

Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 13, 2019

Mike Boynton, Jr.

Curtis Jones

Yor Anei

Oklahoma State Cowboys

TCU 73, Oklahoma State 70

THE MODERATOR: The Cowboys of Oklahoma State have joined us with Coach Mike Boynton, Jr. and his student-athletes are Curtis Jones and Yor Anei. Coach, we will turn to you for an opening statement first.

MIKE BOYNTON, JR.: First of all, congrats to TCU, obviously played really well to start the game. Put us in a really, really deep hole. Really controlled most of the game to be honest. We made a really good comeback. So I'm proud of our kids for not giving in. It's been the theme of our season in a lot of ways, but happy I had the opportunity to coach these guys and looking forward to getting back and trying to figure out how to be better.

Q. Yor, can you talk about that stretch down the end of the game, last 7, 8 minutes when you guys took over defensively and the way you were able to protect the rim and knock back some shots?

YOR ANEI: It just felt normal to me. I was trying to block everything that came to the rim and I was trying to get the stops for our team that we needed to win us the game.

Q. Curtis, you guys are down 21. It's not been a great season. How did you find the fortitude to hang in there and be able to make a rally and take the lead?

CURTIS JONES: I think that's something we've done all year is continue to fight. We came in at halftime Coach said continue to fight. We didn't want our season to end that way, and I think we kept fighting and cutting the lead and kept playing for each other. It didn't finish the way we wanted it to, but I think we went in with a little momentum.

Q. Yor, for most of the game they did control it, but what switched in your mind and in the players' minds to get you guys going in the second half?

YOR ANEI: Coach had, like, came in during halftime



and really got us fired up and ready to play like we should have from the beginning, but he reminded us what we were playing for. We were playing for the program and it's bigger than basketball. We were representing Oklahoma State and that's what got us fired up.

Q. Curtis, can you talk about what you've seen out of Yor and his development this year, how he went from not playing a lot early and the kind of player he's become down the stretch?

CURTIS JONES: Yeah, he's made a big jump this year, his willingness to learn, come to work every day, have a great attitude about the right things. That's what I've seen from him and then just as the year got on he got more comfortable and you got to see the growth. Excited to see him as we go into next year and as he continues to grow.

Q. For both players, can you talk about the difficulty of this season and how you think the adversity you've gone through is going to pay off in the future for you guys in the program?

CURTIS JONES: Yeah, we went through a lot of adversity this season, but I think it will make us stronger. One thing we never did is never gave up. We came to work every day. I think as the year went on we got more comfortable with each other, got more familiar and I think going into next year we can use this to really try to help us and have a great season next year.

YOR ANEI: Yeah, with all the adversity, going through like our Coach told us "adversity introduces a man to himself," so it was part of all of us growing up.

THE MODERATOR: Curtis and Yor, we will let you go back to the locker room. Thank you. Questions for Coach?

Q. Coach, talk about how big having 5 double digit scorers was. As the game started and you guys got a slow start but talk about ball movement and how big that was?

MIKE BOYNTON, JR.: Honestly, we're a team that the whole is better than the parts. For us to have success this season, we had to have multiple guys play well. We didn't have that in the first half, obviously, so we were down, big. Really kind of turned it on and our balance showed there. Lindy obviously made a lot of

plays. Yor made some. Isaac Likekele made some. Cameron made a big shot. Kind of a summary of our season. Got down big, face an uphill battle and the kids just kept competing because that's what they do.

Q. Mike, you played such great defense the last six, seven minutes, but it looked like a breakdown on TCU's last possession. From your perspective what happened on that play?

MIKE BOYNTON, JR.: I will be honest, I don't know, it's hard for me to say right now. There was a breakdown somewhere in the communication. I don't know exactly who was involved because we were switching a lot in that possession. We wanted to avoid exactly what happened, which was Bane specifically getting a rhythm jump shot there. I'll have to go back and watch the film, and I would be more than happy to get back for you on it. But you've got to give credit to the kid. He still has to make the shot. So credit goes to him and his teammates for being able to make the big shot and be able to move on.

Q. Coach, can you talk about how you've seen the players grow through all that they've gone through this season and having such a short roster and how they have, I would assume, come together as a unit?

MIKE BOYNTON, JR.: Yeah, those are the type of things that give you a chance at life, really. What they've gone through basically is what a lot of people go through, adverse times.

You really find out about yourself when things aren't as easy as you hoped they would be. What I learned about this team is they are guys that love to compete. They love each other. They love representing this program and the school and I'm certainly proud to have been there with them the whole way. We chartered some rocky waters this year, but every day they showed up with a good attitude. They stuck together. No one pointed fingers at one another and there was a reason why here in the last two weeks we've played better basketball. They've gotten really comfortable with one another and they've laid it on the line for each other.

Q. Coach, your guys obviously had times during this game where they could have just said we're going to give it up and call it a season, but they didn't do that. What's this say about your players and does it surprise you that they kept fighting like that?

