

**American Athletic Conference
Men's Basketball Championship**
Sunday March 11, 2018



**Kelvin Sampson
Devin Davis
Galen Robinson Jr.**
Houston Cougars

Cincinnati - 56, Houston - 55

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement from Coach.

KELVIN SAMPSON: I would like to have seen that last play decided by the players on the floor. Questions?

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach, please.

Q. It was a real rock fight out there, both teams really got after it defensively in the second half.

KELVIN SAMPSON: Yeah, both teams have that identity. Can't say enough about our kids' grit, toughness, three games in three days, people just looking for a pretty offensive game. If we didn't play for two weeks, that might not be a pretty offensive game.

Both teams battled. That's why it's so disappointing on that last call, just disappointing.

Q. Kelvin, from your vantage point there interpretation-wise, what did you see on that call?

KELVIN SAMPSON: I have no other comment on that play. You can ask me about the game. That's over with.

Q. How much do you think a game like this helps you prepare for the next week?

KELVIN SAMPSON: I think so. I think so. Eventually I'm going to calm down, I'm sure, but you got a three-point lead with under a minute to go. We're a stop away from coming down with a three-point lead and don't turn it over, make your free throws, we're out there celebrating. That's how close we were. Their kid falls down, maintains his dribble, was not walking. I'm always honest about that stuff, he maintained his dribble, but he threw it out, their five man makes a contested three, that's how close we were.

But our kids deserve better at the end though.

Q. The offensive rebounding margin or the second-chance points margin, 17-4 --

KELVIN SAMPSON: That's pretty good. It was 17-3 at halftime. So we were great in the second half.

Q. The shooting overall, 6-for-30, in the second half. To lose a game by one point by shooting 20 percent, have you ever seen a game like that?

KELVIN SAMPSON: No, but don't judge this on a level playing field. Make sure you say both these kids, both these teams' kids were exhausted. They played three games in three days. Their main guys probably played 100 minutes. So you're going to have games like that on three games in three days. If you want pretty, look at our game against Central Florida.

But Cincinnati, Houston, third game, three days, our game Friday night got over about 11:30, I think. Then we came back and played at 3:30 yesterday. I think it was 3:30 yesterday. And 3:30 today. I'm not shocked at shooting percentage. What did they shoot the second half? Anybody know?

Q. Not much better.

KELVIN SAMPSON: Yeah, well, it was hard to get a shot against a good defensive team and kids didn't have much legs, that's why the way it ended was so disappointing. Just disappointing, disappointing.

Q. Along those lines with the fatigue and second half I think you guys were 0-for-10 on threes, you don't see that normally from your team. Was that also the factor?

KELVIN SAMPSON: I would say so. I would say it had a lot to do with it. What were they from the three?

Q. Obviously this is a tough loss, but can you just speak to the way this team came together this season and obviously getting back into the Tournament, NCAA Tournament.

KELVIN SAMPSON: No, I'm proud of our team. Proud of the way they fought today. That's why it's so disappointing the way we lost. I don't care about the stats. I mean, you know, writing about stats is not the story of this game. You have two teams that, I mean it's a bloodletting. Two teams out there just -- sometimes a rock fight you throw at each other and you hit nothing. We're hitting each other in the face with rocks, and kids were battling each other. Give Washington credit, he made a great shot.

As I said earlier, I just was disappointed the way the last point was scored. I would like to have seen the two teams continue to decide it themselves. But I was proud of our team. What was our record?

Q. 26-7.

KELVIN SAMPSON: 26 wins, I'm not going to sit here and find something wrong with them right now. They fought their hearts out. Just came up a little bit short. But they're still champions in my eyes.

THE MODERATOR: Houston, thank you.