

March 11, 2006



BIG 12 CHAMPIONSHIP

An Interview With:

TEXAS LONGHORNS

COACH RICK BARNES
P.J. TUCKER
KENTON PAULINO

COACH RICK BARNES: First of all, we really beat an outstanding team today, a team that we respect as much as any team we have played this year and the fact that they play hard. They compete every possession.

But I am also proud of these two guys on our team because when we had to make some plays, we made it. P.J., I think, showed today why he's the player he is. Not only you look at list line, his rebounds, his points, but defensively what he's done for us, the play at the end of the game where we switched him over to guard Acie Law and made a great play there, the drive and dish down, passing, he's a complete player.

Kenton made a huge basket for us when we needed. *Daniel Gibson* steps up makes some free throws. Great team win. Again, it's what you'd expect this time of year, a hard-fought game and being a close game and come out with it, it's a good win for us.

Q. (Inaudible)?

P.J. TUCKER: Just I just got the ball in my hands. He just tells me to go make a play sometimes and drive whatever is open, just take it. And that time Brad happened to be open when I drove the ball, so I got him the ball.

Q. P.J., how long have you been waiting for another shot at A&M? How much did it motivate you?

P.J. TUCKER: I think all week everybody has been talking about getting a matchup with A&M just because how we ended the game last

time we played them. Truth be known, it don't really matter who we play. I don't think we all came into this tournament thinking that we just want to play A&M because they beat us. We just wait and see what we're going to play next game. Whoever we play, we take a look at it right before and get ready to play.

Q. P.J., was there some extra motivation for you because rightfully or not you took a lot of blame in that A&M game with the shot clock violation? Did you come out with extra motivation to show what is up?

P.J. TUCKER: Not at all. I would be motivated anyway. Anybody on my team can tell you I am a motivated player every single game. I haven't played *Big 12* tournament since my freshman year, so I am motivated here by getting a chance to play. I don't think specific teams motivate me, but just playing basketball does.

Q. Would you describe how the play unfolded where you made the 3, how the past came to you and all that?

KENTON PAULINO: Play was designed for P.J. to get the ball, just create something. Unfortunately he missed the shot and *LaMarcus*, he grabbed a big offensive rebound, he kicked it out. My feet was set, so just let it go.

Q. As a senior you have seen this A&M series change a little bit. How much better are they now, because this game seems to be so much different than, say, it was three years ago?

KENTON PAULINO: A&M is a totally different team. They are more competitive than they have been in the past years. With Acie Law and Joe Jones, what they have done for that team, you know, with them getting a new coach, they made a complete turnaround.

Q. Can you react to the fact that *Joseph Jones* took that shot? I mean, he's taken 19 3-pointers all year. What is going through your mind as to where the final shot came?

P.J. TUCKER: We knew we wanted to take Acie Law out, make sure he didn't take the

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shot. Try to put the ball in somebody else's hands for them to make the play because they look for him to make things happen. When **Joseph Jones** got the ball, I particularly wanted to try to deny Acie Law the ball and make sure he didn't get it back and make it Joseph Jones, that's the shot we really wanted.

KENTON PAULINO: We just didn't want Acie Law to catch the ball to him to create something and get an open look, so we wanted somebody else on their team to make a play.

I think the play broke down and **Joseph Jones** ended up being the 3-point line and he took the shot, but we just we wanted to contest everything.

Q. There was a time where you it almost looked like you ran an ISO as it cleared out I'm going to take this thing in. Were you getting the feel that there's nothing that's going to stop me from taking it to the hole?

P.J. TUCKER: My teammates and coaches, a lot of times the shot clock gets low, they might think I've got a mismatch so we were cleared out and just make something happen. Not just to get a shot for myself, but a lot of times to free up Ken or LaMarcus to get a good look at it because people come and gravitate to me a lot.

As I said, it's the trust I get from my teammates and Coach to make a play happen.

