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

Scott Drew
Al Freeman
Taurean Prince
Rico Gathers
Baylor

Baylor-75, Texas-61

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by the Baylor Bears, Coach Scott Drew. The three student-athletes today, Rico Gathers, Taurean Prince and Al Freeman. Coach, we'll go to you first for an opening statement. Congratulations on the day's victory.

COACH DREW: Well, our team knew any time you're playing Texas, it means a lot to our fans and it means a lot to us. And let alone, it's a Big 12 tournament and you're playing for a chance to win the championship and we knew we had to compete at a high level. We lost some of our last games against some good teams, and I think we're ready to get that woozy taste out of our mouth. I thought we competed, and I was proud we shot free throws 20-23. In the couple of losses, we haven't shot free throws. And in close games you have to make them and I thought everybody did a great job there.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach. Let's move over to our student-athletes first and come back to Coach Drew.

Q. This is for Taurean. You looked really inspired out there. Were you just determined to get off to a great start in this tournament?
TAUREAN PRINCE: The tournament was bringing intensity, do whatever we had to do to keep the team alive and in the moment. So I just wanted to show my effort on the rebounding of things.

Q. Rico, can you talk about you all's rebounding edge and this was probably your best game in quite awhile.
RICO GATHERS: I mean, when you deal with what I have been dealing with for the past three, four weeks, just trying to get myself back in shape, and also just getting back into the groove of things.

I mean, you have to give credit to possibly like Johnathan Motley. You know, coming out and taking care of business from the jump, and just allowing me to ease my way back into the flow of things. So I think you got to give it to a dude like that who can draw a lot of double-teams and stuff, it makes it easy for me to come in off the bench and be able to sneak in and get a couple of rebounds in.

Q. This is for Al. What did you all do defensively? They only shot 38%, hit 5-16 three-pointers.
AL FREEMAN: We just wanted to come out with energy. Come out just flying around, give good ball pressure, guard the ball, play the passing lanes, just trying to do everything we could do and control what we can control on the defensive end and limit them to second-chance points as much as possible.

Rico did a great job, T.P. on the boards, Mot, T.J. Williams, we tried to come out with defensive energy and fly around and play quick, play fast and play hard.

Q. Taurean, late in the game, they went on a bit of a run, but you were able to keep them at arm's length. Were they doing anything different late in the game? Or was it just something you noticed late in the game you can put the peddle to the floor and put them away?
TAUREAN PRINCE: We just stayed aggressively defensively. We said they have to beat us with 2s and weren't going to let them beat us with 3 and why they went 5-16, and originally focusing on running them off the line. I think we did a good job of staying composed and not worrying about them getting the easy looks, so I think that's why the great leadership by seniors and upperclassmen to keep everybody together.

Q. This is for Al. Coach talked about getting off to a fast start. You guys led for 37 of the 40 minutes. How big was that confidence-wise, knowing that you can play with the lead and try to extend it and just kept rolling along there?
AL FREEMAN: It definitely gave the team more confidence playing with the lead. You know, it's hard to play from behind, and you know when the team gets up on you, you kind of have to play catch-up. You have to focus in even more on getting stops and making shots. And not saying we didn't focus in on it, because...
obviously we did, but when we play with the lead, we just were able to play with rhythm, kind of get what we want. We was dictating the action a little bit, as much as we could, and we was executing and getting stops. It allowed us to relax. When you relax, you play basketball a lot easier.

Q. This is for whoever wants to answer. Texas started out 5-23 in the first half. I mean, was it something you guys were doing defensively? How critical was it, allowing you to build the lead? COACH DREW: It was the coaching (laughter).

TAUREAN PRINCE: I think it was the first five minutes. We took it upon ourselves to come out with a lot of energy and focus on, like I said, taking away the threes and making sure that they felt our pressure. Credit to the effort in the young guys and how Freeman putting a lot of pressure on their point guards and shooting guards up there and not allowing them to do certain things they are used to doing.

