



UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
DEPARTMENT OF INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS

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FAIRFIELD STAGS (3-5) at HOUSTON COUGARS (7-1)
Wednesday, Dec.6, 2017 • Health & PE Arena • Houston

HOUSTON HEAD COACH KELVIN SAMPSON

Opening Statement

“There were a lot of things that go into a game like this. First of all, I’d like to congratulate Coach Johnson and those Fairfield kids, because they play hard. You can see where they’re hard to play against; they run good stuff and they execute well. They make you guard most of the shot clock. A team like Arkansas shoots early in the shot clock, but Fairfield shoots at the end of the shot clock. You have to guard the first, second and often times the third side of the floor, so now your defensive discipline will be tested.

The biggest thing today was playing against two teams. It is hard to win a college basketball game. Think about Notre Dame last night against Ball State. How good is Fairfield? Fairfield is as good as Ball State. That’s why we have to cover and play every game we play. 18 turnovers is a bit sloppy. It’s hard to beat one team, but it’s almost impossible to beat two. Last year, we led the American Athletic Conference in the fewest amount of turnovers. We averaged about 10 in conference play. We are a nine to 11 turnover team and today we had 18. We have to continue to work on that. Some of that is due to the by-product of eight new guys and guys hitting singles. I showed our guys a video of Tom Brady and had my video guy break down some of Tom Brady completions. It’s amazing how many one, two and three-yard passes he completes that turns into 10, 20, and 30 yards. Also, how many swing passes he throws behind the line of scrimmage, or on the line of scrimmage. The analogy I’m using is to show the guys to hit singles. You don’t have to throw 30-yard post routes, or 20-yard down-in-outs on the other side of the field. Those are the kinds of passes we’re throwing. Just run down there and throw it to him, you don’t have to do anything spectacular. Basketball is a simple game, but we are continuing to learn that. Every game is step forward for this team in terms of learning to play with each other. ”

On how the team is adjusting to playing in H&PE Arena

“We practice over at our place, so it’s a little different. However, we don’t talk about it, we don’t complain about and it is what it is. We’d like to practice where we play every day like everyone else, but we also know that there’s a pot of gold at the end of this rainbow. That’s what we’re excited about.”

On offensive issues

“I called a timeout to remind the guys that we were wearing white. Wes threw the ball and almost hit someone. Chris had just got in the game, he was flying down the floor and for some reason Armoni thought it was a good idea to hit him at the free throw line as he’s running to the rim. There was some mind boggling and idiotic passes and plays. We just need to stop being idiotic.”

On what the team will take from playing at home onto the road

“We have to shorten the areas that we’ve relaxed in. Chris mentioned the defense earlier in the half and he was right. Our defense coming out of halftime on Saturday night was outstanding. Tonight, you assumed there was going to be a letdown. We go from an adrenaline filled game like Saturday night, and now we’re playing a team that these guys aren’t necessarily familiar with, but the coaches certainly respect since we watched film on them. Now, we are 7-1 and we have four games before conference play starts; at St. Louis, LSU, Providence and Prairie View at home. There are certain things that have to travel when you’re on the road. The win I’m most proud of isn’t Arkansas or Wake Forest, but it’s actually Liberty because that was a road game. I saw Liberty beat Georgia State on the road and that was a hard team for us to play against, because there a lot like this team in that they execute. We got down early in that game, but came down and won. We’ve played a road game already, and that will give them something to lean on. St. Louis already beat Virginia Tech by 20-plus points at Madison Square Garden, so it’s going to be a test. I’m excited for it and we’re looking forward to getting on the road and playing.”

