



**2015 NCAA
WOMEN'S
CHAMPIONSHIP**

**DIVISION I
BASKETBALL**

Second Round · UALR vs. Arizona State
Wells Fargo Arena · Tempe, Arizona
Sunday, March 22

SUNDAY PRESS CONFERENCE QUOTES – UALR

JOE FOLEY: Well, we're glad to be here. Two more days of sunshine. It's been a lot of fun. Going to play against a great team. I think the crowd is going to get another great game. I think both teams are pretty evenly matched, and I think that they've got a lot of weapons. They score well. They've got a little bit bigger inside, but we're looking forward to the match-up and looking forward to play again, and like I say it's been a great trip for all of us and these three seniors, it's been pretty special. I'm not looking forward to it ending, but I'm enjoying what they're doing.

Q. Girls, for any one of you, what's your initial thoughts on Arizona State after watching some film last night and getting an initial kind of look at them so far?

KIERA CLARK: It's going to be a great match-up, I think. It's going to be an exciting game. We're looking forward to it.

KA'NESHEIA COBBINS: Like Kiera said, it should be a great game. We're really excited to be here. Like Coach Foley said, they have a bigger inside game than we do, so hopefully we can step up and do our best to guard that.

TAYLOR GAULT: Like they said, I think it'll be a pretty good match-up at the guard spot, but the bigs are a little bigger than us, but I think we can hang tough.

Q. For any one of you, how much tougher does it make it defensively when they don't necessarily have a go to player, when they kind of spread it around?

KIERA CLARK: That means that we just have to lock in and focus a little bit more, make sure that we help each other out.

KA'NESHEIA COBBINS: We have to have a lot of help defense. When you have a team like that who has multiple players who can do multiple things, that just makes our team defense have to dig down and get to it.

TAYLOR GAULT: Yeah, I think it'll just show us what we're made of defensively, considering that they have multiple threats. We just have to pull together as a team to play team defense.

Q. Taylor, it didn't seem like yesterday any of you guys were really afraid of the moment, the stage or the opponent or anything. Do you guys feel that you guys belong here in the round of 32, in the top-30 teams, and how much do you feel like you belong in this game and maybe even beyond?

TAYLOR GAULT: Yeah, I think we deserve it. We've worked so hard this season, and us being seniors, we're leaders on the court. We just know that we're not going to let each other down, and we know what it takes. With that being said, I know that we deserve to be here.

KIERA CLARK: Basically what Taylor said. I do believe that we deserve to be here, and it's a great experience.

KA'NESHEIA COBBINS: Like these two, I have so much faith in these two along with all my other teammates. You know, no, we're not afraid. We're the underdog, so we just have to step up to the plate.

Q. Taylor, what do you expect defensively from ASU's Promise Amukamara?

TAYLOR GAULT: I don't know who that is.

THE MODERATOR: No. 10.

TAYLOR GAULT: I really don't know. I think she's a good shooter, but I think we can defend her, whatever she does.

Q. Kiera, I talked to you last week about your feelings about being back in the rotation after being in and out all year, and especially after yesterday, how are you feeling confidence-wise, just being back in a role that you're probably more comfortable with?

KIERA CLARK: Well, it feels good. I'm just here to do whatever my team needs me to do. It's about the team, not about me individually. I'm just here to do whatever my assignment is, and here it goes.

Q. Those 38 minutes yesterday were a season high. Were you a little sore or tired after yesterday?

KIERA CLARK: I did make a comment, and I told my teammates, y'all know I'm not used to these kind of minutes, so I was tired. It was funny, we just made a joke out of it.

Q. For any of you guys, are you guys worried at all about the home-court advantage that Arizona State is going to have tomorrow?

KIERA CLARK: No, we're not really worried about that. We've just got to worry about what our assignment is and get it done.

KA'NESHEIA COBBINS: You know, we're not really too worried about this being a home game for them. They're having a really good crowd, and the thing with -- at the free-throw line, we're just going to have to mentally block that out. But I think we can get it done.

TAYLOR GAULT: Yeah, they do have a nice crowd or whatever. Home-court advantage is always good for a team. It gives them momentum and a little more courage, but it's not anything that we can't handle.

Q. Ka'Nesheia, you brought it up. I can't remember what their free-throw thing is called --

THE MODERATOR: Curtain of distraction.

