Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship
Thursday, March 10, 2016

Shaka Smart
Connor Lammert
Isaiah Taylor
Texas

Baylor-75, Texas-61

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by the Texas Longhorns, Coach Shaka Smart and the two student-athletes today are Connor Lammert and Isaiah Taylor. Coach, we will call on you first.

COACH SMART: Congratulations to Baylor. I thought they were the more aggressive team for the majority of the game. That's what allowed them to win. It was really disappointing for our team because we felt like we had a great opportunity to advance, but here we are.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach. Questions now for our student-athletes.

Q. Isaiah, two things. Number one, was your foot bothering you today, that's number one. And number two, the Baylor game in Austin, the Kansas game, this one, what do you think is the common thread of why you guys get behind and have to kind of fight an uphill battles?
ISAIAH TAYLOR: My foot is fine. I think we didn't come out with enough urgency. The past two games, we always come out sluggish. We come out slow and we end up fighting back, and I think that's what puts us in a hole late.

And the Kansas game today, we weren't able to battle back.

Q. Connor, on that note, where do you see the sluggishness coming from? And is that starting to be a concern for you since it happened a couple of times the last few weeks?
CONNOR LAMMERT: You said the sluggishness?

Q. That Isaiah mentioned.
CONNOR LAMMERT: I think our problem is we don't do it consistently. We come out on defense and we show that we have potential to guard really anybody in the country. And for whatever reason if we let our offense dictate our defense, if we're not focused on the right things, we're just -- we're this, we're 75 points getting and scored on. And that's just not going to get it done when you can't put the ball in the hole, and when you get good shots.

So overall, I think this team needs to take individual responsibility and ownership of defense. Because a team like this, like Baylor, they go one-on-one a lot. A lot of isos, and a lot of pick-and-roll defense. And it's individually, but we have to have guys on the same page as a team. And I go back to consistency, we don't have that consistently enough. And we have to have five guys on the court at one time that are willing to do whatever it takes to get a stop, and I think that's our biggest problem right now.

Q. Connor, if I had told you before the game that you were the only starter to score in the first half, how would you have reacted?
CONNOR LAMMERT: I'd been surprised. Obviously, we got good looks, though, and we want our guys taking those shots. So I think other than that last three-pointer that they had in the half, I think we win the half with some momentum. We came back and were heading the right direction. But I guess I would be surprised, to answer your question, if I was the only one that had a bucket.

Q. Connor, was Baylor doing something defensively, maybe you guys weren't hitting those shots? Or was it just as simple as guys not hitting the opening looks?
CONNOR LAMMERT: We got every -- we got some good looks, though, and we want our guys taking those shots. So I think other than that last three-point that they had in the half, I think we win the half with some momentum. We came back and were heading the right direction. But I guess I would be surprised, to answer your question, if I was the only one that had a bucket.

Q. Isaiah, the last nine games, you are 4-5 now. How much are you worried about not having positive momentum going into the NCAA tournament?
ISAIAH TAYLOR: I mean, we just have to respond, just bounce back, put this game in the past. We know that to win these games, we're not playing anymore gimmies the rest of the way, especially going into the tournament. Baylor was a good team and they did a...
good job tonight, but we have to do a better job of making the easy buckets and just coming out with a sense of urgency.

Q. Connor, was it anything that Baylor did specific-on the glass to contribute to the deficit or just kind of the effort today?
CONNER LAMMERT: We probably could have sent more guys to the offensive glass more consistently. I think, coming from me, I could have gone to the glass a lot more. And we got good shots and they just crashed the boards really well. And, you know, they're very physical. They were just the more aggressive team on the glass today, too.

It's a tough pill to swallow saying that right now after I know this game meant so much to us, but for them to -- for me to say they out worked us is tough, but you can see they out rebounded us by almost 20 rebounds.

THE MODERATOR: All right, Connor and Isaiah, thank you for coming. Good luck next week. Questions for Coach Smart.

