

**March 13, 2008**



**BIG 12 CHAMPIONSHIP**

**OKLAHOMA STATE COWBOYS**

CHARLIE FISS: We're joined now by the Cowboys of Oklahoma State, Coach Sean Sutton and his three student athletes: Byron Eaton, Terrel Harris and James Anderson.

Coach, congratulations on your victory today. Your thoughts and initial comments on today's game.

COACH SUTTON: I thought Texas Tech really came out and played well, which I thought they would, knowing Pat, even though they had come off some tough defeats. I thought their guys really played with great energy throughout the game. They shot the ball extremely well. Our defense looked like we were down at the Y, just playing playground ball, not to take anything away from them. I think they do as good a job with their motion offense, Pat has continued that. I did think that we were as nearly sharp defensively as we've been down the stretch of this season.

I was really proud of our freshmen, not knowing how they were going to react for the first time in post-season play. Those guys had 37 points, 15 rebounds. Byron really came back. I challenged him at half time he had to be the best point guard on the court. Came back and scored 12 points in the second half, made a lot of big plays down the stretch and then James made a great defensive play when blocked that shot shot and hit the two big free throws. Forced us to win and happy to get this first round behind us and hopefully play better tomorrow against an outstanding team.

**Q. James, did you feel like this was the best game maybe you've played against a Big 12 team this year?**

JAMES ANDERSON: Yes, I think it is. I came out and made big plays and picked up our defense from where I had been playing earlier in the year and made a big block and hit two big free throws. I think it was one of my best games this year.

COACH SUTTON: He rebounded better, too. He had 8 rebounds.

**Q. Byron, how many times has Sean challenged you this year? I hear the word "challenge" associated with you quite a bit?**

BYRON EATON: He challenged me quite a bit this year. It all started at the beginning of the season. He challenged myself, Terrel and Obi to run the team and to be at our best.

And every game is a challenge for me to guard their point guard and play the way I should play.

And I think the last few games he challenged me the most because I have been going up against some good guys. He told me to come out there and run my team. I think I have been doing a great job of responding to his challenges. I got to keep it up as I go against another great team tomorrow.

**Q. Terrel, Byron got his third foul late in the first half and you were down 6 the guy made the foul shots. The rest of the half you went on a big run. Can you talk about how you guys were able to play well without Byron on the floor?**

TERREL HARRIS: Well, during that time we pushed the ball a little more. When Byron is in, he pushes the ball and runs the offense. When we don't have Byron, we really don't have too much players we run because we really don't have a true point guard on the court, so I believe our transition points picked up a little more and our defense picked up more.

So we really just carried Byron while he was out and just took up his slack.

**Q. James, what do you think during**

**that time out between your free throws? Are you thinking, Coach has iced me here?**

JAMES ANDERSON: Coach just told me to take my time, stand at the line and don't fall back and fade away from my free throws because I faded away earlier when I shot two free throws and I missed one. He just told me to stay in there and I hit it.

**Q. Byron, it seemed like for a good portion of the game that you were kind of out there, kind of up and down but then late you emerged to take the game over, in a sense. Can you tell us how that happened? Maybe why it took until the end of the game for you to be what you could be.**

BYRON EATON: I can't say why it took so long. I had some great looks during the game, I just wasn't able to knock them down.

But the main thing came down to my team did a great job when I was on the bench keeping us until the game. When I came back, like I said, Coach tried and challenged me the second half. Marcus Dove told me, "It is your turn to take over the team. You need to be the best point guard out on the floor." Like Coach Sutton said, that's what I did. I got high enough. They tried to switch on us a few times, I was able to get to the rack. If not, I found the open man.

I was doing a lot of things I had been doing in the past and it was successful for us. I got back to doing what we were good at.

**Q. Voskuil finished with a lot of points. It seemed like when Terrel was in, he did a pretty good job keeping him quiet.**

COACH SUTTON: He moves about as well as anybody without the ball. I think him and A.J. from Texas, those guys are in constant motion. It's hard for just one guy to guard them in a situation like that. We had to rotate different guys on Terrel. They had done a very good job on him the first two times we played them.

He got off to a hot start and second half they went right back to him and Obi got caught up on a couple of fade screens and didn't get through. I thought when Terrel came back in, at least he had him more under control. He didn't get as many good looks.

TERREL HARRIS: I got to tell you, that is the hardest person to guard in the Big 12 to me. I had to guard A.B. Abrams a lot and he moves a lot, too. But they have Augustin that really penetrates

and gets some shots. But Voskuil, the offense is just constant movement. You have to always be on your Ps and Qs with him. So whenever you let up -- anytime you let up, he'll dodge you, you know?

I mean, I try to always stay with us, try to stay in his tracks and make sure he doesn't have any space. He hit some tough shots today, and he did good today. Wasn't my best defensive job on him today.

