

PAC-12 Women's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 1 2018

Charli Turner Thorne

Robbi Ryan

Kiara Russell

Kianna Ibis

Arizona State

CHARLI TURNER THORNE: I think everybody in this room knows the crosstown rivalries in the Pac-12 are super intense. Anything and everything happens, and anything and everything happens in March. So we were very locked in to know that we really, really need to be ready for this game.

Besides the four or five minute stretch in the second quarter, I thought it was a great team win. I loved our energy. Loved our effort. Balanced scoring. Really locked in defensively, had some great helpside. Picked it up in the second half on the boards. Really controlled the boards in the second half.

So I'm really proud of this team. I mean, this team, when we -- when Sabrina Haynes got hurt, we didn't have a deep roster, anyway. No seniors and stuff. They just pulled together and said, no. We're still going to have a great season. So excited to be back for another day.

Excited to play Oregon State again. We've had two great kind of epic battles with them, so that's going to be really fun. I appreciate all the Pac-12 and Pac-12 Network does to make this experience really special for all of us.

Q. So the bigs had a really strong performance tonight. Very efficient with Kianna, Charnea, and Sophia all logged a lot of points and shot very efficiently. What did you see from them tonight, and how do you think that's going to impact tomorrow's game? How are they going to be utilized?

CHARLI TURNER THORNE: Well, they have consistently had good games. U of A is obviously undersized and they went to a really small lineup down the stretch of the game. I credit our guards for taking advantage and getting them the ball. But I also like the fact that Kiki, Reili were attacking the rim, getting -- attacking their on-ball screen defense.



Really kind of had balanced scoring where it wasn't just get the ball to Ki. So honestly, I think of all the games that we've had, we were a little bit more balanced in this one. But that was the advantage. They're about the only team that we do have size on that we played this year, so we did do a good job of taking advantage of it.

Q. Eva came in and made some good contributions late in the game, scored a couple buckets. What can she do for the team as postseason play continues?

CHARLI TURNER THORNE: That's a great question. Eva's been working really hard. She's got the fitness level to play now. It's kind of a readiness thing. We didn't get quite as much game experience. Our postgame is really strong, and we have a four-post rotation. They've been playing really well all year long.

But she's obviously a difference maker with her size. You see how she goes in and just buries people. We had a great talk going into postseason. It's like, March, be ready. Be ready. She's ready. She's ready to help. So we'll be looking for opportunities for her to help us.

Q. You guys seemed really dominant defensively. Was there a specific focus, specific strategy you guys took into the game?

CHARLI TURNER THORNE: We took the same strategy that we did the other two games really. Take away their threes. Keep them in front of us, and you know, just when we do that and they put their head down, just play really good team defense and don't bail them out. Not try to put them on the free-throw line, and I thought we did a great job of that.

Q. So looking at the stat sheet it's pretty full across the board. So what tonight was clicking that maybe wasn't in those losses previously against the Oregon schools? What do you think you could take from this into that game?

CHARLI TURNER THORNE: Well, I mean, I think that in those games they played us differently and we settled and we didn't execute quite as well offensively. I think in some ways it was very similar. We played three and a half quarters really well. The difference is when you're playing a top 10 team and you have a half quarter off, it's different than a team is obviously

building.

Anybody want to add anything?

Q. Kiara, you had a big game today. What was working for you and the guards in particular tonight?

KIARA RUSSELL: Like Coach said, they want to a smaller lineup, so I just fed into the post and just got us into offense, I guess, yeah.

Q. So to any of the players, how did you guys take that defensive presence allowing two points in the first quarter and turn it into the offense that you guys put on for the rest of the game?

KIANNA IBIS: We knew we had to jump on them first, and we always emphasize being the more aggressive team and rebounding early. So we knew we had to get into the post because it's kind of a mismatch in there, so we tried to take advantage of that. Just tried to jump on them first.

Q. Coach, what was your message to the team after the first quarter when you guys really kind of dominated all phases of the game?

CHARLI TURNER THORNE: Whatever it was, it wasn't very good. I mean, I don't remember exactly, but it was obviously awful because we weren't very good in the second quarter. I know exactly what I said at halftime, but I can't. No, I'm just kidding. I went in there and they knew. Like stop it. Stop letting up. Stop not playing hard every possession, and I thought we had a fantastic second half. Yeah, whatever it was it's not worth repeating.

KIARA RUSSELL: It just wasn't pretty. It wasn't our best.

Q. Coach, you talked about how this is a very young team. Do you think it was beneficial of you guys to play tonight to prepare you for the quarterfinal tomorrow?

CHARLI TURNER THORNE: You know, we're not used to the play-in game, but that's a great question. I feel like when you get to postseason, sometimes the first game is the hardest, just getting over the hump.

I would definitely say, yes, if we had a deeper roster, but, actually, I would say yes even despite it. I think we do. We've played a game in the arena. We've got some good -- I don't know. Kind of flow going into this next game. Then obviously we just played Oregon State, so I think there are a lot of positives for us coming out tomorrow night and giving a great, great effort.

Q. Oregon State's kind of a two-headed monster

when it comes down to it. They have Marie Gulich who went off the last time you guys played them, and their three-point shooting is one of the best in the Pac-12. How do you try to neutralize both of those attacks going into this game?

CHARLI TURNER THORNE: Wouldn't you like to know? Come tomorrow night. But that's the challenge. We obviously took away their three-point game, not the whole entire game, but the second half we weren't locked in in defending Gulich. Obviously, we have to figure that out, and we plan to do the best that we can.

Gulich is a great player. I don't know if she's up for an All-American, but to me, she's that level. You know, you've just got to try to contain her a little bit better, which that will be our job tomorrow night.