

March 10, 2007



An interview with:

TEXAS

CHARLIE FISS: We are joined now by the Texas Longhorns. Coach Rick Barnes, his student athletes, A.J. Abrams, D.J. Augustin and Kevin Durant.

Congratulations on today's victory and your thoughts on the game.

COACH RICK BARNES: One, I think you got to congratulate or respect what Oklahoma State had to go through this week. The fact they had to play Saturday, Monday, come back and play and for them to fight and work as hard as they did, again, just great admiration for them. It is hard. It is really hard to do that.

Obviously, I'm proud of our guys. We found a way to work through a hard-fought game against a team that doesn't give you very much on the offensive end. We took care of the ball, the big thing today. Our second-chance points were really big and what we were able to get off those turnovers were very important.

Again, great win for us and we have got to get ready to come back tomorrow, obviously, and play against an outstanding basketball team.

Q. For Kevin and D.J., can you take us through that sequence where, D.J., you put up the shot and then, Kevin, somehow the ball got out to you for basically the game winner?

KEVIN DURANT: Coach told me he wanted to go two for one. So Damion did a great job at tipping the ball out to me for an offensive rebound and I just -- I just pulled up. I mean, if I would have missed it, it would have been a bad shot but I am glad I made it.

Q. Why would it have been a bad shot? You were open, weren't you?

KEVIN DURANT: Yeah, I was looking at the time. It was 35 seconds left. We would usually go for one shot, but I'm glad I hit it.

Q. Kevin, can you talk about how hard it was for you to score in the last 13 minutes in the defense, they were doing all the double-teaming on you and everything.

KEVIN DURANT: I was getting the same wide-open looks I was the first half but I just wasn't putting them down. My teammates did a great job at scoring and picking up the load and I am glad we got the win.

Q. A.J., how fun is it for you to contribute the way you did today, knocking down your shot?

A.J. ABRAMS: It was a great win for us. Any time you can get a chance to go out there and help your team win, it is a great thing. I'm happy we got the win and looking forward for tomorrow.

Q. You seem to be getting some open shots lately. Are you running off screens higher, are they running stuff for you that's better? What's going on?

A.J. ABRAMS: I think teams are like they have always been concentrating on Kevin. At this time of year you have to concentrate on a little bit more because he does so much for your time.

At the same time, Coach did a good job of letting me run off screens and get open looks.

Q. Kevin, after losing to Kansas for a chance to share the Big 12 regular season title, how much does tomorrow mean to you and a chance to win a title?

KEVIN DURANT: It is a big time if we get this win, it will be a big-time win for our program. We just want to go in the game, we know Kansas is a great team. We have to execute our game plan. Hopefully we will win the game.

Q. D.J., you seem to really get your confidence going in the second half. Did your confidence ever wane yesterday when you got off to a slow start and how are you feeling now?

D.J. AUGUSTIN: No. I never lost my confidence. That's the one thing I learned to keep,

keep playing hard. My teammates pick me up. I mean, we just played hard tonight.

Q. D.J., I'm assuming you guys wanted to push it as much as you can in the second half. Would you talk about how you tried to direct the offense, especially what they were doing to Kevin.

D.J. AUGUSTIN: Yeah, it was tough. They are playing good defense. They are a great defensive team. I just tried to get things going, trying to get A.J. coming off screens and tried to attack the lane, get guys involved, you know.

Q. Did they defend you differently in the first half than they had been when you scored on them in the first two games as far as helping out or anything?

D.J. AUGUSTIN: They were kind of packed in the lane waiting on me to drive. But second half, I picked that up and I started dribbling, hand-off to A.J. He was coming off and attacking the lane like I was doing. We got counterattacks for anything.

Q. D.J., it looks like JamesOn was doing a lot of talking to you in the second half. Can you tell us what he was saying?

D.J. AUGUSTIN: Oh, no. He was asking me some crazy questions. Something that has nothing to do with basketball. (Smiling).

