

Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 9, 2017



Brad Underwood Leyton Hammonds Cameron McGriff Oklahoma State

Iowa State - 92, Oklahoma State - 83

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by Oklahoma State Cowboys and Coach Brad Underwood, and his two student-athletes with us today are Cameron McGriff and Leyton Hammonds. Coach, an opening statement?

BRAD UNDERWOOD: Tremendous amount of credit to Iowa State. They were terrific today. I thought there were some pivotal moments in this game. We got off to a very tough start, transition defense I think 12 of their first 16 points were in transition. That's been a huge focus for us all week coming into this game was transition and yet we didn't handle that very well. Postseason is about preparing when the ball doesn't go in. How are you going to win?

Allowing a team to shoot 64% in the second half, and going 11 of 30 at the rim in the paint isn't the recipe. We've got to get better at that. Again, I don't want to take anything away from Iowa State. They were the better team today. I'm ecstatic looking forward to postseason play, and I'm ecstatic to get away from Big 12 teams because this league is so good. I look forward to that opportunity next week.

Q. Leyton, could you talk more about the defensive problems today beyond just transition? Iowa State is really good on offense, but they were really effective today.

LEYTON HAMMONDS: I would say just guard the ball and being there on help side and mainly communicating, because when we didn't talk they made us pay.

There were moments out there when we were talking. We were there off the ball. We were guarding the ball, and there were times we didn't and they made us pay and they made the shots and give them credit. They played really well today offensively, and when we didn't do the right things out there today, they made us pay.

Q. Cameron, can you talk about how difficult it is for teams to deal with Monté Morris and the kind of problems we presents? I know Jawun does the same for you guys, but when you guys are on defense and a point guard like that, what does he do to you?

CAMERON McGRIFF: He definitely tries to control the game and he doesn't get sped up as much, and he also goes for rebounds on both ends of the floors which really hurts sometimes on the offensive end for them. He just doesn't really turn the ball over, one of the best turnover ratios in the country.

Q. Leyton, your Coach mentioned he's going to be happy to get away from the Big 12 and all the teams you keep seeing. How excited are you to see "fresh meat" in the NCAA Tournament?

LEYTON HAMMONDS: I'm very excited. This is the best time of the year. I'm blessed I get to play in this tournament again, and like Coach says, we put ourselves in a place to play in this tournament and hopefully get a good seed. I'm excited to play against somebody else, I mean, because it's kinda going to be different. We've never played against these teams before. It's a different league, and it's going to be exciting.

THE MODERATOR: Anything else? Okay, guys. We will let you return to the locker room. Thanks for coming. Good luck as we move through March Madness. Questions for Coach Underwood?

Q. Brad, after the Kansas game the other day you said you guys can put the ball in the basket and that gives you a chance to win in postseason. How difficult is it, though -- how much do you worry about the defensive end? The other team can put the ball in the basket, also.

BRAD UNDERWOOD: We spent a majority of the week working on the defensive end, and, again, give them credit. I should have mentioned in my opening statement, you know, Monté Morris assist away from a triple-double. That's a pretty effective day at the office. They caused so many problems because they have tremendous size on the perimeter, and it's something that we don't have. Great size.

Those guys have a tremendous ability with their experience to jump up and make hard shots and

contested shots and Naz hit a couple, or one in the first half, and I think Matt hit one in the first half. I mean, we were right there!

But, again, we spent a majority of the week working on the defensive end, and, again, you don't anticipate that night where you go, 11 for 30 at the rim. Mitchell Solomon has 8 offensive rebounds and 4 points. We've got to have a better ratio than that. That's frustrating.

Q. Brad, as much of a relief as it is to get way from the Big 12 and especially some of the guards you guys have come up against, how you should that grind and that experience help you next week?

BRAD UNDERWOOD: That's what we're going to talk about. We've got a few days here. I think the silver lining in losing is you get kind of freshen up mentally and physically a little bit. Recharge. We don't know who we will play, but I think there's a certain level of excitement about going to the tournament. It's so special. I want our guys to enjoy that moment, never take that moment for granted, have that experience, have that moment and then you have to play well. But it's knowing that we've been through what is in my opinion the best league in the country, prepares you for a lot. I can promise you we're not going to see better point guards than what we've seen night-in and night-out in this league.