MIKE BOYNTON, JR.: Doesn't surprise me. Again, I've been with these guys since June. I've watched how we've transformed, a lot of positive. But certainly there has been some negativity also, some things that we were not necessarily happen that happened during

the season, but I never came to practice and felt like the guys didn't want to be there or didn't care it about one another and what we were trying to accomplish. The record doesn't indicate that this season was a success at all, and I wouldn't stand here and tell you I'm proud of being 12-20.

But I do believe the way we got better, the way our kids played gives me hope that, you know, everybody talks about the future but the future is here. Now. One of them was sitting right next to me. So we're excited about what we can become as we get back in the off-season and figure out how to get better for next year.

Q. A few weeks ago when we were talking, we were talking about most programs need a star and I asked you where one was coming from and you said, well, I might have one in Anei. Is that what you were talking about? The way he played the last 20 minutes?

MIKE BOYNTON, JR.: Yeah, really, and a lot of the last part of the season. This is not against players I don't know how many times we have had a player lead in blocks and not get any recognition, not even an honorable mention and that's not saying that the players who made it weren't deserving. But we think we have one that may be a little more deserving as well. I'm excited about what he can become, he's really just scratching the surface, Barry of what he can become. A lot of times he's playing on I think not something. He's got to develop in the weight room and develop a go-to inside and the instincts he has from a shot-blocking standpoint you can't teach and it's a game changer for the other teams in terms of game preparation. So it's a good start with when you have a 7-foot kid in there who can change the game without scoring a basket.

Q. Toward the end of the game you were forcing a lot of turnovers, scoring a lot of points which is the complete opposite of the beginning of the game. What were you seeing out of your players at the end of the game where you went on a large run and got those turnovers?

MIKE BOYNTON, JR.: I think a sense of urgency kicked in. We knew coming in, our season is over when we lose here. It's that simple. I think these guys cared enough about each other that they wanted to play together again. So they played with a great sense of urgency in the last ten minutes and if maybe we had played that way for the first 30 we wouldn't have been down so big. It's water under the bridge. It's something to learn from. This whole season has been a learning experience for all of us, and I'm just really proud that I had the opportunity to coach this group.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you so much.

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Jamie Dixon

Kouat Noi

Desmond Bane

Alex Robinson

TCU Horned Frogs

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THE MODERATOR: The TCU Horned Frogs have arrived in the interview room. We have Coach Jamie Dixon and we will have three student-athletes, Desmond Bane, Kouat Noi and Alex Robinson. Coach, we will turn to you first for an opening statement. Congratulations on your victory tonight.

JAMIE DIXON: Thank you. It's a great win for us obviously getting 20 wins and for our seniors an opportunity again to play against one of the teams that won the league. Excited about how we played. Obviously, first half we did exactly what we wanted to do. But as you know, they're a tough team, playing well, Oklahoma State and came back and battled, not at all surprised by that. I think I could have done a better job of sustaining our aggressiveness both offensively and defensively, so put that on me for their comeback. I thought we moved the ball the first half and got a change to the other side of the floor against their defense, but defensively is what we got going and obviously shot 35%, outrebounded by 2. That's where everybody is best. It's a great win for us and certainly an opportunity to go play tomorrow.

Q. Desmond, take us through that last 3-pointer and what you kinda saw and how you guys kept your composure when they were making the late charge?

DESMOND BANE: We've been here before, as far as keeping our composure. We've got a lot of guys that have played a lot of those games and on my last play I got downhill and I kicked it down to him and he kicked it back to me and I was open and just shot it.

Q. Guys, for all of you, what was the thought when the lead was shrinking down? How were you trying to stay together and trying to get through and get that win?



KOUAT NOI: We just wanted to keep the momentum going, un, get stops and that's what we did and we came back with the win.

ALEX ROBINSON: What Kouat said. We just wanted to stay locked in and made sure we stayed together. We knew they were making a run. We wanted to make sure we stopped it and turned it around.

DESMOND BANE: For sure. A team like that they're going to hit shots and part of it was our defense and part of it was them hitting shots, but we kept our composure and was able to finish it out.

Q. Alex, you guys had a 21-point lead. But your offense stagnated down the stretch. How much was Yor Anei and the way he protected the rim. I think he got 4 blocks in the last 7 minutes.

ALEX ROBINSON: He did a great job of staying down and getting blocks and I felt like a lot of it was us on the stagnant part we weren't moving and cutting it and that's on us and he's a great defense player and he's going to make a lot of noise in this league.

Q. Kouat, you were able to score 14 in the first half, 20 in the game. After only scoring 4 over the last week what allowed you to snap out of your shooting slump today?

KOUAT NOI: Like we said earlier, passing the ball, moving the ball. I give credit to my teammates for helping me when I was open and that's how it happened.

Q. For all of you guys, short turnaround for K-State and with the depth how do you guys think you will be able to bounce back tomorrow?

DESMOND BANE: Thanks to Coach Dixon we practiced hard every day and there is nothing like it. We'll be ready.

KOUAT NOI: What was the question again?

Q. The short turnaround and the depth you guys have, coming back tomorrow?

KOUAT NOI: We're going to be ready to play tomorrow for sure.

ALEX ROBINSON: Yeah, yeah, yeah what Kouat and Des said. We'll be ready. We've been here before.