It wasn't personal or nothing. He was cool about it.

COACH RICK BARNES: He actually asked me, does the Dallas Morning News have anybody who knows how to write. He answered it correctly, which he can't tell you (smiling).

Q. D.J., with all the games Oklahoma State has had to play recently, were you all trying to push the tempo and wear them down a little?

D.J. AUGUSTIN: Yeah. We tried to tag them from the beginning of the game, keep pushing the ball. Coach told us to keep going, keep going.

That's one thing we did. We tried to get Boggan tired and a lot of the guys tired. We knew they played a lot of games. And we tried to attack them like we always do.

Q. Kevin, you talked about sort of not being able to knock down some shots there in the second half. But it when it came down to it

and you hit it, talk about where that confidence comes from and what it is like to hit another game-winning shot like that.

KEVIN DURANT: My whole team gives me confidence. I was kind of down, I wasn't hitting no shots. My teammates is like, it is time for a big-time shot. Once I got the ball, I just wanted to shoot it and I made it.

Q. Rick, I watched after Kevin made that shot at the end and some of your coaches were just, like, he did it again. I mean, just talk from your perspective about seeing him after having the struggles hitting that shot.

COACH RICK BARNES: The fact of the matter is I'm not sure we would have gotten a better look if we would have held the ball.

But that's what great players do. I mean, he -- we've talked enough about situations but, again, he did it as if -- the way it is supposed to be done. The play really was Damion keeping that ball alive. That was the play of the game, to give us another possession. That was really a big play there.

He got it and then I think sometimes players get -- I told my guys, this time of year is a player's game. You got to go and you got to play. You got to get lost in it. There's games like that with a guy like that, he does, he does get lost in it.

Instinctively, he was open. He shot it.

Q. Rick, is Justin okay? It looks like you're having to sub for him a lot with Craig and can you talk about Craig --

COACH RICK BARNES: Craig is doing really well. Justin is a little nipped up. But Craig is really bringing us a lot of energy right now. I think the fact of what he is doing is going to help Justin in the long run because I do think, again, Justin has had a little problem, just banged up a little bit.

Craig has been terrific. His offensive rebounds -- actually, during that one point in time, we actually said we were really doing things for A.J. and told him he can get the offensive boards for us. You got to go get them for us and he did a great job.

Obviously his three was a big shot. We probably came off the throttle a little bit too soon. We wanted to run, and I think around the 7 1/2 minute mark, we got into a grind with it. That happens obviously.

But I would have liked to have seen us

push maybe a little bit more. Probably my fault because we were trying to maybe get too involved with them. I do think D.J. had a real good feel for the game and I think he was in rhythm. Connor set some really good screens for him.

Again, Oklahoma State doesn't give you much. You got to earn what you get. They did a really good job on Kevin. He was a little tired. He hasn't traveled and lost a ball like that. That's fatigue.

When it counted, he made the big one.

Q. Coach Barnes, no one has Oklahoma State in any NCAA tournament bracket coming into this tournament. Do you think they give the selection committee anything to think about this week or is their 6-10 league record too much to overcome?

COACH RICK BARNES: First of all, I have always believed this. I don't think anything I can say is going to politic to get them in. But I do think this, I would like to think that what you do all year matters as much as what you do at the end. I think a committee will look at the fact. They played their hearts out all year. The fact they had to make some adjustments there, and the storm hurt them. Having to turn that around, play on Monday, then come back and do this. I said this yesterday. They're the one team that I thought if they could have gotten a 7-8 in the season, they belonged in the tournament before they ever got here because they went out and played some people.

I don't know. If the R.P.I. and all of that matters, they had to be talked about. You guys saw this game today. It could have gone either way. I think you got to give Sean and his staff credit for really keeping these guys afloat and even giving them a chance to be in this position to have a chance to where maybe people have to talk about it. But I don't know. I don't know how they think. You like to think they will look at the whole thing from start to finish.