Q. Coach, how do you approach this week? You've got a full week. Do you give the guys more than a day off, a couple of days off? How do you approach intensity as far as practice coming up? Do you look at it as trying to help these guys get legs, what will you be working on? How is it different than a regular week in the Big 12?

BRAD UNDERWOOD: I think there will be some downtime for sure. I think you've got to understand that if you lose you go home. So, you know, beating them up this week is not the answer, and whether it's a week from today or a week from tomorrow, when we play, we've got a little bit of time. But we also have things we have to go back to the drawing board on and clean up and make a better effort to do a few things. That will enable us to win. The important thing is I want our players to relish the moment and to never take that for granted.

We'll talk about that some. I've talked about -- I always talk about that with my teams in the past and I think it's something that we've got to be in the right frame of mind and go out and have a lot of fun and play very hard.

Q. Coach, it's been a while since your team has lost three games in a row, and, again, three games

against three really good basketball teams. Going into this part of season where every game now is more magnified, are you concerned at all that this is a first time in a while that your team has been on this kind of a losing streak?

BRAD UNDERWOOD: No, I was bothered more by today. Iowa State on Senior Night, that was a high-level basketball game. Kansas, No. 1 in the country, high-level basketball game. Both teams, we played really, really well. Tonight was more of a fluke, I think, missing 19 shots in the paint. I hope it wasn't anything more than that. I was disappointed. I thought it steam rolled, but everybody -- there are so few teams that are going to win their last game at the high major level that are going into postseason. You have one conference winner in your five power conferences, a lot of teams going in on a less. We will approach that and get our guys mentally right for that.

Q. Coach, is there an anticipated seeding that you think you guys will get come Sunday?

BRAD UNDERWOOD: I wouldn't even guess. Every time I've thought about that in the past, I've been wrong. There's so many factors that go into it because of where you can play teams. You know, if you're look at North Carolina and Kansas as one seeds, we've played them. So we can't play 'em early. And how that all factors out and where the at-larges go, man, it gets to be way too complicated for me. I'm not near smart enough to figure all that stuff out, but I think our league is excellent and I think that will give us an opportunity to be a decent seed.

Q. Brad, when it comes to the NCAA Tournament is there a style of team that you fit better against or a style of team, the make-up of a team that you don't fit well against? How much do you look at that?

BRAD UNDERWOOD: I think we've played just about -- I think that's the one thing we did in our nonleague schedule. When you play UConn, Georgetown. Georgetown was huge. Carolina was huge, had great guards. Maryland. I think we've seen just about everything. I think the one thing that, you know, West Virginia in this league is very big. We've had success against them. TCU is very big.

So I think it's a matter of how we play more than what the other opponent has or doesn't have, and I think we're capable of beating anybody. I think it's more about toughness, more about execution, and that's why Iowa State won today.

Q. Back on the defense today, sounds like you attribute today more to just Iowa State's offensive excellence more so than maybe your defensive shortcomings other than the transition? Would that be accurate?

BRAD UNDERWOOD: Yeah, Iowa State makes you score against them. You have to score. You have to take advantage. We have 19 offensive rebounds, and I don't know what our second-chance, I guess we had 25 second-chance points, but you have to score against them because they've pretty much done it all year long. And they do it from three. If you're getting 2s, you've got to be very efficient.

When you don't score, every breakdown becomes magnified a little bit on the defensive end. Seemed like every time we got multiple stops or had an opportunity, we weren't able to score, take advantage of it. It was missed layups or missed -- we got a couple of clean looks, and Jeffrey Carroll had a driving layup. You guys have all seen, Jeff doesn't miss that. Jeff misses a layup, and it's an and-one at the other end. I think it was a 2 or 3-point game at that point, so they put a lot of pressure on you to be good offensively and we weren't. When you get multiple stops you consider yourself fortunate, but you better take advantage of them.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much, Coach. Good luck next week.