Q. What happened in the second half that allowed them to slow it down and get it more into their pace of the game, and surprised that **LaMarcus** only got two shots in the second half?

KENTON PAULINO: I think we turned the ball over a couple of times and they made some 3s, they got back into the game, but I that I was due to our turnovers.

Q. Since you guys and Kansas tied for the regular season title, would it be fun to play them in the Championship tomorrow?

P.J. TUCKER: I guess so. Like I said to the first question, it really doesn't matter to us, really doesn't. Playing Kansas would be fun because they are a great team, but playing Nebraska would be good too because they gave us a pretty good game at home when we played them. Really doesn't matter. Going to sit back, watch the game and after the game is over analyze the teams, see what we are going to do tomorrow to play.

KENTON PAULINO: Same thing: Whoever we play we're just going to prepare for them tonight, just come out and play them.

Q. 27 wins, a new record at UT. Any thoughts on -- a little history?

COACH RICK BARNES: Not really. Haven't thought much about it. I think you probably, when the season is over with, you might reflect on that. But right now, I said it a couple of weeks ago, I think we still got work to do and it's not time to sit back and think about that right now.

Q. The Aggies, as you know, have made their mark by their tough, gritty style, winning games at the end. You like what happened with your team when things got tough late today?

COACH RICK BARNES: I really do. One, I can't -- I could sit here for a long time and talk about the job that Billy has done with the program and I have got a lot of respect for the fact that guys -- teams that play as hard as they play and compete and to be there in a game like this -- this is what it is this time of year. And you can have a lead, we watched it happen yesterday, you watch it unfold in the Big East with Syracuse down, coming back. You watch it all week. This time of year is what it is.

For us to do what we did today, making the plays, I do think players have to make plays at games. Ken was a big player. P.J.'s defensive rebound where he took it away from **LaMarcus** was huge on the other end. Daniel going through the free-throw line, Buckman's one was a big one. There were a lot of big plays in it.

Being a close game and the way the guys carried themselves I thought was really good. P.J.'s defensive play on Acie Law was a great play when he came out, stayed in front and we had a foul to give. I said to him, if you get a chance to go for a still, go for it. Once he picked up his dribble I would have preferred him not to give it right there, but he did anyway. That was a big defensive possession and P.J. did a terrific job on that possession.

Q. Is P.J. the toughest guy in the conference to guard?

COACH RICK BARNES: He is tough because he can give it to you a lot of different ways. And, again, people will look at his line, 26 points, 13 rebounds, and he didn't have a great day shooting it from the free-throw line, which he's pretty darn accurate. But his rebounding -- but it's

what he does. He said it, we diagramed a play that we wanted to get guys in position, wanted to play, we had designed, we were going to throw it back to him, let him make a play. But we had Brad and **LaMarcus** on the backside to get offensive rebounds kind of using Daniel as a decoy and Kenton was going to play off P.J. and P.J. turned the corner, made a great read.

We could work and work and work, but he made the play, players make those plays and he has got great vision and he can give it to you a lot of different ways. And, you know, the tough thing about this time of year too when you are in conference play, I mean, Texas A&M can probably come in here, talk to you about everything we do. They know our people, our personnel, as we do them. You got to work to get things done this time of year once you are in conference tournament time.

But P.J. is special, he is. His mindset, what he has got, I don't know if I have ever coached a kid that it means as much. This game means a whole lot to him, and it's always been well-documented what he's gone through. And he responded to that one question like I thought he would. I don't think he had any more motivation. He's one guy that he lets things go and moves on to the next play pretty well. He's not going to beat himself up very long, but today, this time of year, you would expect him to do what he did today.

Q. Because of what he's been through, do you get any satisfaction -- are you happy for him as a person because he could -- he took so much flak for that A&M thing?

