

Administration of Barack Obama, 2012

Remarks Honoring the 2012 NCAA Women's Basketball Champion Baylor University Lady Bears

July 18, 2012

The President. Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. Welcome to the White House, everybody. And congratulations to the Baylor Lady Bears on their undefeated season and second national championship.

There are some proud Members of Congress who are here today. We've got a bunch of proud Texans in the house.

I want to thank all the outstanding young women who are behind me and the coach for making my bracket look good, at least on the women's side. *[Laughter]* I picked Baylor over Notre Dame, but I have to say, I wasn't the only one. It wasn't that hard. *[Laughter]* Because if there's one thing to describe this team, it was "dominant."

Last season, the Lady Bears scored more points than any team in women's college basketball history. They became the first team ever—men's or women's—to win 40 games in a season.

Now, this is not to say that success came easily. After a tough loss to Texas A&M in the Elite Eight last year, the Lady Bears decided they weren't going to go through that again. So they buckled down, they spent all summer in the gym, and they have not lost since: not to the Aggies and not to anybody else. *[Laughter]*

So obviously, a lot of credit goes to Coach Kim Mulkey. This is Coach's fifth national championship—she just—she likes to win if you haven't noticed. *[Laughter]* She won two as a star player at Louisiana Tech, one as an assistant coach, and now two as head coach at Baylor. That's an incredible accomplishment. I want to point out, that's the first person in college basketball history to win titles in all three roles. I heard she plans to win her next one as mascot—*[laughter]*—so that she can—but I mean, she's got to figure out what else she can win at this point. But we want to congratulate Coach Kim for leading this team and being named Coach of the Year in women's basketball. Congratulations.

Now, obviously, a great winning team requires a great coach, but it's not as if on the court the players were slackers either. We can't say enough about Brittney Griner. And this young woman is the new face of women's basketball: she blocks shots; she rebounds; she's got the jump hook; she's got the dunk.

She won just about every award that you could win last season. And I have to say that there have been times in the past where I shot around a little bit with the visiting team, but this time I don't think I can get my shot off, so—*[laughter]*—I'm not doing that this year. *[Applause]* Not doing that this year.

She's not the only one I'm scared of. You've got Odyssey Sims, who just owned the backcourt, earned her reputation as one of the premier perimeter defenders in the country. Senior Terran Condrey, or Big Shot T——

Team members. Yes!

The President. Where did she go? Right here? Knocking down jump shots. Three other seniors: Ashley Field, Lindsay Palmer, and Cherrish Wallace, who anchored this team for 4 of the most successful years in school history.

So we know that the Lady Bears are talented on the court. But when practice is over, they work just as hard. Some made the Big 12 Honor Roll with perfect GPAs. That's worth an applause right there. [Applause] They read with students at elementary schools in Waco and served meals to the homeless. They traveled around the world, caring for infants at an AIDS orphanage and building houses in Kenya.

The Lady Bears also made a difference in one little girl, who is so special to them that the team brought her along for today's visit. Haley Klepper, who is right here—hey, Haley. Haley is as brave as can be and has just gone through some struggles. But when the team found out about Haley and all the stuff that she goes through every day, and she's such a brave little girl, they immediately took her under their wing. So she has her own spot reserved in the Baylor locker room, and she's a pretty big fan. She cheers from the sidelines just about at every home game. Is that right? [Laughter] So we're thrilled to have Haley here.

So this team just sets a terrific example for girls everywhere: as athletes, as scholars, as leaders in their community. I could not be prouder of this team. And I've said—I was saying to them before we came out, as the father of two daughters who are tall and beautiful just like them, it is great to have role models who can show that women can be strong and athletic and competitive, but also play as a team. That's a terrific lesson for my daughters; that's a terrific lesson for girls everywhere.

And so we could not be prouder with them. And since they've got all five starters coming back, I suspect that they're the odds-on favorite for my bracket next year as well. [Laughter] So congratulations, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:31 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Brittney Griner and Ashley Field, point guards, Odyssey Sims, Terran Condrey, and Lindsay Palmer, guards, and Cherrish Wallace, student assistant, Baylor University women's basketball team.

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