**Q. You guys played two really close games with Texas. What's it going to take for you guys to knock them out tomorrow?**

BYRON EATON: I think the main thing is we got to come in and get a great start. They got a great start down there in Texas in our house. And we got to close out the half. In our house, I think they were on a 10-0 run and went up 10 points. I think they went up 2, 3 points at their half. The main thing is we have to do a better job of guarding them. We can't give them open shots. We need to do a better job on closing out shooters. Make them run. They're good at pushing people. You got to push it back at them and see how good they really are.

The main thing is we just got to guard them and guard them guys and see how good they really are and knock down some shots when we get the opportunities.

TERREL HARRIS: Well, with Texas we do play them close. We have played them close basically every year -- I mean, every year since I've been here. And I believe that this year everybody has to win their matchups. Byron has to win his matchup with Augustin. I have to win my matchup with Abrams. Our starting seven has to outplay their first seven. That's basically what it comes down to. People have to make plays, we have to rebound the ball and just control -- control their transition.

So I mean, they are a really good team and they execute their core offense. So we just really have to just play good defense and really just execute them -- out-execute them.

CHARLIE FISS: Thank you for coming and congratulations to your victory today. We will let you return to the locker room.

Questions for Coach?

**Q. What about this -- is your team improving every game like you were during that**

**streak even through the Oklahoma disappointment? Do you feel like you are getting better?**

COACH SUTTON: I thought we did some good things today. Obviously we did not play defense like we've been doing but I thought we got down a couple times and we fought back and took the lead and it was kind of a see-saw game. I thought our guys did a good job of hanging in there. They made some great shots, shot the ball extremely well from the three-point line. I think we are still getting better.

In a situation like this, you never know how deep you are going to react the first time out, even with -- I thought our young guys did really well. Some of our older guys I didn't think reacted as well as they have been playing early, as the game went on. Certainly Byron, Obi, both those guys got going a little bit down the stretch and then I thought Marcus Dove was pretty solid throughout. I mean, for him to hold Zeno to seven points I thought was a huge key.

And then Byron, he didn't play very good offensively until late but his defense on Roberson was outstanding. Held him to 2 points. That was a matchup that I really challenged him in, that he had scored 20 the last time we played them in Lubbock and he was the difference in the game. I thought Byron did a lot better job at defending him today.

**Q. You switched to the small lineup. Why?**

COACH SUTTON: Well, we were having a hard time getting back to Cook and he was causing us problems, wasn't stepping out there -- Thomas and Adams weren't getting out there to defend the three-point shot. So he put five guards on the court if you count Marcus Dove, that way we could switch all ball screens and then Pat countered and put in a small lineup of his own. Basically it was five guards at both ends of the court.

And defensively, it allowed us to switch a lot of things against their motion, switch ball screens. I thought it worked out for us.

**Q. Can you comment on the way this team has battled and fought all the way and then also looking ahead to Texas?**

COACH SUTTON: Chris, this team has been really fun for me to coach. We struggled early, which I expected because when you lose as many quality players as we lost and you throw

JamesOn Curry into that mix and you start with seven new players, I knew it would be a challenge early because of how hard our schedule was. If I had to do it all over again, no one -- those guys, I probably would have played a softer, nonconference schedule. But these guys have continued to battle every day. As I said, a lot of fun to coach. I think we've made great improvement.

I told them I'm tired of having to come to the Big 12 tournament to win the tournament, just to get in the NCAA. I want it to go back to the way it used to be where we come in here and we're already in it.

But they stayed together. They believed that we would get better and they played hard. That's all you can ask for as a coach.

They have to learn a valuable lesson. In conference play, you cannot lose at home. It just kills you when you lose at home. I told them after the Texas game, how many home games did we lose? And they counted up three. I said, if we went -- if we went to three games at home, we are in third place and that's a lesson that you freshmen have got to learn from here on out. That when you play conference games at home, you are going to win those because they're hard to get on the road. And hopefully those guys will remember that as we start into the conference season a year from now.

Really proud of this team and hopefully we can keep it going and play well.

**Q. About Texas?**

COACH SUTTON: I think they're as legitimate Final Four team. I think they got a great point guard, Augustin is as good as anybody in the country. They can shoot the basketball. They play very good defense, and they're explosive in transitions. So we've played them well both times. They've just made a few more plays than us at the end of the game. Put ourselves in position last Sunday and Abrams hit a big 3 for them late that proved to be a big difference in the game.

**Q. Sean, was that James' best game in some time and was there something you had seen that gave you reason to believe that was coming?**

COACH SUTTON: I thought it was, John. He practiced really well this week. I thought his shot looked better this week. He looked more relaxed. I thought he played pretty good at Texas

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but in terms of his most complete game, this is probably the best game he's played since we started the Big 12.

CHARLIE FISS: Coach, thank you and again congratulations. Good luck tomorrow.

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