

March 14, 2008



OKLAHOMA SOONERS

CHARLIE FISS: We're ready to begin with the Oklahoma Sooners, Coach Jeff Capel and his two student athletes this afternoon will be Tony Crocker and Taylor Griffin.

Coach, congratulations on your victory. Your thoughts on the day?

COACH JEFF CAPEL: We felt very fortunate to get the win. Obviously, you know, it wasn't a pretty game for either team, but we found a way to make some plays, get some stops, maybe fatigue had something to do with it with Colorado on some of those shots that they took.

We found a way to get a win. At this time of year, that's all that matters, is just winning. It doesn't matter how pretty it is. It is just a matter of having more points than the other team, and we were able to do that today.

Q. Can you guys talk about just how -- even if it's Colorado, which no hope for the NCAA unless they went out -- the tournament can be good for you guys just preparing you for next week, tournament atmosphere, neutral court, that kind of thing?

TAYLOR GRIFFIN: You know, it is the closest thing you can get. You're not used to not having any time to warm up really. You only get whatever amount of time they give you. So, you know, it is just like the NCAA, and it is good practice for us.

But, again, we got to be able to get prepared better than we did today in a short amount of time.

TONY CROCKER: I think it's good for us. It is just giving us more game -- more practice to work on stuff against other teams, giving us a chance to play together more, like seeing how we're going to do with adversity. They fought back today. They played a good game today, and it was just -- it is teaching us how to overcome things and fight through it.

Q. Tony, I want to ask you, the team had missed four straight free throws in the final minute; you had missed two, you were short on both of them. What went through your mind when you went up the next time you shot the free throws?

TONY CROCKER: Just take my time and get the ball over the front of the rim, you know. I work in practice with Coach on just keeping it straight and getting on my toes with my shoot to get it over. I just focus on trying -- just trying to make it for the team.

Q. Guys, you got out to a 10-0 lead. It looked like it might be a pretty good game for you and then things changed. What did change after you continued with the hot start?

TAYLOR GRIFFIN: I thought they started attacking more. We got out to an 8-0 or 10-0 start, and I thought they started trying to get to the basket more. And I think we were kind of playing back on our heels a little bit. You know, they came at us and, you know, that's one thing we talked about is getting off to a good start and keep attacking.

You know, we did get off to a good start but, you know, we let them be the aggressor for however long that was.

Q. Taylor, could you talk about what is going to be the key tomorrow against the Texas team that you have lost to twice?

TAYLOR GRIFFIN: You know, everybody knows they're a good team. They got one of the best point guards in the nation. They got good athletes in every position. We've lost to them four straight times over the last two years and it's time for a win.

We got to be able to defend them. We got to be able to stop Augustin and we got to be able to put some points up ourselves.

Q. Toney, I wish you would expound on that, talk about Texas. Taylor, I want to come back to you, did you guys take a step back with

the way you played against Colorado?

TONY CROCKER: Getting ready for tomorrow's game, you know, we just got to forget about today. Of course, we know we had some slip-ups. We went on a lead. We kind of set back and stopped going at them like we were and they came back and that kept it close throughout the whole game.

But going forward with tomorrow, we just got to work on their stuff, going over trying to keep their guards in front. They got a great guard. Just work on containing all of them and putting points up.

Q. Did you take a step back with the way you played today in this game as to how you have been playing prior to the tournament?

TAYLOR GRIFFIN: We've had three pretty good games before this. I guess you thought it was a step back. It definitely wasn't a good game for us as a team. It was good in the fact that we won, but I don't think anybody played great, maybe not even good. But it was enough to get the job done.

But, you know, now it's over, we got the win, and we got a good Texas team tomorrow.

CHARLIE FISS: All right, guys, we'll let you go back to your locker room. Congratulations on your victory.

Now let's go to questions for Coach Capel.

Q. Coach, back to the Blake Griffin question. He had 15 minutes, did he get hurt in the game or what was the reason of him not being as big a factor today?

