

**March 14, 2008**



## TEXAS LONGHORNS

CHARLIE FISS: Joined now by the Texas Longhorns and Coach Rick Barnes and his three student athletes, Damian James, D.J. Augustin and Justin Mason.

Coach, we'll come to you first. Congratulations on today's victory and your thoughts?

COACH RICK BARNES: Well, we knew coming in it was going to be a really hard-fought game. We had two of them with them throughout the regular season and really a hard one just a couple days ago. It is almost like you feel like you are in 2-3, 3-5 series. But I thought we did some good things, some of the things that we didn't do so well last week, I thought we improved on. Had different guys do some different things.

I look down and Justin had 8 assists tonight which is great and Connor got off to a tough start but came back and made really some second-effort, got us some extra possession plays. Obviously, D.J. and Damian throughout were terrific.

**Q. D.J., do you feel like this was a typical game for you guys, both the good stuff and the bad?**

D.J. AUGUSTIN: You know, we just try tried to play better than we did when we played Oklahoma State at home. We watched film and we didn't like what we did on defense. We tried to come in this game and play hard on defense and leave it out there, give it the full effort.

**Q. Damion, at one point they hit three straight 3s to make it a fairly close game. What was the tendency? It seemed like at that time you were content to fire up 3s right with them, and then all of a sudden, no, let's go inside. Let's move the clock. Can you talk about that?**

DAMION JONES: It was just, you know, we didn't want to exchange baskets with them. You know, we really wanted to get stops on the

other end. But Coach always told us to put pressure on the basket and either in the post or D.J. or Mason driving the ball. We were just able to get in there and people made plays.

**Q. Justin, just talk about the grittiness, I guess, of this team right now, what's driving you guys, how hungry are you for this Big 12 tournament title?**

JUSTIN MASON: I think we're all very hungry, you know. You know, the year of experience we went through last year, you know, we're all aware of what we're fighting for for this year. You know, I think it is our maturity and us growing up over the course of the season makes us play harder. We know what's out there every night for us.

**Q. Damion, everybody knows about your rebounding talents and everything. Are you feeling a little bit more responsibility to score more now since A.J. has been in a shooting slump?**

DAMION JONES: I really don't worry about scoring. Coach always tell me to do the small things and you'll be able to score the ball.

I just really focus on rebounding and really working hard on my defense. That's my main focus right now. Staying in front of my men, helping my teammates.

**Q. What was key in the beginning of that second half, I mean, in that run that you guys had? Was there a concerted effort maybe something with Thomas to maybe slow him down some, too?**

D.J. AUGUSTIN: I think we had to slow the whole team down. We needed to get stops on defense and not let them get easy baskets. They got a lot of great players. I think we did a great job tonight helping each other and, you know, playing pretty good defense.

**Q. D.J., y'all have been effective in that zone a lot this season. How effective was it**

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**today? Was it as good as it's been in a while?**

D.J. AUGUSTIN: It was pretty good. You know, we can go back and work on some things, you know, and I think we played pretty good zone defense tonight. Everybody was, you know, playing their role, playing their part and we got stops in there and it worked well for us tonight.

**Q. Damion, how confident are you guys when you have a lead late? I think you guys are 26-1 or something when you have a lead with 4:00 left, especially with D.J. controlling the ball.**

DAMION JONES: We really do have a lot of confidence with the ball being in D.J.'s hands because we know him being the player he is, he going to make plays and just make plays for everybody else and put us in position to be on top at the end of the game.

**Q. I would like to ask any of the players, the officials seem to call it real loose, allow a lot of contact. Wonder if you feel like that played into your hands or not.**

D.J. AUGUSTIN: You know, either way you are going to have to play hard. You can't worry about what the officials call. They are going to call some bad calls, some good ones. You got to play through it and no matter what, play as a team. That's what we do every night. Go out there and play as a team no matter what happens.

CHARLIE FISS: We'll let you return to the locker room. Congratulations on your victory today.

Let's go to Coach now. Questions for Coach Barnes.

**Q. Back to my original question, when they were bombing 3s in left and right, did you make a suggestion that perhaps your team should not try to do that as well?**

COACH RICK BARNES: Yes. We, actually -- second half I thought maybe we were extended in our zone because they did a really nice job of flashing someone into the middle of the lane and putting some pressure there. And the only thing we really did in the second half, we said we were going to have the off guard as opposed to really worrying about the three-point shot from them from the top of the key. Really try to take away that interior pass first.

But when they knocked down a couple, again when you play a zone and it's been -- it's

hard for us right now because you followed us this year, we have become a pretty good man team. We feel like we are getting what we needed out of it.

They made a couple, and I do think -- I thought we -- around the 7:00 mark there -- I thought we had gotten into a kind of walk-it-up game with us. We don't want to do that. 7:00 is a long time. Actually that's what we looked at last night. The first half in Austin we did a great job of playing our tempo. Second half, they got the game kind of like it was today, but we needed to get out and try to get some easy baskets. That's all I kept telling them. Let's run, try to get some easy baskets. If not, play inside out.

