

PAC-12 Women's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 8 2019

Kelly Graves

Ruthy Hebard

Sabrina Ionescu

Oregon

Oregon - 77, Arizona - 63

COACH GRAVES: Sure, yeah, we've played a few like this and done well in those grinder kind of games. This was certainly one of them. We didn't get it going, we weren't moving the ball like we normally do and shooting it as well as we normally do. Even though our percentage was good, it wasn't from the three-point line.

But, yeah, we can play those kind of games. There's no question about it. But I think sometimes even as a coach, you just didn't have that feel of a typical Duck game, but in the end it was a convincing win.

Q. Sabrina, obviously McDonald led the Pac-12 in scoring this year. But what was it like going against her? It seemed she was pretty determined to go against you guys, and how hard is it to beat that team three times in a row?

SABRINA IONESCU: She's one of the best guards in our conference. We knew that going in and we knew she was going to go in and try to prove something. But we knew we had to stop her as a team, and that's what we tried to do tonight. If we couldn't stop her, we had to limit their other options, and I think we did that pretty well tonight. But we're going to learn, she did go off for 30-plus points. So we are going to learn from our mistakes and continue to grow.

Q. Sabrina, I understand you were facilitating in Maite's planet 100 percent. But what was it offensively that it seemed ball movement wasn't particularly good? There were a high number of turnovers. I understand Maite was playing through sickness, but it seemed you were out of sync for a good portion of the game.

SABRINA IONESCU: It might have been those first-game jitters. We're all super nervous and honestly excited to get out there and play. And I think that definitely took that play into this game. But we'll be fine. Maite will come back tomorrow better than she did today, and we'll have players step up and play Duck



basketball.

Q. Ruthy, James mentioned Maite being sick. Coach said the other day it would probably be after the season before you're back to a hundred percent with the knee and everything. How much did it feel like you were battling through today and had to kind of grind this one out?

RUTHY HEBARD: Yeah, being not a hundred percent definitely sucks. But we did a good job of staying together, and we're going to do that for the rest of the season.

Q. Just to piggyback off that, Coach, how nice was it to just kind of see an almost classic Ruthy performance right on the first game here in the tournament?

COACH GRAVES: Yeah, no question about it. 9 for 11, that's kind of what we've come to expect from her. I thought we did a better job in the second half of getting her the basketball. And, you know, that made a big difference.

So our shooting percentage on the night actually was really good thanks to her, but it was those outside shots we weren't getting. But Ruthy's a force, there is no question about it. When she's playing at her best, she's one of the best post players in the country, certainly.

Q. Kelly, I understand this may be a strange question given the rebound margin, but how did you feel about the defensive intensity? Because I know you're not a team that's necessarily going to force the issue and apply a ton of pressure at times. But just seemed like you guys were willing to sit back a lot and allow slower passes to get there and rebounding, though the margin was high, just didn't seem like you guys were necessarily really pushing it that hard?

COACH GRAVES: Little step slow I thought all night long. Defensively I don't think we were as connected as we need to be certainly. Yeah, you know, still plus 17 on the boards, you're going to take that. They shot 40% from the field? You're going to take that. It seemed worse than it really was when you look at the numbers.

But I agree, it just seemed like something a little bit that was missing. To your point about the 13 turnovers, you said turnovers were high. Well, that is high for us. There are a lot of teams in this country that wish they could only turn it over 13 times against a team that pressures you. But, again, that's the bar that we've set for ourselves. When we get more than eight, nine or ten, it's like, wow, what happened?

So, you know, it's just one of those nights that just didn't feel like a 14-point win.

Q. You guys have played some memorable games against UCLA the last couple years. Just kind of what are your thoughts on getting ready for them in the semifinals?

COACH GRAVES: Well, yeah, they're good. They're playing so much better now than they did when we played them in January, and they obviously beat us a few weeks ago in Eugene.

Yeah, they're just so aggressive. We didn't do so well against tonight's pressure, and we're going to see it tonight, plus another level tomorrow. So we're going to have to make sure that we pass it to the team. Are we in white tomorrow?

SABRINA IONESCU: Green.

