

Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 9, 2017

Bruce Weber

Barry Brown

D.J. Johnson

Kansas State Wildcats

Kansas State - 70, Baylor - 64

THE MODERATOR: We're ready to begin with the Wildcats of Kansas State, Coach Bruce Weber and his two student-athletes, D.J. Johnson and Barry Brown. Coach, opening comment?

BRUCE WEBER: Couldn't be more proud of our guys. They fought through adversity, fought through injuries. They've stayed coachable. They've stayed together and just a great run here. We talked last week, March Madness started last week for us at TCU and continued at Brambridge and now we're at the Sprint Center, and we beat a teams that's one of the top RPI teams in the country.

We talked about fighting and battling and scraping and anything we could do to get a win and sharing the basketball. I thought one of the keys was the decision making by Kam and Wes to get it to our big guys, and I thought our bench was really, really important especially -- in both halves it was really important. That was important and it's great to have D.J. healthy and doing the things he can do; and then, you know, just for Barry to make a bunch of free throws and D.J. down the stretch to ice the thing, just really happy.

But we are not done. We told them the only way you know you're in the NCAA Tournament is to win the tournament, so we took one more step toward that. And now we've got to worry about West Virginia and that's what we've got to focus on.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the guys?

Q. Where did that shooting prowess come from today?

BARRY BROWN: Feel like it came from my teammates. We ran a couple of plays and some of it was just, like the one and and-one 3, Wes was able to find me. But I credit my teammates for getting me open and I had to reward 'em by making the shot.



Q. What's going through your mind? You ripped down that rebound and got fouled and you were high fiving D.J. and Stokes slapped you. What's going through your mind with an impending victory with 30 seconds to go?

BARRY BROWN: I was just trying to hit those free throws and finish out the game. They fought to the end of the horn. I had to hit those free throws and get back on defense. I wasn't thinking about the game was over, I was just trying to hit the free throws and get back.

Q. For Barry and D.J., obviously you've had some huge distractions lately, the talk about coaches future and then also your AD's decision to go to Tennessee. Could you talk about how this team was able to stay locked in and just focus on beating Baylor?

BARRY BROWN: We talked about all the things that were going on off the court, but Coach kept us level-headed and kept us thinking about basketball. It paid off. The team stayed together, no matter what the people were saying in the media and all of this about all of that. We stayed together and we were able to pull out a victory today.

D.J. JOHNSON: Same thing, Coach helped us to stay focused on basketball and don't worry about anything else, just keep improving our game.

Q. After that Oklahoma loss, everything seemed to change. Coach Weber said at the TCU shootaround he got after you a little bit and said some things that he hasn't in the past. What exactly happened to this team that you could rattle of these three significant victories?

BARRY BROWN: I feel like we just came together. We knew what people were saying, and we didn't want to see the things happen that people were saying outside of this basketball family. We stuck together. We played for Coach, played for one another and able to rattle off three wins. So we've got to be able to do that for the future.

D.J. JOHNSON: Same, just focusing in on each other and keep out the noise and just wanted to keep on improving.

Q. Barry, you mentioned the free throws. Did

hitting the first couple of those down the stretch help your confidence? That's been a shaky area for you this year.

BARRY BROWN: Yeah, really I was just trying to stay focused, not worry about making or missing. Like Coach says, I was worried about my routine, keeping my hands up, going through my routine and taking those deep breaths, getting my mind clear and knocking the free throws down for my teammates.

Q. D.J., it seemed like you guys played with a whole lot of heart and effort tonight. What did you think of it? Were you as impressed as maybe some fans watching in?

D.J. JOHNSON: Looked good from the bench, and we played as a team. When we do that we usually have good outcomes.

Q. D.J., how good was Barry on 3-pointers? What kind of lift did that give you guys?

D.J. JOHNSON: Geesh! 4 for 6! 4 for 4! (Laughter.) It speaks for itself, 4 for 4!

Q. D.J., the bench really gave you, especially Isaiah and Xavier and Carlbe, was that the best bench production you've had in a while?

D.J. JOHNSON: How much did the bench score?

Q. 19.

D.J. JOHNSON: They did good. Isaiah came in and gave us quality minutes. I think he had 8 points or so, and same with Xavier Sneed. And I think Isaiah had 8 points in 8 minutes and he pulled down a couple of rebounds, so bench production was great.