COACH RICK BARNES: I love him. After the game, first thing I said to him, I said, you know what, you have won a lot of games for us. I said, before you are done, you are going to win a lot more. You love anybody as a coach that's going to give you everything he's got. And he does. He gives it to us every day. It's not just a one-time thing. I mean, you know, when he -- I don't even know if I can tell you if he's ever had a bad day in terms of practicing. What he does off the floor as a person. He's a great person. He really is. He's all about his team and I have said to him before, one of his greatest strengths is probably he's stubborn and sometimes that's probably one of his biggest weaknesses. I kept telling him, they are going to surround you, do this, do that. He looks at me, he says, they ain't taking it from me. That's the way he is. Believe me, I am glad he plays for us.

Q. Could you talk about the plan to defend Josh Carter late in the game?

COACH RICK BARNES: Well, they obviously can shoot the ball. Our zone has been good the last couple of days, people have -- again, people know how to play against us. But we have switched back and forth a little bit between the 2-3 and a 1-2-2 zone, 3-2, any way you want to write it.

They can shoot the ball. We knew they were going to do that first half. We didn't cover out very well. A lot of the 3s he got was really from pretty good defense where we got out there, and all through double penetration, Acie Law made a couple of terrific passes where he got us up and got into the gut of the defense and kicked out. It is just naturally when somebody drives you are going to help on that. He kicked out, they started making some 3s.

But we think we're a good man team. We think our zone is best when we mix them both up, and really and truly we stay in that zone based on how people handle it. If they're not handling it, we're going to stay in probably longer than we like. I think sometimes -- and I tell the coaches this all the time, I like when we play man because I feel like we're more aggressive on the offensive end. But sometimes people aren't hitting shots. Handle it, we'll stay in it until they do.

And but we knew coming in. They proved yesterday they could make a bunch of 3s. But we ran well out of the zone first half, we really did. Got a lot of good transition baskets out of it.

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COACH BILLY GILLISPIE ACIE LAW JOSH CARTER

COACH BILLY GILLISPIE: Very competitive game against a great team, and I think we got not a great team but a pretty darn good team ourself, and give those guys credit for winning. They did a great job. We couldn't handle them in the lane and too many offensive rebounds, too many drives to the basket too close to the basket. We kept competing, gave ourselves an opportunity. But we just never could get the stop when we needed it or the defensive rebounds to put us over the hump.

Q. Talk about at that final -- not the final play, but the play where Joseph ended up taking the three-pointer, what happened, what were they doing defensively?

ACIE LAW: They was in a man. We worked on that play, double down, me to come off the ball screen, set the down screen for Dominique or Josh and Joe to pop. We knew that they was going to smooth it down like two -- down two or three, I am not sure. We was going for a 3. And I knew they was expecting me or Dominique to shoot the shot or *Josh*. We always work on that play in practice, Joe the pop out on the back end of it. *LaMarcus* made a great defensive play. Joe didn't make the shot and was downhill from there.

Q. Josh, what was your situation on that play because you had been hitting 3s all day?

JOSH CARTER: Well, me or *Dominique* come off the down screen and *Dominique* just happened to be over there, he just came off and I was just in the corner just in case Acie just came

off the screen and he could drive and penetrate and pitch to me.

Q. (Inaudible)?

JOSH CARTER: Well, no, the guy was guarding me Acie went the other way, so wasn't open.

ACIE LAW: It's my fault. I should have took the ball that way and made a play for him. But I just -- I knew that way I was going to go back to *Dominique*. I knew he was going to go to Joe, I had confidence in Joe, Josh had been hitting the whole game, and I should have went and made that play for him. I had confidence in Joe to make that shot for us, and he was just unable to make it for us.

Q. Talk about Josh last two games, what he has brought to this offense?

ACIE LAW: Great for us, not only offense, he has been doing a great job rebounding. He's getting better each day defensively. He's just maturing. Shows you all the ability he has here in the *Big 12* when things are getting tough, everybody is stepping up, raising their game up, trying to defend real well. *Josh* has done a great job showing everybody what he can do, and the sky is the limit for him if he just listens to coach and works on his game, because he has got a lot of talent.

