

Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 13, 2019

Lon Kruger

Kristian Doolittle

Christian James

Oklahoma Sooners

West Virginia 72, Oklahoma 71

THE MODERATOR: We are ready to begin with the Oklahoma Sooners, Coach Lon Kruger and the two student-athletes, Christian James and Kristian Doolittle. Coach, we will turn to you first for an opening statement.

LON KRUGER: Obviously, a disappointing loss. I thought West Virginia really dictated on the boards. We had trouble keeping them from second shots, especially late in the ball game. That's always a big factor when you play West Virginia and I thought they, again, won that battle with us. Again, had some opportunities early in the second half there to widen it out and couldn't quite do that. Again, both teams battled, and we didn't make the play at the end. As many plays at the end as they did.

Q. Christian, obviously this game had a lot of similarities to the last time you played West Virginia with the Buddy Hield review, what was going through your head as you took the shot?

CHRISTIAN JAMES: Felt good. I tried to create space and get a good look. I didn't know my foot was on the line. It was a tough moment, just like my freshman year.

Q. That team in 2016 did go on a Final Four run. What do you have to do to get past this and prepare for a possible NCAA Tournament berth?

CHRISTIAN JAMES: Got to play together, play together more. West Virginia did a great job on the boards. We gotta clean it up a lot. We've got to play hard. We gotta play hard, play together and make plays. March is all about making plays down the stretch and that's something we have to do. My teammates have been working so hard to get to this point, and it's in God's hands whether we get a bid or not.

Q. Kristian, besides the rebounding where did you think you let it get away tonight?



KRISTIAN DOOLITTLE: I would say we were lacking emotion and fight from the beginning of the game, which is something that can't happen. We were playing catch-up. We knew going into this game that West Virginia was going to be crashing the glass and playing really hard. That's what they pride themselves on. We weren't ready to master energy and create our own energy. To hit them first was something we talked about at the beginning of the game. Something that we can't do. We've got to hold each other accountable, something that the coaches can't always do. They can't always bring all the energy and that's something we have to change before our next game.

Q. For both of you guys, Kristian mentioned most people have the NCAA Tournament, does this result not tonight bring any doubt into your mind? Are you worried about that? Do you think you're safely in?

KRISTIAN DOOLITTLE: It's not something I'm too worried about. I've never paid attention to the outside noise of if we're in or out. We've got to focus on the game at hand. We had it in our hands to fully seal it and not to leave doubt in anybody's mind, but now we have to wait for someone else to decide for us.

CHRISTIAN JAMES: I hope we're in. Like I said, we've worked so hard to get to this game and this game could have sealed the deal and my teammates have worked on hard and I just want to see them get a chance to see what it's like to go to the NCAA Tournament. It's going to be a stressful couple of days, a lot of praying and hope we get a bid and go far in the tournament. Make a run.

Q. Kristian, what was going through your mind when that shot went up and they were reviewing that final play?

KRISTIAN DOOLITTLE: Knowing that he got the shot off in time they were going to check to see if it was actually a three. That's why they have instant replays, to make sure they get the right call. It just didn't go our way this time.

THE MODERATOR: Okay, guys. Thank you. Questions for Coach Kruger?

Q. Lon, do you agree with Doo's assessment that they just didn't bring the fight tonight? If so, how

do you explain that in the month of March?

LON KRUGER: He's referencing the thing we talked about a lot, fighting on the boards. We got whipped on the boards. Yeah, we didn't do what we had to do on the boards, and they beat us up pretty good. Seemed like every missed shot especially in the last four minutes they got those shots back. So that was a major topic of conversation throughout the preparation of the game and the game itself so we lacked the -- we didn't win that battle, I'll put it that way.

Q. Coach, what do you tell your team that they still may have more basketball left but having to endure this heart breaker?

LON KRUGER: We had a lot of opportunities and advantage plays in transition that we didn't finish. You've got to finish those. But, again, it came down to primarily winning the rebound battle, and we didn't do that.

That was the major thing coming out of it when you talk to them. Can't change that in this ball game, but we've got to learn from it going forward.

Q. Coach, you scheduled pretty aggressively in the nonconference to give yours a really strong strength of schedule. Do you think you've done enough to get into the NCAA Tournament because of that?

