

March 8, 2007



An interview with:

OKLAHOMA STATE

CHARLIE FISS: We're joined now by the Cowboys from Oklahoma State. Coach Sean Sutton and his student athletes, Mario Boggan and Marcus Dove.

Coach, we will call on you for your thoughts on tonight's game.

COACH SEAN SUTTON: I thought our players really responded to the challenge tonight. Monday night in Lincoln, I don't think anybody that was there felt very good about that performance at all. It really challenged our players the last couple days, not only about being able to win this tournament but to have a really solid performance to start out with.

I thought defensively for 40 minutes is about as well as we have played all year long. Very active early, got our hands on a lot of balls. I think we had 26 deflections at half time. Our goal every game is to get somewhere between 40 and 45, and then we really clamped down on their three-point shooters.

The second half, we didn't shoot the ball well. We had to play without Mario for a long stretch there, but I really liked the effort and the energy that our guys played with. If they will play that way the rest of the way, then I think we have got a chance to win this tournament. That was our goal when we came here.

Q. Same question, it seemed to be a game there was a special intensity, it seemed. It seemed like it was at another level. Did you sense that?

MARCUS DOVE: Yeah, we didn't play our best when we first played on Monday night, so we kind of had a chip on our shoulder. We wanted to come out and show the fans we still know how to play Oklahoma State basketball. And I think that's what we did tonight.

MARIO BOGGAN: The same. I feel like Monday we didn't play as intense as, you know, we thought we should have. We just wanted to come out tonight and play real intense because the coaches have been stressing it the last couple days in practice.

We wanted to come out as a team collectively, be real intense and play hard on the defensive end.

Q. Aside from the intensity, at the end of the game it seemed like the first time there were big bright smiles on your guys' faces. I noticed, Coach, Marcus, you guys hugged, had a few words, had a big smile on your faces. Is that a smile of relief? A smile of we got something accomplished? A smile of the season continues? How would you describe those final moments after you two had the favorable words?

MARCUS DOVE: I would say a combination of all. We did accomplish something. We got our first win of four. Now we just got to go three more.

We played Oklahoma State basketball defense. Like we said earlier, that's the best we played defensively all year. Even though we didn't play that well offensively, but any time you play that well defensively, it makes up for it.

Q. Marcus, you guys seemed a lot more aggressive. All five starters had a foul in the first three minutes. Was that a sign you guys were out there trying to get all up in there?

MARCUS DOVE: Yeah, we really wanted to get in the passing lane and try to get alive, get a lot of steals early and keep our intensity up. We got a couple of fouls early, but we didn't let that lose our intensity.

Q. Mario, is it possible for you guys to keep up this kind of defensive intensity for four days straight?

MARIO BOGGAN: I think it is very possible. I mean, just within yourself, you know,

knowing your assignments and Coach giving us a great scout report, following our direction from the coach, I feel like we can keep up the intensity.

Q. For both players. Given the way you are feeling about yourselves now, can you all talk about getting another crack at Texas A&M?

MARCUS DOVE: Our first two times we played against A&M we didn't really play our best. Not to take away anything from them. They played really well. I mean, they are the Top 3 team in the Big 12 and the Top 10 in the country. They are a great team. Acie Law, Joseph Jones, they got a lot of good players.

We are looking forward to get another chance and play them and try to beat them this time.

MARIO BOGGAN: I feel the same. First two times we didn't really get -- we weren't playing defense that good, and our offense wasn't clicking also. So I feel like this time -- I mean, we are going to go out there and just play harder. I feel like it is going to be a better game than last two games we had played.

Q. Marcus, you mentioned earlier that you hadn't been playing Oklahoma State basketball. You wanted to show people that. Can you describe your emotions, how you feel you have been playing? Is it frustration? Is it embarrassment? What kind of emotion describes the way you guys have played the last two months?

MARCUS DOVE: I think most of it is frustration knowing we could play a lot better than we have. Knowing that we're not only letting ourselves down and the coaching staff down, but the fans for Oklahoma. I think this is a good platform to get that back, a little of what we lost, back.