COACH JEFF CAPEL: He rebounded well, but that was about it. You know, they were doubling, tripling down in the post. And he was passing the ball back out, didn't score as well as he had been scoring, as he scored for us all year.

We just had a different lineup on the floor. We had guys playing better, to be quite honest with you, and we went with that group.

Q. Do you like conference tournaments? You are not going to get rid of them, but do you like them?

COACH JEFF CAPEL: They're fine. They're exciting, especially a tournament like this. You have so many good teams in one arena. I think it is great for the fans. I think it is great for our kids, for every team. You get a chance to participate and it gives everyone hope, even teams

that maybe have no post-season hope, they still have a little bit, maybe a spark if something magical can happen.

You've seen that at different times throughout the years of college basketball, or you've seen a team that has been a 10 or 11 or 12 seed all of a sudden make it to the finals. So, yeah, they're fine.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about Texas and what maybe you have to do different and the challenges they present?

COACH JEFF CAPEL: Well, I think they're one of the best teams in the country. I've said this before, if you look at their body of work and what they've done all year, I think they're as good as anyone. I think they have the best point guard in the country. They have two other all-conference guys in Abrams who's quietly had a tremendous year. Damion James, second team all-league guy; Connor Atchley, all defensive guy; Justin Mason, all defensive guy. They are the epitome of a team. They understand who they are. They understand what the strengths of their team are. They have great guards. Not good guards; they have great guards and they can make shots. They can beat you off the bounce.

I thought when we played them in Austin, I thought we did a pretty good job defensively on everyone especially for Augustin. Augustin is such a tough guy for anyone to cover, but for the game, I think Texas shot under 40%. I thought we did a really good job at their place defending the three-point line. If I'm not mistaken they were one or two for something for the game.

So we defended them well enough. We have to be able to score points twice against Texas this year. That was our downfall. At our place we had a lead and I think at the 11-minute mark, 12-minute mark, it was a tie game. And we went through one of those stretches where we couldn't score.

Texas is a team we know is going to score. We have to be able to score and still defend them at a high level.

Q. Give us your evaluation of this game and your thoughts on how your team played against the 12th seed?

COACH JEFF CAPEL: I don't think we played well, but at this time of year, it is about surviving and advancing. And that's what we were

able to do. We were able to make some plays. I thought we did some good things at times but we couldn't be consistent with it. Hopefully what we did today was that we were able to knock off some rust.

I think you have to give Colorado a lot of credit, though. They're a hard team to prepare for because of the style in which they play. You know, you have Richard Roby who is now the all-time leading scorer in their program's history right at 2,000 points, either a little bit below, a little bit above. Hall is a guy that's scored over 1,000 points. They have two really, really good players who are both seniors, who are older.

But I just thought for us, we couldn't make shots. Hopefully we got that out of us today. You know, we let some -- had some bad turnovers, some times when we felt like we had a chance to stretch the lead. I think it was a 7-point game and we missed four straight free throws from guys that are pretty good free throw shooters for us, so we didn't play well.

But I thought we did a pretty good job defensively. Held them to 34% shooting. Like I said earlier, some of it may have been fatigue on their part. We knew they had played a 50-minute game yesterday. And Robby, Hall and Higgins had played 50, 48 and 46 minutes. So maybe that had a little bit to do with it. But regardless, we found a way to win. So we're pleased about that. We're not pleased about how we played, but I'm pleased that we won. It is certainly a better feeling than what we had in Boulder.

Q. You guys played pretty good team defense today. Do you think that's a good launching point for Texas?

COACH JEFF CAPEL: I thought we did some good things. We still gave up some drives and our help side wasn't as good as it has been in the past.

Like I said, maybe part of it with them, they missed some shots. They were short on some shots late and that probably had a lot to do with fatigue. But we know it is a tough challenge for us tomorrow but our guys have responded to challenges this year. We'll be ready. We'll muster up some energy and we'll be ready. We have to be. They're really, really good so we'll be ready.

CHARLIE FISS: Coach, thank you very much.