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NEBRASKA CORNHUSKERS

THE MODERATOR: We're joined now by the Nebraska Cornhuskers, Coach Doc Sadler and his two student athletes, Steve Harley and Aleks Maric. Coach, congratulations on your victory tonight. Your thoughts on the game?

COACH DOC SADLER: Thanks, Charlie. First of all, you got to give, you know, Missouri credit. They just kept playing and playing and playing. And, you know, we missed free throws and allowed them to keep having some hope.

I thought both teams really played well defensively, and it was hard to score. I mean, if you hold Missouri to 56 points, you've got to be really, really excited as a basketball coach to know that your team put forth that type of effort against a team such as Missouri.

And going into the game, one of the things that we wanted to do that we did not get done is we did -- we wanted to take away the three-point shot. When we won at Missouri, they made three. When they beat us at Lincoln, they made 11. So that was a conscious effort. And we gave up nine, so we didn't do a good job in that area.

But overall, I mean, I couldn't be more pleased with these guys. They have given me every bit of effort, and it was a 40-minute ball game. Until the very end, we had some guys get some defensive rebounds and then, you know, got the victory.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you very much. Let's go to questions now for our two students athletes.

Q. Aleks, how did you feel going into halftime when Steve hit that jump shot at the buzzer?

ALEKS MARIC: We were feeling great. With a point left, we had a lot of good momentum going into the locker room and coming out in the second half. Guys were up and energy was up

and I think that transferred into the first five minutes of the second half.

Q. Aleks, nine-minute stretch in the second half, you were the only one on the team to score, kind of held Missouri off from making that run. How big was the second half there for you guys?

ALEKS MARIC: It was huge. I mean, obviously like Coach said, both teams played great defense. It was very, very hard to score. I mean, we used the shot clock as much as we could, we had to mix things up. It was tough but we were able to do it. Stuck together, played team basketball and got through it.

Q. Aleks, wanted to ask you about playing Kansas in the next round. It was a team that beat you pretty soundly two times this year. What kind of a challenge is that for you guys?

ALEKS MARIC: To be honest, I haven't thought about it. I am fresh off the court against Missouri. That was our main focus. We are going to go back to the hotel as a team, rest up and look at them tomorrow. Then I can answer that one tomorrow if you want to ask it.

Q. Steve and Aleks both, the scheme things that Missouri does as far as switching back and forth from different defenses. I know they did some pressure for a while there. Talk about the challenges and then also just beyond that, the little pesky things that Missouri's defense does. They break up a lot of passes and disrupt what you guys are trying to do offensively. Talk about that and how you were able to overcome that?

ALEKS MARIC: They mix things up a lot. They play a lot of scramble defense. They press you full court, 1-1-2, 1-2-2. They chase things up a lot. They'll deny, they switch. You have to be sharp mentally I think on the offensive end to pick up what they're doing.

We got caught a few times on the baseline

after they scored and we turned the ball over because we didn't pick up what they were doing. That really cost us. But for the most part, I think we did a good job.

STEVE HARLEY: Like he said, we were switching defense and was making it very hard for us as an offense. Switching defense with the press back to a zone, that makes it very hard for us to run a play because we don't know what defense they're going to run until they get into it. So they just keep us off balance as an offense.

Q. Steve, how evenly matched was your team with Missouri? You played a 4-point game with them and then an overtime game and then this game came within a point.

STEVE HARLEY: It is just a battle. I guess, we match up with them, they match up with us, it is going to be a 40-minute ball game every time we play them. I guess it is an equal battle.

Q. Steve, it was a battle. How did you get so open on that inbound play and cut for a lay-up?

STEVE HARLEY: I don't know. You can ask Missouri. I really don't know (laughter). I got lucky.

THE MODERATOR: Okay, guys. Congratulations on your victory tonight. Good luck tomorrow.

And now questions for Coach Sadler.

Q. Doc, can you talk about the work you did on the Lyons tonight?

COACH DOC SADLER: Again, you know, the last few ball games he has been -- he and Carroll both have really played well for them. It is a catch 22 because, again, you look at the reasons they're winning and especially when we played them and it is the three-point shot.

But at the same time, you realize that you got to stop Carroll and you got to stop Lyons. And what we tried to do that is what we call two-slide helping and get back. We did a great job the first half and then late in the game Lyons got that baseline shot when we didn't get out there.

But you're not going to stop those two guys. You know, again, I think defensively Aleks did a great job and again Ryan and we had a lot of help with him also.

Q. Coach, can you just talk about what this win means in terms of momentum for your program.

COACH DOC SADLER: Wow, you know, we've got so much to do there. And each time we do something that we haven't done, it's got to help us and this was just another step. So I hope that it really, really helps us. I mean, you know, it's hard to sit there and, you know, listen to you guys on T.V. and talk about seven out of the last eight years we haven't won a game down here, all that stuff, believe me, it starts messing with peoples' head and especially my little head -- big head, little brain.

So I was conscious of that. We were fortunate enough to get a win and hopefully it will help us.

Q. Coach, can you talk about getting another shot at Kansas and what you might expect from them tomorrow?

COACH DOC SADLER: I am the happiest guy in the gym because if we wouldn't have won, we wouldn't be getting a chance to play again. The happiness ends there.

I've gotten a chance to play them four times, and I know one of your questions to them was "do you have any suggestions"? My question to you y'all, do y'all have any suggestions because what I've done hasn't worked.

We're going to have to play near perfect basketball for us. It's just a very, very tough matchup. Their forwards create problems for us. But as I said before, I mean, I know this will be the only team that has a chance to play against them tomorrow night and the way our team is, I mean, I don't know what's going to happen but I know this, we're going to give an effort for 40 minutes and we have all four times we've played them. It's just the score has been way out of whack.

So I don't know. I'm happy but sad, I guess. Does that make sense?

Q. The last two possessions, they weren't able to get a 3 off. So if you can just talk --

COACH DOC SADLER: We switched on everything there. You know, I was concerned that they might drive it to the basket but they didn't. So we switched out on everything, even Aleks on their point guard Horton. And I think the thing that kind of goes unnoticed is that we got the defensive

rebounds. They did miss the shots, but we didn't give them two and three shots at it.

And so our guys did a terrific job once they saw the shot being taken to go run down the basketball. So I think more than anything, that's the thing I'm happy about.

Q. Coach Sadler, with a few exceptions you have played a lot of close games this season. This one and the other games against Missouri both in Lincoln obviously very close games. Tell me what your team did really great in the last minute, last 30 seconds that made the difference for you guys coming away with the win.

COACH DOC SADLER: I thought our free throw shooting was tremendous (smiling).

I don't know what we did. I mean, I think defensively, you know, that free throw shooting was a joke. And defensive rebounding I mean, they didn't get two, three, four opportunities when they missed the shot. And I think so many times in those situations you see teams win the game on second shots or third shots. You know, we're running down the rebounds, they get it and they kick it to a wide-open player and he makes a 3. That didn't happen. So I think if you were to ask me what I was most happy about, it would be that, that we didn't give them two and three shots in that last minute when they did miss the shot.

Q. You were up 17-4 in second-chance points tonight.

COACH DOC SADLER: Thanks. Should have saved some of those for tomorrow probably. Thank you all so much.

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