. So if that's how weakness, we've got to play team defense now instead of individual defense knowing that Jordan was going to bail you out. Weakness also is consistent scoring at the 5 position. We've got 6'5", 6'7", 6'3". It's like eenie meenie miney mo, whoever is playing. I keep them in there and the other two can come sit by me until we can get them ready. But we need consistency at the 5 position. But we knew that going into the year. They're young and experienced, okay? They just hadn't played that much. They're getting better. But the season is getting to an end. I've got to get better in a hurry.

Q. A lot of people might look at this and see it's 6 versus 11, and kind of label you guys as favorites. But you sound a little bit more cautious. Does that come from what you know about Joe and his program and whatnot?

COACH BLAIR: I think I was a mid-major student at Boston, when you look at the Middle Tennessees, the Green Bays, ourselves, the Gonzagas of the world, and a lot of schools that are like that -- I don't mean to leave anybody out -- their coaches are BCS coaches. They're just not playing in BCS leagues. That's why their programs are always winning at the highest level because their administration says I want the best coach. Some of those guys or girls never get a chance to get to the BCS level, but they're going to win consistently where they're at. Those programs are never going to lose, just like when I was a student at Boston and Louisiana Tech. They're going to win because of tradition and good coaching. I don't know if I answered that all the way, but I usually ramble anyway. So just throw some adjectives in there.

Q. You mentioned in your opening statement about Charli coming back from an absence. Do you see anything different from what you've seen of her team to be the same as what you've seen before or do you feel like just that you were able to take a step back and take a breath and all that?

COACH BLAIR: You have a great situation that happened in 2009. Correct me if I'm wrong. Were they the 6 or 11 seed? I think we were the 3 that year. Okay, we're up near Trenton, New Jersey, won our first two ballgames up in South Bend, I believe, beat Minnesota and then go up there. We're the higher seed. They had taken care of Florida State already. Is that right? And two good teams. She's got that type of team again, okay? Now, she might not have Briann January. We made Briann January a lot of money. Y'all shot 62% on us, we couldn't stop.

She was going to be drafted anywhere from 10 through 15, we made her a sixth round draft choice. And of course an Aggie helped choose her, because Kelly Krauskopf who is an A&M grad played. She's the general manager at the Indiana Fever. She tore us up. They did everything well in that ballgame. It wasn't so much that we played poorly. They played so good that was not a thing we could do. That is the trademark of Charli's teams. It's the we, not the I. It's not the head coach. It's the assistant coaches. It's the we factor, and that's why she's one of the best at getting it done. She might not get all the McDonald's All-Americans that go up to Stanford or sometimes the other Pac-12 schools. She's getting it done with players that fit within a system and give her a lot of credit. She could go to anyplace in this country, and you all are lucky to still have her here. She doesn't want to leave. She's like Sherri Coale. She doesn't want to leave Oklahoma. Mulkey doesn't want to leave Baylor. There may be more entertaining places than those three, but this is pretty entertaining right here. This is a good place.