Q. I've heard a little bit of talk from yesterday's game. Have you heard about it at all?

KA'NESHEIA COBBINS: Actually my roommate and I, in between our little breaks at the hotel, and we were watching reviews, and when they showed it up, and it's like at the free-throw line of the opposing team, like when they're shooting the free throws they'll open a curtain, and it's like a clown. Every time they open it, it's a different character, and we're like, how do they do that? But the commentators were saying that they think that's something good. It's cool, I guess. But we're just going to have to block it out and don't let it be a distraction to us.

Q. Taylor, how much of a boost have you guys gotten from Kiera the last two games? Yesterday offensively there was a period where you were both hitting pretty regularly yesterday. How much are you helped with her in the flow of the offense?

TAYLOR GAULT: A lot. Kiera is a big part of the team. She knocked down -- she had a spectacular game yesterday. It was unbelievable, not just on offense but at the end of the game she had some clutch defensive plays, got some steals, stuff like that. We need everybody to win, so with Kiera doing what she does, it's just adding to what we can do.

Q. Joe, they don't really seem at all intimidated about kind of the home-court advantage they're going to be against or the seed or anything or the setting. Does this team have something that maybe some of your others in the past haven't had, just mentally, I guess?

JOE FOLEY: Well, they've had the experience of being in the division -- NCAA Tournament Division I tournament. They've played big games throughout their careers, they've experienced playing in big games, conference finals, playing at LSU this year, beating LSU on their home floor to start the season, to have a team like Oklahoma come in and handle them pretty easy. I think the experiences they've had is coming out right now, and I think that's what's showing. We've been through this before. It's not anything new, so they know they've got to play well. They know they've got to prepare well. But they've been prepared, so they know what to do.

Q. What makes ASU such a tough defensive team and how do you keep from getting sped up when you get out there and they're pressing you?

JOE FOLEY: Well, they're so diverse in the way they can score. That's going to be the hard thing is the size inside, overcoming the size like we did yesterday. They've got guards, No. 0 is one of the best shooters I've seen. So when she can spread it out, extend the defense as far as she can, that opens up the middle. Same thing for the bigs, with her being able to spread it open, so the inside-outside action they've got just makes them a super ballclub. There's no doubt about it.

Q. You mentioned their size. You guys were able to kind of combat that yesterday with I assume your ability and quickness of the guards. Is that what you think it was yesterday and how much confidence does that give you that you can do it again tomorrow night?

JOE FOLEY: Well, we've had to overcome it all season but not to this extent. When you're playing against 6'4", 6'5", like you are, it makes it a lot tougher. I thought we were fortunate yesterday that we were able to get the big kid to miss some baskets early so she didn't get her confidence going. We helped really well. Their outside shooting is not nearly as tough as ASU's, so that's going to be a much bigger concern. The Texas A&M guards can shoot but it's not extended. They're more the mid-range jumpers, so that helped us a lot that we didn't have to extend our defense. It'll be a different story against this bunch.

Q. Charli Turner Thorne called your offense a thing of beauty. What do you think of ASU's defense in particular?

JOE FOLEY: I thought they did a very good job of trying to pressure. I think the bigs helped well inside. The good thing about our offense that a lot of people are starting to enjoy again, I think, is the mid-range. Our kids are used to playing in the mid-range, so we don't have to rely on the three-point or lay-ups. A lot of teams have gone to either getting threes or lay-ups. We're not that way. We still believe in the mid-range. I think you see that in Kiera's game, you

see it in Gault's game, and we take threes with the addition of AD, Lexus, gave us the addition of threes this year, so that really helped our offense, and then our post players, we don't get the 6'4" and 6'5", at a mid-major you don't get those type of players, so I think it's to our advantage when you run a mid-range game that those big kids can't guard up. We have a hard time guarding them but they have a hard time coming off those screens. In my career, and I think that's the reason I've been successful, that's kind of our equalizer is that mid-range game, and that helps us.