We have a lot of experience. So this is nothing new to us and we will be ready to go.

Q. For all of you, how much does Dean Wade likely not playing for K-State tomorrow affect the way you go into this game against Kansas State?

DESMOND BANE: Every team in the league is good so you prepare and think the same way regardless who is going to be out there. We're here all high, major basketball players so we gotta prepare the same way we would as if he was playing.

ALEX ROBINSON: Yeah, what Des said.

DESMOND BANE: Hey, bra!

ALEX ROBINSON: It's true. We're going to prepare for them like we prepare for any team, whether Dean Wade plays or not, we still need to prepare for Kansas State. They beat us twice so we need to come out and play hard.

Q. Since it will be what Des says, I will ask Des, what did K-State do well against you guys? You struggled to score against them in the two matches earlier. What can you guys do to combat that and get a little more offense?

DESMOND BANE: They're a good defense team. As soon as we played them we made a few adjustments. And we didn't have this guy the first time we played them. But they got us at home so we gotta come out and play harder than them tomorrow from start to finish.

Q. Being down 21 points and then having the lead cut back to a tie game and eventually losing the lead, what does it say with your toughness and wherewithal to finish?

KOUAT NOI: Coach is always preaching toughness at every practice, so we knocked it down and got stops toward the end.

THE MODERATOR: Guys, thank you. We will let you go back to the locker room. Congratulations. We will see you tomorrow. Coach?

Q. Two questions, first of all, does this give you a spot in the NCAA Tournament?

JAMIE DIXON: 20 wins in the Big 12, toughest conference in the country and we played a tough nonconference, so I would think so. But you never know what plays out in the other things, but given that's a safe bet in history and I would say as things have played out in history this year, and clearly with the different conferences and our conference clearly being the best we've put ourselves in a good spot.

Q. Kansas State held you to your two lowest scoring games of the season. Talk about playing their defense with short rest?

JAMIE DIXON: Kouat didn't play in that game at their place. It was a close game. We had six guys. This time we will bring out 7, and we will be ready to play. As I told our guys it's an opportunity to play the team that won the league and beat us twice and we're looking at it as a great opportunity. We think we can win two in a row. We think we're playing a little better defense. I think we were very good on offense. They're a team that's dangerous because of the threes and they're going to keep playing and they've been in this position before. It was almost like it was scripted and we just handled it better offensively, and we played really well and I'm good in the last 10 minutes. We've got to handle those things better.

Q. Jamie, going off that, I guess you guys have built big leads and seen 'em come down this season. Is there anything specifically you need to do?

JAMIE DIXON: Sometimes I think we could have played more guys, when I say more guys, more minutes for the other two guys. That might have been something that could have helped us. I thought it was good for us against Texas that we had fresher guys out there, especially our guards. But it just didn't work out that way today. Again, I was not at all surprised. I figured there was no way we could sustain what we were doing in the first half, nobody can. You get a 20-point lead and they're going to make a run. I felt I could have done a period of time job offensively getting us into different things. But, again, you miss free throws, we got some drives to the basket we didn't convert and a lot of it came from there. We're not perfect.

Q. So toward the end of the game obviously the lead was starting to dwindle down. What were you telling your players in the timeouts?

JAMIE DIXON: You know, we just -- I mean, there was obviously it was a long game and we had the big lead, but there was times when you knew they were going to make the run, I thought we could have handled some things, we throw it out of bounds, we have a layup and we use our inside hand and it gets a block when it should have been a layup. We've got to do things better. I think we've done some things better defensively in the last seven, eight days and maybe in this last lesson that we got to finish and sustain and discipline in what we're doing. But I've got to do a better job as far as running plays out of timeouts and we've got to do a better job than that execution and down the stretch. I think that would be a big thing for us. We've got to make some free throws. A lot of times it's been we missed free throws in some of these

situations.

It's an interesting thing because Kevin doesn't shoot it well, we want to have him on the floor. But at the same time he's shooting free throws, it's almost a turnover on good offense.

Q. Jamie, came question I asked Alex about the impact on the comeback for Oklahoma?

JAMIE DIXON: He was big, especially in the second half. He got a bunch of layups. At our place he killed us. He made some thoughts. I don't think he's made any since, but he's obviously very good. He plays very hard, makes free throws or at least he does against us. He changed a lot of those shots. I say that we didn't run great offense, but we didn't get layups that we got in the first half that seemed to be shot-blocked late in the game. Give him credit for that. We've got to do a better job. We got a 3-second call so some turn overs and not changed shots by him.

Q. You talked about K-State's defense. What challenges do they have for you guys tomorrow?

JAMIE DIXON: The oldest team in the country, experience is good and both of these teams that won the league, Texas Tech and K-State have played like the oldest teams because they are the oldest teams, both well-coached and defensively they're very good and very physical. Amazed at how physical they are. Kansas State, they push you around, they bang, they reach, they get hands on balls. So those are the things that they do really well, but I think we're a better team know, but, you know, we've got to do it for forty minutes but everybody runs through these things where they can't sustain, forty minutes, play their best basketball. There ain't no blowouts in this thing. It's what it is. It's good teams in the best league.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Coach.