LON KRUGER: You know, based on what people say, again, the parameters are all 30 games count the same. It doesn't matter if it's conference or nonconference. So given that, you know, based on projections it appears so. But we won't know that for sure until Sunday. But, yeah, those are the rules going in and our guys won a lot of ball games. But like to have won a couple more.

Q. Lon, that Christian shot was right in front of you. Did you know before they went to the review his toe was on the line?

LON KRUGER: No, not at all. Even in the review it looked like the pump fake he was behind the line and when he did pump fake he moved it ever so slightly to get on the line. No, I didn't know at the time.

THE MODERATOR: Okay, Coach, we'll get you go. Thank you.

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Bob Huggins

Lamont West

Jordan McCabe

Jermaine Haley

West Virginia Mountaineers

West Virginia 72, Oklahoma 71

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by the Mountaineers from West Virginia, Coach Bob Huggins. Our student-athletes are Jordan McCabe, Jermaine Haley and Lamont West. We will go directly to questions for our three student-athletes. Then welcome back for Coach Huggins.

Q. What's the feeling like for this team having gone through what all you've gone through this year and come down here and keep the season going another day?

LAMONT WEST: I just think that our goal was to come out here and play hard, and we wanted to give it all we got because we didn't want to go home early. I feel like it's the start of a new season even though it's the tournament or whatever we came out here and we knew it was 0-0. We just wanted to come out here and play as hard as we can.

JORDAN McCABE: We have been talking about it since mid-season, where we were in the standings and everything like that. We knew our only chance to make the postseason or the NCAA Tournament was going to be this tournament right here. We came in knowing that we had nothing to lose, so that meant we should play as hard or harder than everybody else in this tournament, so it was good to see us doing that out there today.

Q. What's going through your guys' mind when they were going through that review? Did you see it on the floor that his foot was on the line, or did you have to wait like everybody else?

JERMAINE HALEY: I'm going to be honest. I thought we were only up 2 points, so I don't know if you guys seen me in the end. I was on the ground thinking that we lost. Luck was on our side. He had his foot on the line and even if the game went into overtime we would



have been prepared to play another couple minutes.

LAMONT WEST: I didn't want to foul him. I had my hand in there and I was thinking of practice. I can't let him shoot it, but we've been jumping at those puff fakes all day. I knew he was going to do something so I just had to stay on the ground and he hit it. I was nervous. I thought we was going to overtime, honestly.

Q. Jermaine, you guys sorta spurted away 10 minutes to go or so in the game, took command and sorta took control. What happened midway through the second half that allowed you guys to get control of that game?

JERMAINE HALEY: I think rebounding the ball. We outrebounded them by 10, and staying aggressive in the second half. We had a couple of mental errors not getting back on defense in the first half, and I think we cleaned them up in the second half.

Q. Lamont, the last few weeks it seems like guys like Jordan, Jermaine and Derek have carried the load on offense. They weren't hitting the first half and things were going well for you. Did you feel when you saw things weren't going well for them that maybe there was added pressure on you that you needed to do something?

LAMONT WEST: No, I didn't really feel like it was pressure. I feel like since I'm one of the older people on the team I feel like I've got a certain responsibility and I wanted to keep them in the game and keep everybody involved. I didn't want to do anything different. I just wanted to tell them to keep their head up and stay in the game and stuff like that, especially DC because he had no fouls. I just wanted to keep everybody's head locked in.

Q. Next opponent, Texas Tech, what's the first thing that comes to your mind when you think of that team?

LAMONT WEST: We owe Texas Tech.

JORDAN McCABE: Texas Tech is a very good team. We know obviously from the regular season what they did to us at home where we thought we had a chance to win the game. We went to their place and it kinda got out of control. So the biggest thing is we're a completely different team from when we were playing in Lubbock. I think all the guys in the locker room know

that and just like going in this first game against Oklahoma our mindset was it is a new season. We've kinda been waiting for it because we've gotten better each and every day since we've got things figured out as a team. With Texas Tech obviously a really good team. We're going to go in there and compete just like we did tonight.

Q. Lamont, what was your response?

LAMONT WEST: We owe them.