Q. Coach, same question for you as I asked Marcus about the smiles at the end of the game and your interaction with the players, in particular Marcus. For you, was it a sense of relief or a sense of accomplishment? Or, hey, we're back in it kind of a thing?

COACH SEAN SUTTON: I was just so mad Monday night after that game. I was probably as intense in that locker room before the game as I have been in a long time. Wanted them to embrace the challenge of this game and to play defense like our program has been known for.

That's the one thing that this year -- we haven't played very good defense. That's why we're in the position that we are.

And I told them -- I really challenged them. I think it was a reward for how hard they played, that I wanted them to feel great about their effort. And when they play that way, the fans appreciate it and they ought to feel good about themselves.

Q. Sean, on Monday night when you guys got down 29, I know you had to kind of start pressing. Did you maybe learn something about Nebraska and the way they handled the ball that came in handy?

COACH SEAN SUTTON: I think you have to try to learn something out of every loss. I think that's one of the advantages that we had. As poorly as we played, I thought we exposed an area of weakness with them that we were able to speed their guards up and pressure their guards.

That was the game plan from the start tonight, was to pick them up on every made basket, on every made free throw and make them play the game 94 feet against our defense.

I thought we really got into them. We wanted to challenge every passing lane and put heavy pressure on the ball.

I didn't mind those five fouls to start the first half at all. I would take it again tomorrow night if they will play with the same mind-set and just as aggressive.

Q. Sean, was it a concern about Obi, playing him too much or knowing when to put him in or not? And just secondly, your thoughts on Obi because he has such an athletic ability, he is probably what you want out there.

COACH SEAN SUTTON: Our team lost a lot when we lost him early because he is such a play maker. He plays fearless out there on the court and he makes plays for other people.

I think he will be rested tomorrow night. He only played 19 minutes tonight. I thought one of the things that came out of our loss on Monday is that he got to play 29 minutes and played very well at the offensive end which I thought helped his confidence tonight.

Working him back into the rotation of the team, it is not something that I'm concerned about because I think our players understand we're a better team when he is on the court. Tonight, as

hard as we played at the defensive end, we still have a lot of guys that are fresh. Kenny Cooper didn't have to play a lot, David Monds didn't have to play a lot, Mario got in foul trouble and sat on the bench quite a bit in the second half.

Tomorrow night's game will be just as intense and Texas A&M is a lot better team. I don't think energy or intensity is going to be a problem. I met with them all last night, and I said, this is it. There is no tomorrow. This is it. You guys want to keep playing, you have to win. You are going to regret this later in life if you don't leave it all out there on the court.

I said, this is a once in a lifetime opportunity. Obi, you're the only freshman on this team. There is no guarantee by the time -- in three years that the tournament will be back in Oklahoma City. At some point, it should come back here. I think Oklahoma City will do a great job at proving that. But it may not happen during his career at Oklahoma State.

I said, you guys have a chance to separate yourself among the teams, not only at Oklahoma State but all the teams in the Big 12. Nobody has won four straight games in this tournament. We have one down. We still have three to go. If we can play as well tomorrow night as defensively and played a little bit better at the offensive end, then I think we will be right there with a chance to win.

Q. Sean, the last time you played Texas A&M in Stillwater, is tomorrow night also as much about pride as maybe tonight was?

COACH SEAN SUTTON: That's sort of been discussed in the locker room and the fact that what happened and still the last time that we played was -- Texas A&M played very well but it was embarrassing to get beat like that on our home court. I think it is fresh in our mind that our fans weren't very pleased with that game. Personally, I didn't blame them because we should never play that way on our home court. But they are well aware of what took place that night.

The biggest motivation is winning it and having a chance to go to the NCAA tournament. I think they know that we are going to have to play well tomorrow night because Texas A&M is a team that has got all the ingredients to make a Final 4 team. I have said this before. They remind me a lot of the really good teams we had at Oklahoma State. They don't beat themselves. They are very well coached.

As Barry says, they play rattlesnake-type defense and they're tough. They have got two

great players in Acie Law and Joseph Jones. I think our guys know what we are up against.

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An interview with:

NEBRASKA

CHARLIE FISS: We are joined by the Cornhuskers from the University of Nebraska. Coach Doc Sadler and his two student athletes, Aleks Maric and Charles Richardson Jr.