Q. Rick, Durant and Abrams had 29 of your 31 first-half points. I am sure you are well aware of that. I am just wondering, did you tell Augustin to be more aggressive like he was during the season to start the second half or was that just in the flow of the game? How did you approach that?

COACH RICK BARNES: Actually we told A.J. to be aggressive. We felt that it was really important to try to get Terrel Harris in foul trouble. Our plan was to play a little bit more zone.

We felt if we could get he or either JamesOn in foul trouble our zone might be more effective. A.J. probably overpenetrated a few times. Took a couple shots. I told him a couple times to slow down a little bit.

I told him one time to drive, he was so wide open he should have shot it.

But we haven't ran -- I told the team when I went back last night and ran the tape, we haven't ran like we were earlier in the year. One of our post guys was running, we are not getting to the corner, spacing the floor. I told them at half time, if they would space the floor D.J. could go to work and make some things happen.

He got into the flow. I thought the rhythm started playing to what he wanted.

Q. Rick, probably from a conference standpoint, tomorrow's championship game is what everybody wanted to see. Would you just kind of set the stage for that thing and what it means to have you guys in the finals.

COACH RICK BARNES: These tournaments are really, really hard to play. We are going to have to get some play today. We are able to get Craig's minutes, Matt Hill, Dexter, those guys will have to help us. Now we are going on three days where Kevin took himself out of the game tonight. He played 37 minutes. So that's what? 77 minutes in two days.

We need him, obviously. But a day of rest is huge which we don't get right now. And you think about it. They have been able to play the first game yesterday and had a longer break than we had really. But, hey, players want to play. I told our team yesterday, one thing I did tell them at half time, we either come back and win in game or we go back and practice. You decide what you want to do. It proves they rather play than practice. I would expect some way to come out.

It is going to be hard. Kansas has -- I have said before, I think their depth, when they go to their bench, I think they get probably more athletic. They have got -- they shot the ball really well against us in Lawrence. They're a team that is very worthy of where they are right now in their ranking. They won the Big 12 outright.

It is going to take a great effort on our part from a lot of people, not just Kevin, D.J., A.J. It will take a lot from a lot of other guys doing a lot of the little things for us.

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An interview with:

OKLAHOMA STATE

CHARLIE FISS: Ready to begin with Oklahoma State with Sean Sutton and his student athletes, Mario Boggan and JamesOn Curry.

Coach, your thoughts?

COACH SEAN SUTTON: I am sorry for our players. I thought they really competed their tails off all three games here. Got within 40 seconds of having a chance to make a play to play for the championship tomorrow.

Texas came up with a huge play there late and then Durant, he just made a big-time shot. I thought the difference in the second half, we did not do as good a job on the defensive glass. And they hurt us on the boards during that half. We outrebounded for the game, but it seemed like they came up with a bunch of missed shots early that allowed them to keep the lead throughout the second half and then ultimately Kevin hits that shot at the end.

It was a tough loss. I am really proud of our players and how hard they played down here. Like to say thanks to our fans for the passion they brought to this arena and wish it would have turned out different, but just didn't happen today.

Q. JamesOn, you guys tied up at 61 and then the scramble after the miss and Durant ends up with it. Just talk about that sequence and the three he hits there.

JAMESON CURRY: It was a great shot. But before that, the emphasis in the huddle was play tough defense, box out and rebound. And if we could would have complemented our defense with a defensive rebound, we may not have been in this situation.

Q. Do you think despite the 6-10 conference record that your play this weekend proved that you should get a NCAA tourney?

JAMESON CURRY: Definitely hope so. I think with 13-1 in our complete team, I know we are 0-8 on the road, but I don't think we played any road game with our complete team. Our R.P.I. is 40 something, I believe.

But that's up to the committee. Hopefully we -- we do know we have more basketball to play, but hopefully we will be in the tournament. Just going to stay positive.

MARIO BOGGAN: Same as JamesOn said.