Q. Rico, Jake Lindsey had that three-pointer before the half, how big was that momentum going into the locker room?
RICO GATHERS: That was a big three, especially since he had just got hit in the nose and he was kind of teary-eyed. But just for him being able to step up and make that shot right before the half, man, that's big. And I am real proud of him.

THE MODERATOR: Guys, thank you very much. Congratulations on your victory and look forward to seeing you tomorrow. Questions for Coach.

Q. Congrats. I know this is one of the -- every four years, you can go on a foreign trip and this was that, and you guys went to Canada. I was wondering, obviously, you are quite a ways from that now, but I was wondering, looking back, how that helped the team this year compared to past years and where it is you are now?
COACH DREW: I think the foreign trips really help in the beginning of the year more than anything. It gives you a jump start on teams that haven't had as much time to practice. By the end of the year, it might be something that hurts you because you might be more tired. But in the beginning, definitely it helped us.

Q. Coach, obviously kind of a rocky finish to the regular season. How important is the Big 12 tournament for your team to build momentum getting ready for the NCAA tournament?
COACH DREW: This is the tough thing in the Big 12. I keep saying, since year 2000, this is the highest rank conference than any conference has been other than the ACC. What that means is when you are playing great teams, you could be playing good basketball and not get a win. So that makes it tough. I mean, I think we're playing decent, but we just didn't get some wins. And credit the other teams. Obviously, as a coach, you always want to go into the NCAA tournament having momentum, but a chance to play here in Kansas City that inspires and motivates you enough. And it's a new chance to cut down nets and win a championship, and the upperclassmen especially appreciate that.

Q. Coach, if you guys are to play, let's say, Kansas, if they beat Kansas State in the next game, you played them tough in Waco last time. What makes them so good this season especially than other seasons?
COACH DREW: I think you are asking about Kansas, I think their defense. I think that's been consistent and that's why they've been where have been at. And I think a couple of years past, they had some teams that were mostly on the offensive end, but didn't consistently guard as well as this team is doing and they really make you work for everything.

Q. Coach, you talk about your rocky end to the season, but it seems that you guys almost reset when you come here to Kansas City. Do you have a certain message after the regular season for your team going into post-season? Because it always seems like you guys find success here in this conference tournament.
COACH DREW: I think it always starts with your upperclassmen and they set the tone. They pass it on to the underclassmen and the great thing is over time they learn as underclassmen, they take the responsibility of leadership as upperclassmen. And I think what's really important in this program is that you have people that don't transfer, they stay in, they bye in, it means a lot to them. So really, if you're asking why we have been successful, it would be the leadership in the post-season.

Q. Scott, Taurean probably had one of his best games of the year. What did you see from him out there today?
COACH DREW: He was really aggressive rebounding, did a great job crashing the boards. And T.P. is one of those guys offensively that is a tough match-up for people. When he is defending and rebounding then our team goes to another level, and he was really active tonight.

Q. Scott, Isaiah, you really kept him out of the lane the whole game, was that attributed to your defense? Or did you feel he was lacking a little burst with his fasciitis injury or what was going on?
COACH DREW: I think everyone who plays with Texas
starts with Isaiah and key in on him and trying to make things as difficult as possible. He is a great player and that's why he had nine assists, he had open teammates. And I know the question was asked early, were we doing something defensively and I think when you get to a conference tournament, a different arena, I think both teams miss some shots that they would normally hit, but I think then he might have had 12 or 13 assists.

Q. Scott, with particularly with Motley in foul trouble, how big was this for Rico to have the game that he did coming off the bench?

COACH DREW: Well, I think Rico hasn't -- with that bacteria infection hasn't been himself. And it's great getting him back with the energy, the smile, the enthusiasm because he is a warrior, he's going to compete. Obviously when you're healthy, you play at a better level. And he was huge tonight because 46 to 27, if you don't have the rebounding advantage and edge, then probably not winning.

THE MODERATOR: All right, Coach. Thank you very much and good luck tomorrow.

COACH DREW: Thank you.