Q. On the play that Joseph ended up taking the 3, the way you talk about it, is Joseph on that play actually an option to take that 3 --

ACIE LAW: That's the second option. I am going to come off the board screen, then it is a down screen or *Dominique* and they played the down screen well and *Dominique* recognized it and he went to Joe. Joe just didn't make the shot. If we were in that situation again, I would run the same play, give it to Dominique -- I am sure *Dominique* would give it to Joe because Joe would make that shot for us in that situation.

Q. Can you discuss Tucker's effect on that game? It's one thing on offense, late they switched him on to you --

ACIE LAW: He's a great player, player of

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the year in our league. He can do it all, all type of plays. He's great for them. He had 26 and 13, just dominant performance. He's a great player, I mean, that pretty much sums it up about P.J. He's just a phenomenal talent.

Q. Speak to just feeling it in your hometown, I guess, how comfortable you have been shooting it up here?

JOSH CARTER: I am always pretty confident in myself that I can make shots. They were just falling this weekend. It was good to have it at home, but I mean, it would have been better if we would have won.

Q. There's some guys in Indianapolis right now that are deciding who should be in and who shouldn't be in the NCAA tournament. What would you tell them about this team?

ACIE LAW: I think we should be in, but like I said before, it's out of our hands. All we can do is just sit back and pray and hopefully they will let us in. We think we deserve to get in. We think we did enough, but it's up to the committee. I don't know that look at or what of you hopefully they will let us in sounds sound at end.

Q. Follow on that the NCAA tournament, what do you think your chances are?

COACH BILLY GILLISPIE: What do I think? I am not a politician. I haven't been. I won't be. You don't have to be when you play in the *Big 12*. You finished fourth, you win your first game in the tournament, you play a team that's hopefully going to go to the Final 4, unless we get put in the same bracket, and you know, there's no question we have won 8 in a row. I don't know if anybody has a longer winning streak our last four losses that we have had over the season have been today, Texas on the road, Oklahoma on the road and Kansas at home. All those guys are pretty darn good. So we're going to get to keep on playing in the *NCAA* tournament and I think we're going to represent this conference very well. Thank you.

Q. Talk about how -- the movement of the ball today? You guys had 19 assists only 6 turnovers.

COACH BILLY GILLISPIE: I thought we did after we got started, they were scoring too much on us, we couldn't get them slowed down at all, and they did a great job in transition of putting the pressure on us, but what we were able to do is make some shots and we started playing inside out

and Acie did a fantastic job. He's really come to be a great player. He's always been a good player but he's become a great player, offensively, defensively, leadershipwise, everything. He got the ball where we needed to.

He made so many good plays that don't show up anywhere in the stat charts of getting guys shots, moving guys where they needed to be, getting the ball in the post, putting guys in position where they can get the ball to the post. He played a fantastic game for somebody that really -- I am not saying -- I am not saying someone here doesn't, but if you really understand basketball, man alive, it was one of the best performances I have ever seen.

He didn't shoot it as well as he does sometimes, but man alive, he played a great game. I am not disrespecting anyone in here as far as basketball knowledge. So many little subtle things that he did to make everybody on our team much better put him in great positions to score. That's the reason we were able to come back and have a chance to beat a really good team.

Q. What does it do for your offense when Josh is shooting the ball like that, and has his defense improved that much where you are able to get him more minutes?

COACH BILLY GILLISPIE: He was a little overmatched defensively. Those guys are really hard to guard. They did a really good job of attacking us off the dribble, because that's the way you attack pressure, we tried to pressure. We didn't do a good enough of -- we were always on our heels in the first half because they were just gripping us into transition. And when they got it down there they were just beating us off the dribble. We weren't in help position close enough to help enough. And not only *Josh*, but just too many guys got beat off the dribble.