On Chris Harris’ fitness and performance

“Fabian is a freshman and Chris is a sophomore, you can see how excited we are about developing those two big kids. You never go against guys like Breanon and Devin every day, and it’s the best thing in the world for Chris, because they’re outstanding players. Chris got hurt in the McNeese State game which was November 11th, so this is the first time I’ve seen him with live bullets. We’ve been nurturing him in practice by not letting him do a lot, so today’s the first time I’ve seen him go full speed. I thought he was active, he almost got four rebounds, he blocked four and almost blocked four more shots. Chris is almost 6’11 and when he learns to compete and increase his activity, he’ll be a really good player. He’s back now and we’ve got him moving forward.”

On if he is happy with where the team is

“We are on a six game winning streak, so obviously we’re not mad about that. However, for us it’s a little bit of choppy waters. If we were in an airplane, the air would be a bit turbulent, so not smooth yet, but it should be smooth. We were smooth in February and March, its early December and we’re still trying to land the plane. We’re not through the clouds, we have birds flying at our propeller and we have air traffic control telling us things, so we’re still fighting through some stuff. You can see it once we connect offensively and defensively. We scored 88 points and had 18 turnovers and that team had more shot attempts than we did, because we kept turning the ball over. Maybe if we had eight, nine, or 10 turnovers with last year’s team, we could 105 to 107 points, because that’s what this team is capable of doing.”

HOUSTON JUNIOR GUARD COREY DAVIS JR

On how do you feel about being able to pull out a win?

“We knew we had to come in more focused, coming off a big game like Arkansas. We had to get mentally prepared. A lot of big schools lose, so I mean coming off a big game like that and then playing another good team, you just have to come ready to play.”

On feeling more comfortable in the offense

“We’re definitely getting more comfortable. It’s just us getting comfortable with our sets, getting comfortable with each other more than anything. It’s all a process. We’re getting a lot better though.”

On the difference between the first half and second half

“Coach Sampson uses this term ‘hitting singles’ and that’s really what we started doing. We were trying to make too many big plays and too many skip passes, instead of making a simple one person over pass and getting the ball moving. I think that’s what we did a lot more of in the second half.”

On being on the road next game

"We treat every game the same. Home or away, we play with the same energy, same intensity and same focus. We're just in a different gym, that's really all it is. We don't let that bother us too much, we just play Houston basketball."

On how the season feels so far

"Honestly, I'm feeling really positive about the season, because every day we're working hard, every day we're focused and we're listening to Coach Sampson."

On his three pointers being developed from junior college

"Honestly at junior college, that's what we thrived on. We were really a three-point shooting team and I think that really developed my game. I was already a good three-point shooter coming here and it just elevated even more. I got more confident and have more people around me that's are helping me with my game. So I feel like that's what is helping me to get even better."

On Coach Sampson and his intensity

"I was aware of it before I even came to Houston. We just try to match his intensity, because Coach Sampson, every day of the week, every hour, he's the same man. He's going to be on you and he expects you to match his intensity every day."

HOUSTON JUNIOR FORWARD BREAN BRADY

On feeling more comfortable in the offense

"To touch base on what Corey said, we're getting a feel for our game. You know, once you get a feel for your game, you get a lot more confident and that's what it's all about. Everybody coming together and just getting a feel for what they can do. Coach stresses it all the time: 'Do what you can do, don't try to do too much.' When you do what you can do and what you're supposed to do, you get a lot more comfortable."

On the difference between the first half and second half

"In the first half, our energy is sky high. We're looking to score the ball, we're looking to go hard on defense and we're looking to do everything possible. Sometimes you throw in mistakes here and there, but once we settle in to the second half and coach gets on us in the locker room we know when we come out we have to eliminate everything we did wrong."

On being on the road next game

"I love playing away, because at the same time I'm still playing with my family, I'm still playing with my team. I just think us, as a group, we take care of what we need to take care of. No matter what gym it is. We just have to go get the job done."

On how the season feels so far

"We're a good team, this is one of the best teams I've ever played with out of all my years playing basketball. I feel like we have a very good team, we have a lot of people who can do so many things and we have a lot of depth. So with that being said, I feel like this season could be a good one"