Q. You guys were in this place five years ago as an 11 playing on the home floor of a 3. What can you draw, obviously the opponents are different, but can you draw anything from that experience, maybe prepare a little bit more or Oklahoma was a good team --

JOE FOLEY: Oklahoma ended up in the Final Four. We didn't know it at the time. To me it's kind of the same situation. You're playing on their home floor. They're going to have a great crowd I'm sure, and Oklahoma had a great crowd. They got after us right off the bat. We hit a lot of threes against Georgia Tech and really played well. They pressed us and we handled the press very well. Same situation here. They like to press, so if we can handle the situation and hit the threes the second game, we missed a lot of threes early against Oklahoma and got down about 10 or 11, and we got to the second half, we'd get back to eight or so but we never could get back to the lead. So they ended up closing us out, had big kids inside that really hurt us that second game in three days. So it's kind of the same situation, and hopefully we'll handle it a little bit better. Hopefully we'll shoot the ball a little better than we did that second game. Like I say, nobody knew it at the time, but I knew Oklahoma was a good team, but I didn't know they were a Final Four team. If we'd have got by that game, no telling what we would have done. At least the Sweet 16, maybe Elite 8. I think we're looking at the same situation kind of.

Q. I asked the girls this, but how much confidence do you have in this team just belonging in this round of 32 and beyond? Do you think you guys should be among or deserve to be among the top 16 if you advance?

JOE FOLEY: Well, you've been with us the last two weeks, so I've got a lot of faith in them. They play like they're playing the last two weeks, they're capable of doing anything. When you shoot the ball like they've been shooting it and you play defense as hard as they've been playing it, they're capable of doing anything. I've got a lot of faith in them right now.

Q. What's the biggest thing that you're emphasizing mentally for your team in preparation for this game?

JOE FOLEY: I think the main thing right now is you've got to focus even more. You've had a lot of success in the last week, all the teams have had a lot of success, especially the ones that had to win their tournament like we did. You won three games, everybody has been patting you on the back, you've been playing well, then you come in, beat Texas A&M, all the moms and dads patting them on the back, you did this, you did that. They've got to overcome that. They've got to get focused. I got from Butler's coach a few years ago, one of the things I was really impressed with what he said was our kids play through winning. A lot of teams you learn from losing, but when you can learn from winning, you've got a pretty focused ballclub. I'm hoping that's what we are.

Q. Promise Amukamara is ASU's top defender. What will that match-up of her versus Gault be like?

JOE FOLEY: It's probably going to be a lot like yesterday. A & M was trying to push her off the line and trying to get to her and she handled it very well, and of course Taylor has

been the focal point all year long for everybody's team. She's had a heck of a year with all that focus that they've had against her to keep herself under control, handle the pressure and let the game come to her. It's been pretty phenomenal. She's had a heck of a senior year. And Taylor in the past, she's grown into a young lady and especially matured in the basketball sense. Things like that used to bother her if she didn't get off to a good start, but now to me she's very focused, she's very confident in herself, and she's letting the game come, and she's making a lot more assists. If people are running her off the line, two or three people at her, she's improved her game to making assists, getting other people involved, and that's the reason why we are where we're at right now.

Q. When Kiera started getting a few more minutes in the tournament, did you anticipate she could get to this level this quickly after kind of coming off the bench through most of the year? What was your thought as to what you could get from her?

JOE FOLEY: Well, you know, early in the year we were playing Kiera a lot, and she went into a little bit of a slump, and with her in the offense, especially in Shan's spot, we had her playing, rotating a lot, just in the guards, we were playing four guards quite a bit, and now that we're rotating her at Shan's spot, Shan is not near the scorer, Shan has always been a defensive player, and putting Kiera out there has made it super tough for us to guard that mid-range game with Gault and AD and of course Neash drives a lot and kicks to them, so when you put the four guards out there that can handle the ball, that can shoot the ball, that can drive the ball, our offense becomes -- we're at constant movement and don't ever know where they're going to be, so that's really helped our offense. Defensively she's improved and she's helped us there some defensively. That's always been the drawback of Kiera, the defensive aspect of it. But offensively when we get her on the floor offensively, we become a much harder team to guard.

Q. Do you anticipate Kiera starting tomorrow or do you like the rotation that you've gotten to?

JOE FOLEY: I would have anticipated her starting. Actually it's funny that you ask that. I was going to start her yesterday. But we got screwed up. I told Asriel, she didn't understand. I said I'm going to ask Neash if she can go or not. If Neash can go, then we'll be starting Kiera. If she doesn't, then we're starting Shan. Well, she thought because I was going to start both of them then, and she got mixed up because when Ka'Nesheia told me she was going to go, she automatically put Shan out there, and I asked her what did you do because it was right at the 10-minute mark when I made my decision so we couldn't change it. I was going to start her yesterday. It was funny the way it ended up.