But those guys are extremely hard to guard off the dribble because they can all shoot it so well. So Tucker is a good shooter. Those other guys are great 3-point shooters. But he's just a hard guy to stop off the dribble. It's hard to keep him out of the paint. That's where the game is won. They got the ball in the paint too much. When they missed too much, they controlled the offensive board in-the-paint and we had a lot of opportunities to get defensive rebounds and tried to keep them out of the paint, and we couldn't do it. They just whipped us in the lane today.

Q. Did you make somewhat subtle switch with Joseph Jones as to where and

when and how he was posting up between the halves?

COACH BILLY GILLISPIE: No, not really. I don't think that Joe was sealing his man as well as he needed to in the first half. Against the zone, I thought we had a lot of opportunities after ball reversal for Joe to seal a little bit better in the first half. He was open, so he didn't feel the need to go and seal his man away from -- of where the ball was, and he changed that a little bit. I am not being critical of Joe at all. That's normal thing for anybody to do is if you are open you are going to stay where you are, but he started posting up a little bit closer to the basket against the man and zone in the second half and he probably was a little bit more effective.

Q. On the play when -- 10 seconds when Joseph took the 3, what did you see as the play was unfolding? Did you expect him to take that shot, were you hoping that it could get in the hands of maybe one of their other 3-point shooters?

COACH BILLY GILLISPIE: Joe can shoot the ball as good as anybody on our team. But that -- he shouldn't have shot it today, and Joe knows that. They did a good job. We didn't set as good a screen as we could have. I like the play. We didn't have to have a 3-point shot. I thought that Acie was going to come off a double screen even though they were trapping it.

I thought I was going to be able to either get in-the-paint and score and get us a two or penetrate and pitch for *Josh*, or I thought *Dominique* would get a double screen and shoot a 3 or continue the play. But when we reversed it, all our guys have great confidence in each other, and me too. It was my fault because I called that play. Looking back I probably should have said let Acie go flat with it. It is a good play. I thought Acie might drive it on the first side anyway, penetrate and pitch for Josh or Dominique.

As you can tell, when you ask these guys, nobody -- nobody wants to put the blame on anybody else, and that's why they are a good team. They should say, Coach didn't know what he was doing on a lot of things. But they never do. They always say, well, it was a good play, I could have done this or whatever, that's why it's such a special group.

If you ask anybody on our team what happened, they would say, well, I didn't do this or I didn't do that, or we didn't do this well enough or whatever. That's why it's a special team and it's so much fun to coach. But it was my fault. I probably should have either called another timeout right

there and told them exactly what we wanted to do, or just reminded Joe that we didn't really need to have 3 point shot at that point. But when he gets it I am totally confident he can make it.

Give Texas credit. That was a big play, but that wasn't the play of the game. Plays in the game were all in-the-paint on the other end when they drove too much and couldn't get a defensive rebound. Give those guys credit. Good luck to them. They are a great team.

Q. Talk about how the complex of this matchup has changed now that you have your program where it is?

COACH BILLY GILLISPIE: Well, I think that we're getting to the point to where hopefully one of these days it's going to be a rivalry. We're working towards it. We have unbelievable respect for them. I was watching our guys shake their hands before the game and I think we're to the point to where people have unbelievable respect for us too and that was really a nice sight for me. It was also good coming in to -- we're going to try to emulate has done with their program and they have done a fantastic job, Coach has done a great job of making a national power on a yearly basis. We're going to try to emulate that as best we can. It's very difficult to do.

But one of things coming into the tournament that I thought was really good for Texas A&M is *Colorado* came here wanting a piece of us, and we played very well yesterday and they have got a really good team and today Texas was really mad, wanting a piece of us, and I thought our guys performed well in both games against two really good teams. I think just because of that, I think that we're making strides in the right direction. I don't know if that has been the case in the past.

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