Q. Just to clarify on Ridley, he was cleared to play and kind of what was your approach with him and kind of how do you see him moving forward into next week?
COACH SMART: It's not as simple as being cleared to play. Giving him restrictions in terms of how much he can go on his foot. He practiced some yesterday, it is the first time he had gotten any type of live action. Just a little bit yesterday. Looked good, and so the doctor and trainer gave me a restriction on how many minutes he could play. It wasn't a lot. And so he went in there for 2:00 and did a good job when he was in. But at halftime, he was feeling a little bit of pain. So that was that, he wasn't going to play anymore according to all of us.

Q. Shaka, what is going through your mind, or what are you seeing when in these big games you play, the big crowds, and you guys are down by double digits in the first half, you having spent the whole game fighting uphill?
COACH SMART: Well, first of all, I don't think it's fair to characterize all the big games like that. But in the games that you're referring to, what's going through my mind is there's a lot of things that we need to do better to erase the lead and to get to where we want to be in the game. And it all starts on the defensive end.

I thought offensively we missed a lot of easy shots. We got a lot of really good looks. We missed some free throws early. Unfortunately, it's a pattern that we have yet to break that when some things don't go our way offensively. Some or all of our guys on the floor get bummer out and disappointed, and that impacts the defensive focus and aggressiveness.

Q. Coach, from your first year in the league, can the Longhorns succeed averaging less than 70 points a game?
COACH SMART: What do you mean long-term? Or this year?

Q. Long-term.
COACH SMART: You'd have to hold the other team to one point less than your score.

Q. Is the answer yes then?
COACH SMART: It depends on how good you are in defense.

Q. (Off microphone)?
COACH SMART: What's that?

Q. You led in scoring defense.
COACH SMART: Not today. Not in a lot of our losses. So the answer to your question it's not about just one end of the floor, it's interaction with both.

Would we like to score more points? Does it give you a bigger margin for error on defense? Yes. If we shoot 38% from the field, like we did today, if we score 61 points like we did today, then no. But if we -- if on the defensive end, you know, we do some of the things that we've done at times and we do things at a higher level, more aggressively, then you don't have to score.

I believe we beat Baylor -- I don't know if it was 66-59, something like that, the first time we played them. In a game like that, yes. But I think you're just talking about overall, there's no question we'd like to score more points.

Q. Shaka, what is your level of concern that maybe this team has peaked with little positive momentum going forward in the tournament?
COACH SMART: I mean, you'd love to have great momentum going into the tournament, but I don't think that necessarily dictates that you don't have a chance to win. To me, as a coach, it's more about we've got to play better, you know, and all the things that go into that. So momentum would be great. We don't have that. But what's more important is all the things that go into winning.

And, you know, on the flip side of your question, there's been games where we didn't play -- particularly play where we had quote-unquote momentum, so it's about having a hard edge and having a level of aggressiveness and connectivity as a team.

. . . when all is said, we’re done®
We didn't have that today. There's probably a few reasons why. We'll get another opportunity next week. But you know what, if we bring the same approach in that game, our first game, then we won't stick around very long. So I think the momentum is great if you can have it, but what's more important is the five guys on the floor creating a connected effort to do the things you want them doing on a basketball court.

Q. Coach, Taurean Prince 24 points, 13 rebounds. In the games you have seen him the three times this year, what makes him such a difficult match-up?

COACH SMART: He's a really good player. I think he's probably an NBA-level guy. Just got really good size. You know, for us, we don't necessarily have a lot of taller wing players, so whoever we have on him is either going to be significantly shorter or one of our bigger guys that may struggle keeping him in front. And so at times we've done a good job kind of masking that deficiency, but we didn't today. And Prince had a lot to do with that. He was terrific. I thought his aggressiveness was really good early on, just the way that he attacked and was assertive.

I told our guys he's going to shoot a lot, that's happening. He's going to shoot a lot, it's just a matter of how's efficient he is. And we allowed him to be too comfortable. When you give a guy like that comfort, he's going to have a big game.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you so much.

COACH SMART: Thank you.