

Adams powers Texas A&M past Rutgers 70-48

Written by Administrator

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BOSSIER CITY, La. (AP) — A year ago, Danielle Adams missed a last-second shot in an upset loss to Gonzaga that ended Texas A&M's season in the second round of the NCAA tournament.

Back in the second round in 2011, Adams scored early and often, from inside and out, in a dominating performance that ensured the Aggies' dream of a first Final Four appearance would live on at least until this weekend.

Adams had 28 points and 11 rebounds on Tuesday night — the highest point total by an A&M player in an NCAA tournament game — and the Aggies stormed into the round of 16 with a 70-48 victory over Rutgers.

"I put that shot behind me and that game behind me and just took it as motivation for this season," Adams said of her season-ending miss against Gonzaga in 2010. "I'm just looking forward to these playoffs."

Texas A&M (29-5) moves on to Dallas for a third-round game against Georgia, which advanced with a 61-59 victory over Florida State on Tuesday night. The Aggies also could be on a collision course for a regional final showdown with top-seeded Baylor, which already has three victories over A&M this season — two in the regular season and one in Big 12 tournament. All three were by single digits.

Aggies coach Gary Blair said he appreciates the intrigue concerning a possible fourth meeting with the Lady Bears and their star 6-foot-8 center, Brittney Griner, but doesn't want to get ahead of himself.

"We're not saying the word, 'Baylor,'" Blair said, grinning as he began to reference an old Ray Charles hit. "We're talking about Georgia on our mind."

The Aggies had little trouble staying focused on Rutgers, which A&M had blown out by 29 points when they met in December.

Both teams said they expected a far more competitive rematch. Instead, the Scarlet Knights turned the ball over 20 times and were held to 35.8 percent shooting (19 of 53).

"I do know that we've gotten a whole lot better. It doesn't look like it, it looks like the same old team," Rutgers coach Vivian Stringer said. "Maybe it's that Texas A&M got a whole lot better, too."

April Sykes scored 21 for seventh-seeded Rutgers (20-13) which stayed close for the first 15 minutes of the game before the Aggies began to take command. Erica Wheeler added 12 points, but Rutgers looked overwhelmed in the second half.

"Our season has been a roller-coaster all season ... and the immaturity of us was exposed once again on national television," Sykes said. "It was not the right time for that to happen."

Sydney Carter added 14 points and Tyra White had 11 for the second-seeded Aggies (29-5), who were upset in last year's second round but this time have strung together victory margins of 20-plus points in each of their first two tournament games.

The 6-foot-1 Adams established her all-court game immediately, hitting a 3 less than 2 minutes into the game and using a strong baseline drive for a layup shortly after.

"That's just my game, I try to help out the team any way possible and when they throw me the ball I try to finish. My teammates just do a good job of getting me the ball," Adams said. "As soon as I score, the team will get hyped up and they start scoring and we all get open looks. The defense pretty much tries to double-team me and my teammates get the open shot and they take it."

With Sykes scoring 14 in the first half for Rutgers, the Scarlet Knights were able to stay close and were down only 24-21 after Khadijah Rushdan's layup with 5:50 left before halftime.

Adams had 16 points in the opening 20 minutes, and Texas A&M began to pull away when she

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hit a turnaround jumper on the baseline and added her second 3, giving the Aggies a 32-24 lead going into the locker room.

The Aggies opened up their first double-digit lead when fast-break layups by White and Carter made it 36-24 early in the second half. Carter added a transition jumper and a pair of free throws during a 7-0 run that put the Aggies in command at 47-29.

Wheeler snapped that run with a 3, but Sydney Colson responded with a 3 as the shot clock wound down. Adams followed that with a layup on a feed from Adrienne Pratcher, then Adams scored again on a putback to make it 54-32 with 9:23 left.

After that, Rutgers started pressing on defense and held A&M scoreless for several minutes, but the Aggies' defense was too good to allow the Scarlet Knights to do much more than briefly chip away before A&M started to pull away again late.

"I wouldn't bet against them playing for a national championship," Stringer said. "It's kind of interesting that they're playing Baylor (if both advance to the regional final), but in my opinion they probably are one of the four top teams in country, no question, not a two-seed. There's nobody in the country that applies (defensive) pressure like that. Nobody."