THE MODERATOR: Okay, guys, we will let you go back to the locker room. Congratulations on your victory. Good luck tomorrow. Questions now for Coach Weber?

Q. Bruce, I'm sure you could choose a lot of things, but what impressed most about that effort?

BRUCE WEBER: I think what you said, effort. That's what we talked about. Play with a determination and I told 'em before the game I said I'm not -- the word determination coaches use it all the time you can look it up in the dictionary, they give you some long definition of what it is. But when you feel it and you see it and when they had it, and they had it against TCU, Texas Tech and we had it against Baylor the first time and we had it tonight, that determination, that effort, playing hard, getting on the floor, fighting and scraping for everything, I think that's what -- I really appreciate, when we shared the ball. Kam started slow then he got on a roll and started making point guard plays and they were huge passes that we got more points in the paint than they do.

That's usually been their game, and sharing the basketball, him and you have Wes with 4 and 1 and Kam with 5 and 3 which was really important, and we kept talking about they execute so well out-of-bounds plays at the end of games. We lost Manu that one time at the end on that cross screen down screen, but other than that we made 'em earn everything. So it was a great defensive effort by our guys.

Q. Barry's game, what kind of confidence this might give him in being able to lift your team heading into tomorrow?

BRUCE WEBER: We made big shots and Barry made 'em. The one thing -- one, I've told him to put time in in the gym and be in there, and he does it more than anybody. I think once you get that first one down, he got one down early and that obviously helps your confidence. But the big thing, and he mentioned it, Kam got into the zone. We got it to him. Got him open shots, and it's easier to make open shots than ones with contested shots. All of them except the last one where he got fouled where it was a shot clock thing where he had to get it up there. I thought the other ones were good, open shots. You gotta give Barry credit, three steals against. He didn't make all-defensive team, to me, I don't understand. He has guarded all the best players. He's set a record for K-State history for steals in a season. It's continued to grow, and he guarded Manu and that is a tough match-up; and, you know, he will have another tough one with Carter tomorrow. But we've had to put him on the toughest players every game and he's rose to the occasion.

Q. The 25-25 at halftime seems like a bad offensive performance but kinda seemed like the defense was stepping up for both teams in the first half. Is that what you saw?

BRUCE WEBER: It's our conference. First of all, today must be the day of the purple with TCU and our win, but you play -- every game is close. I don't think people understand nation wide how tough the teams here are. You just saw what TCU did to Kansas today and they played 'em close at home the first time and battled them.

Texas and West Virginia game, got so many good teams. Now you got to play 'em not only two times, but a third time. Our players know every call that they have, you know. They're yelling for a shoulder. We know what's coming. We stayed there. One time Wes beat Motley to it. He ran over him. That's part of playing the second time, third time, and if you're locked in, I just kept telling 'em be locked in on defense.

I thought we did a good job. We knew they would play

more zone. We probably didn't handle it as well, first half. Second half I thought we did a better job against the zone and when we got 'em out of the zone that's when we were most effective with the ball screens, getting to the hoop and making the right decisions.

Q. What are keys to beating West Virginia since you are playing them for the third time and what would a win mean for your program?

BRUCE WEBER: Get to the championship. That's important. You've got another -- you just beat a top-10 team, one of the top RPI teams in the country. You got another top-10 team that we beat once and they hammered us the second time. One, get back to the hotel and get some rest and get food in 'em and get rest and the coaches get back at it preparing us. We talked about success is when opportunity meets preparation, and that's when you have success. You know, we gotta be prepared, we've got another opportunity we've got to be prepared and dealing with their press, dealing with their zones.

They've gone 1-3-1. They've done some different things, taking care of the ball and play strong. But I think the big thing is get mentally ready and get locked in. I told them we came here to win the championship not to just win one game, and that's what our focus has to be, getting to that championship game.

Q. Coach, you said locked in, determination, your team has played some good basketball at times this year, including the first half in Waco. But was this the best forty minutes you guys have played wire-to-wire?

BRUCE WEBER: I think so. There is no doubt to play on a neutral court and beat a really good team like that. They didn't play bad! Both ends of the court, sharing the basketball, making good shots, making free throws. We outdid them at what they do well. That's what makes them special and that's what I talked about. Great win for our kids, and now see if we can get after it tomorrow night against the Mountaineers.