Q. Own or owe them?

LAMONT WEST: We owe them. They beat us last time.

Q. And Jermaine, playing in that west Texas area, is there anything special for you about playing a west Texas team?

JERMAINE HALEY: No, it's just another game.

Q. You guys shot thirty 3-pointers tonight. What was it that made you want to keep shooting from outside so much?

LAMONT WEST: Honestly, we only supposed to shoot about 20 a game. So we might get in trouble for that. But, no, I feel like the coaches have a lot of confidence in us to make a lot of shots and they was open, so we was just takin' them.

THE MODERATOR: Guys, congratulations. Thank you. Questions for Coach?

Q. Bob, that ending got to bring up memories of the last time you played Oklahoma in the tournament, the Buddy Hield game.

BOB HUGGINS: Uh-huh.

First thing I did was look over and see if Fran Fraschilla jumped up on the table and screaming, healed! Healed! Ripping his shirt open, a real non-biased announcer. That's what we like.

Q. Bob, Culver was in foul trouble most of the game and yet you still won. How satisfying was it to win knowing you can get very little out of him tonight?

BOB HUGGINS: Those other two guys, Andrew just started playing basketball. So he's going to make some mistakes and we realize that. Logan has been in the program. This is his fourth year. I thought he did a really good job on trying to stay in front of him. That was really good to see.

I mean, obviously we gotta have some confidence in them, because we're going to play 'em. They gotta play. We want to I think at Baylor and those guys played a lot of minutes. Derek was in foul trouble there

as well.

Q. Coach, what did you think of your defense, final few minutes of the game, particularly that steal by Brandon Knapper that led to do a Derek Culver put back that put you up by three?

BOB HUGGINS: Well, we're getting better. They've been looking at a little bit of film of kinda what we did before, where we made every pass hard and we had good ball pressure. You've got to understand these guys really are just -- they played half of a year. Because they didn't really play when those other guys were around. They played a little but they didn't play very much. And Derek didn't play at all the first semester of the school.

They're having fun. They're having fun and they're playing hard. They're excited about playing together, and they're trying to do the things that we ask them to do that we had other guys do. I think when you're playing four freshmen like we are if they continue to get better I think it bodes well for the following years.

Q. Coach, next opponent, Texas Tech, what comes to your mind when you think about that match-up?

BOB HUGGINS: Well, they're really good. What do they got the number one ranked defense in the country, something like that. Culver is the Player of the Year in the league, so obviously they're very talented. I think Chris is the two-time Coach of the Year in the league. So they've got a lot of components. We're just going to play hard and see what happens. We played them really well in Morgantown. It was a really close game. Hopefully it's a real close game tomorrow.

Q. Lamont talked about owing Texas Tech. Is it easy for you guys to get past a game like that when it's possibly fresh in their minds?

BOB HUGGINS: I don't know what Lamont thinks, man? Why do you ask me what Lamont thinks? I don't know if Lamont knows what Lamont thinks. I don't know.

Q. Coach, obviously with the season that you've had this year, how does it feel to come into the conference tournament and get a win?

BOB HUGGINS: Well, it feels good anytime you win, I think. I think when you've done this as long as I have and as long as Lon has, winning is a kind of a relief and losing is like a near-death experience, you know? I'm relieved.

Q. Coach, a lot has been made about your young players stepping up, but at times tonight the veterans like Logan and Lamont carried you. Can you explain your thoughts on how those three including Chase played tonight?

BOB HUGGINS: I thought they played well. I thought they played hard. We went through a spell, which is uncharacteristic of us. I didn't think we played very hard and we had some breakdowns. They scored 24 points in the paint the first half and that's unacceptable and that's pretty much what we talked about at halftime was making sure we get back and find a man.

They're getting better, you know. It's a learning, and growing experience, I think. Somebody asked me why is Jordan playing better? He's not looking over his shoulder now, not looking to see who is behind him to come in. You've got to play with confidence, and he's always had confidence. But he went through a tough spell where he just didn't make any shots and turned it over too much and couldn't find his man, you know? He can find his man now. I keep telling him it's the one with the different color shirt on.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you so much. Congratulations.