COACH GRAVES: No, we're white. We have to pass to the team in white. Because when you turn it over against UCLA, they're quicker, they're more athletic than we are, and we can't catch them. We can't catch them. But if we take care of the ball and spread the floor and do the things that we normally do, then, you know, I think we're going to be okay. But, hey, make no mistake, these guys are good.

We're a little bit different. Last time we didn't play them with Ruthy, so we can show them something a little bit different than we did last game.

Q. The head coach of the Arizona State women's basketball team, Charli Turner Thorne, stated yesterday, quote, "The Pac-12 is the best women's basketball conference in the country." I was just curious what are your thoughts on that comment? Do you agree with it? How do you feel that that comment holds up nationally against the other teams?

COACH GRAVES: Well, since I didn't play every other team in all the other conferences, I can't say definitively that that's the case. However, I will say that we're certainly one of the elite conferences, and in my opinion, I think, the best.

When you look at it in terms of how many teams have

potential to go to a Final Four, perhaps win a National Championship, yeah, we have teams that can do that. We have a multiple number of team that's can get to the second weekend and perhaps beyond.

But we haven't played Notre Dame, and we haven't played Louisville, and we haven't played Connecticut, and we haven't played those teams. So I think that's a bold statement, but we're certainly one of the best, there is no question. That's why we love Charli.

Q. Sabrina, you've got Bill Laimbeer sitting courtside, obviously the local franchise here's No. 1 overall pick. There is a lot of speculation. How have you blocked all that out and led your team towards the Pac-12 Tournament toward the NCAA Tournament?

SABRINA IONESCU: Yeah, that didn't really cross my mind. I wasn't looking around trying to see who was watching our game. I just knew we had to come out and get this win and do it collectively.

Like we were talking about, I don't think it was pretty, but we stuck together and fought, and that's what March is going to take. But all that other outside stuff, whoever is watching, I'm not paying attention to that. I probably would have played the same exact way if Obama was here.

COACH GRAVES: Who?

SABRINA IONESCU: Obama.

COACH GRAVES: Where did that come from?

SABRINA IONESCU: I'm just saying like I'm not changing the way I play because somebody's sitting there. You all know what I mean. Don't type --

COACH GRAVES: He was a baller too.

SABRINA IONESCU: I know. Don't type some weird stuff.

COACH GRAVES: I wonder if he could have kept Aari under 34?

SABRINA IONESCU: Next. Why are you roasting us up here?

COACH GRAVES: It's collective. You said it was a collective win.

SABRINA IONESCU: Right, you're included.

COACH GRAVES: Exactly (laughing).

Q. Just looking at how you guys kind of tightened up in terms of turnovers from first half to second, was that a scheme adjustment that you guys kind of walked through in halftime, or was that more just kind of taking a deep breath, letting nerves kind of settle in now that you're out here?

RUTHY HEBARD: I think it was more letting nerves settle in, like Coach said. We don't usually have that many turnovers. So letting the nerves settle in and playing the basketball we know how to play helped us with turnovers.

Q. Congrats on the win tonight. It's also International Women's Day, so I wanted to ask each of you if you could shout out a woman that has offered you great mentorship or inspiration.

COACH GRAVES: Great question.

RUTHY HEBARD: My mom. Yeah, she's a great woman.

SABRINA IONESCU: That's what I was going to say. But honestly, I mean, shout out to every woman in this room, every woman that's trying to empower women, and every man that's trying to empower women. I got you. We're back on good terms now.

COACH GRAVES: I love these two. My team inspires me each and every day. That's the honest truth.

Q. Kelly, big fan base here today. Just how in your tenure as head coach, how have you watched the program grow into now one of the better fan bases in the country?

COACH GRAVES: Well, they're here to see that good-looking coach. No, they're here because they love this team, and they play with so much passion and heart, and they're unselfish. I believe they play the right way.

So I think they have endeared -- this team has endeared themselves to our fan base, and they appreciate what they see each and every game. They're accessible. You should see them after games taking pictures, signing autographs. It's not easy. But they do that. That's what wins the fans, you know. They want that connection.

So that and the fact that we're a pretty good basketball team. It's no secret, that's what does it. But this is a fantastic, fantastic group of young women who play hard, they play for each other, and they play very unselfish basketball.