Coach, your assessment of tonight's game?

COACH DOC SADLER: I thought both teams played really good defense. I couldn't be prouder of a team. You know, to hold a team that is as talented as Oklahoma State to 53 points, I think that says a lot about our guys. That's the way it has been all year. They have just given everything that they've got.

That's why they had chances to win. We just couldn't score tonight. You got to give Oklahoma State credit. They're so big and physical. You know, they jumped that first five or six minutes and came after us like we knew they would do. And we weren't able to withstand that kind of pressure to stay with what we needed to do and that was to get the ball to Aleks.

I thought we rushed some things and made their defense look better than it would have if we would have been just a little more patient.

Overall, 24 turnovers, you can't win in the tournament with 24 turnovers. Again, that's a credit to them. But overall, I couldn't be any prouder. I told our team, there is not a team in this league that I would have rather coached because I promise you there is not a coach that can say what I can say, and that is we've had one bad practice all year. And when you have only had one bad practice and you're a coach, you know that they are giving you everything that they've got.

That's a credit to our players.

Q. Charles, can you just address Oklahoma State's defense? How much did that catch you off guard the way they came out in

comparison to how they came out on Monday night?

CHARLES RICHARDSON JR.: They came out with a lot of energy. You know, they pressured the ball. They just came out and played pressured defense. I don't think -- they didn't do anything different than they did on Monday. We just wasn't ready the first couple minutes for their defensive pressure.

You know, credit to them. They came out ready to play tonight. You know, both teams played hard and they just -- they just came out on top.

Q. Guys, both of you, Coach was talking about how tired this team was on Monday. Do you think that had anything to do with the performance tonight?

CHARLES RICHARDSON JR.: No, I don't think so. It is just one of those nights. We didn't shoot the ball well and we wasn't patient at times to get Aleks some touches down low. Their defense took us out of our game plan a little bit.

Once we got going, we was back into the game. But by that time, it was almost over. But I don't think -- I don't think we had any fatigue problems out there tonight.

Q. Aleks, getting behind as early as you guys did, does it start wearing on you after a while being down ten consistently throughout the game?

ALEKS MARIC: No, not at all. I think we are a very tough team. We have shown during the year we can come from behind and win games. That's no excuse.

I think both teams played hard, and like Coach said, with 24 turnovers, it is hard to win.

Q. What about your defense, Charles, as Nebraska's defense as a team?

CHARLES RICHARDSON JR.: Both teams played great defense. We held them to 50-some points. I don't think defense was a problem tonight. We just didn't make shots and take care of the ball. Looking at the stats, only two

people in both teams had double-digit points. So defense was real good by both parts.

We just got to be able to control the ball, take care of it and make open shots.

Q. Charles, can you kind of comment on the play of Sek and Chris Balham, what do they bring when they come out onto the court?

CHARLES RICHARDSON JR.: As a substitute player, you can't come in trying to get ready. They came in tonight with a lot of energy. They was ready to play and they tried their best out there and they gave it all they had. Sek made some shots. Chris played his butt off on the boards and tried to box out, and defensive holding the big men. Like any other night, we needed somebody to step up and they both played real well tonight.

Q. Doc, can you just talk a little bit more about Oklahoma State's defense? Did they do anything differently from Monday night or was it all energy?

COACH DOC SADLER: I thought their intensity was much better. No, Oklahoma State is a team that is one of the most talented teams in this tournament. I mean, they're -- you know, for whatever reason, I don't know because I don't coach them, but they were a Top 10 team. They are very talented. They are very big. They are very athletic. And their bodies got against our bodies and we weren't strong enough to get open.

That's what the 24 turnovers were. It was just -- it was strictly an intensity thing, in my opinion. I have made this statement, I think you've got to play so much harder offensively when you play against good defense teams. I think that was an example of that tonight.

Q. Coach, do you think post-season play N.I.T., is that still a possibility?

COACH DOC SADLER: I don't think so. I would like to sit up here and blame it on the conference if we don't. But I don't think we're going to be a tournament team. So I will blame it on the media. It is the media's fault (smiling).

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