Q. JamesOn, with all the games you all played, did you feel like you had your legs all the way through today? And did you feel like they were trying to push the tempo to get you all tired?

JAMESON CURRY: I think five games in seven days for any team is kind of tough. I think we still played hard. The only thing is it took too late in the season for us to play this hard.

If we was playing this hard defensively and collectively as a whole early on in the conference, we wouldn't be in this situation. But for Mario and Davis, it is a sad situation. But for the young guys, it is something we can learn from and make it better next year.

COACH SEAN SUTTON: I want to say something. I thought the Big 12 made a mistake when they rescheduled that game for Monday this week. I didn't agree with it at the time and don't agree with it now. I am not making any excuses. But I thought that put two teams at a competitive disadvantage this week knowing that we were going to have to win four games in four days and then you add an extra game on top of it.

Q. If you don't get the NCAA bid, especially you, Mario, how do you feel about your career coming to an end in the N.I.T.? Do you feel like you can still accomplish things there? Are there still things for you to play for, you personally?

MARIO BOGGAN: If that's what it is, we got to go out there and, I mean, play and try to win. I won't feel as satisfied going to the tournament.

Like you say, for us, it is sad. But it is just an experience for the younger guys. You know what I am saying? I'll live. But it hurts, though, not being able to go to the tournament.

Q. Sean, you guys -- I think the last 13 minutes, Durant only made one shot and that was that three. I mean, just talk about the defense on him. You have already said it was a big shot. Just that sequence.

COACH SEAN SUTTON: I thought Marcus did a great job on him. Especially the second half.

I think Kevin would say this, that Marcus has probably guarded him as well as anybody he has played against all year long.

He certainly was very valuable to our team this week, the way he defended Kavaliauskas and Acie Law last night and the way he defended Durant down the stretch tonight.

I thought the second half, Augustin, even though he didn't shoot the ball well, he really controlled the game for their team. I have said this a lot this year, he is one of the best young point guards I have seen in a long time, the way he can manage a game.

He has six assists. He has no turnovers and he just seems like he always makes the right play. And then Abrams, Abrams had a good day shooting the basketball in terms of making threes, 4-9 and made his free throws.

I thought those two guys were big keys for them that kept them kind of on top when Durant wasn't scoring during that stretch.

Q. Sean, when you expressed your concerns about that make-up game to the league office, what kind of response did you get?

COACH SEAN SUTTON: That's when Nebraska wanted to play the game. I don't think it is the student athletes fault that the weather was so bad that we couldn't get there to play the initial game. That's all I am going to say about it. I didn't agree with it at the time and still don't.

I don't think it is fair -- I don't think it is fair to my players.

Q. Sean, do you think you guys did enough this week to convince the committee to get in?

COACH SEAN SUTTON: If you are asking me do I think we're one of the best 34 at-large teams right now? I would say yes. I think

we've proven that this week when we've got our team -- the only game we have lost all season long where we have had all our players and this is a game that really came down to one possession. Best player in the country made a great shot and he won the game for their team. Now, does that mean we will get in? I don't know. That's up to the committee.

I feel like we're certainly one of the 34 best teams out there right now. A month ago, probably not. But you look at 7-2 in neutral sites. Didn't play well on the road. Last time I checked, NCAA tournament wasn't a road game, it was a neutral site game.

Q. The decision on whether to accept an N.I.T. berth, is that entirely up to you, are you going to ask your players?

COACH SEAN SUTTON: I think they want to go play. That's what it comes down to, that's what we will do, NCAA runs the N.I.T. now. It is not the goal that we had when we started the season, but if that's what it comes to, we'll go compete and try to win five games and try to win a championship.

I will say this. Regardless of how it turns out, I do want to wish the teams in our league the very best in the NCAA tournament. I feel like we got three teams in Kansas, Texas A&M and Texas all capable of making a run to go to the Final 4. Best of luck to those teams and best of luck to Texas and Kansas tomorrow.

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