During that period, we got a little happy. With A.J. and D.J., we're going to let them shoot it. Damian who shoots the ball well, he shot a quick one. But we came back and did go back inside with it.

**Q. Was your philosophy on the zone today to see how much you could get out of it to rest these guys a little bit as well and your thoughts on, you know, D.J. with the ball in his hands with 4:00 left?**

COACH RICK BARNES: Well, we felt we -- looking back, we probably should have -- excuse me, we probably felt like we should have played zone the last time we played them. But we feel, too, that we want to mix some things up a little bit and it goes back with what I said. We feel real comfortable with our man, but we'll go zone. Normally, we'll stay in it depending on how people attack it. You know, we'll stay in it a little bit longer because when we are really playing, we do some pretty good things with it.

But D.J. obviously with the ball in his hand I mean, a lot of good things are going to happen because so many people are concerned about him. You are going to have to help somebody from somewhere to help on him. And his confidence level, it goes back -- our players know if he got it, they get to where they are supposed to be, if he can't score, he'll find them.

**Q. Took Oklahoma State almost 8:00 for their first field goal in the second half. What did you like defensively? What were you doing to them in that stretch and overall defensively at this point in the season? Where do you think your team is?**

COACH RICK BARNES: I thought our concentration was good in the fact that we did have to adjust a little bit in what we had planned on doing early because we respect the fact that they took 31 3s and we thought they would shoot 3s and we thought they would. And my recollection, I will be honest with you, I think this is the most zone we've ever seen from Oklahoma State. But based on how we handled it a little bit in Austin, we kind of expected it.

When we talked about some of the adjustments that we needed to play, especially those first five guys, they've played enough of it where they were really coming out of their zone area, stepping into other areas to help their teammates. That's what they were alluding to, where just -- I'm not going to say matched up, but they were willing to leave their area of the court and slide somewhere else and make some of those plays.

If we would have rebounded early, that was the difference in the game in the first half. They scored from offensive rebounding and got some extra possessions. That's always a concern with the zone, but overall, again, our concentration has gotten a lot better here in the last couple weeks in terms of being able to talk them through some things.

**Q. Your comments on Sean Sutton as a coach. He has been under fire all season, played three tough games with you. Your thoughts on Sean, the job he has done at Oklahoma State in his second season as head coach.**

COACH RICK BARNES: Back -- I don't know how long it's been. I was at Clemson and Kelvin Sampson came out and asked me to do a clinic for the high school coaches association in Oklahoma and on the way back, I had called Coach Sutton and asked if I could stop by and watch practice. He said, sure. So I flew in that day as I left Norman. And coach had gotten sick and Sean ran the whole practice.

So in my opinion, I don't think Sean has just been an assistant coach over the last however many years he's been there. He has been with that program. He's like family there. You go back and look, he's had -- I'm sure Eddie Sutton will tell you Sean had as much to do with the success over the last couple years that went on there. I can just tell you they're a really hard team to play against because they are an extremely well-coached team.

They don't beat themselves. You know, things happen that -- I know they lost a key guy that transferred, I think to Louisiana Tech. That's a huge loss for them because if they got that experienced post-player they are a totally different team.

And I don't know what happened in that situation, but I was impressed today watching the young guys play. They got these guys back. They lose obviously Marcus. But these guys are back, and he's just done a great job. I know that if I were an athletic director evaluating a coach, he's a guy that would have high marks in everything because of the way he does his business and the way he coaches his team.

**Q. As somebody who used to hate zone, when you see 3s going in from the other team or offensive rebounds, do you have any moment of bout self-doubt about using it or is it just a reality these days?**

COACH RICK BARNES: Yeah, about every time we go to it. Again, coaches would tell you today, if I said it once, I said it ten times, should we stay zone? Should we stay zone?

And then at the end of the game, I'm saying when we're man, knowing they're looking to shoot quick, I would say to the coaches, maybe we should go zone. Yeah, I would say there is some self-doubt along the way.

I've learned though over the time, it goes back to Jim Boeheim, when I started talking to him I think we started using it five years ago quite a bit, he said to me, you go back and look at the way you guys defend the three-point line with your man and look at ours, I guarantee you we defend the three-point line better than you guys and they did.

And I said, how can you stand there and watch teams make 3s. He said, well, sometimes it's fool's gold. They said you just got to be patient with it. I said to myself that first year we're going to do it, they will have to make two or three before we change. Again, over time, we stay in it. If we think people are uncomfortable with it, we'll get out.

Innately, yeah, I have a hard time probably staying with it sometimes. But it's work and we'll do.

**Q. Coach, we talk a lot about the zone. What was it about Oklahoma State that made you feel like the zone worked well, especially since they do Jack up a lot of 3s?**

COACH RICK BARNES: You asked me why I think it would work?

**Q. Yeah, why did you think it would work?**

COACH RICK BARNES: What makes it difficult from -- we wanted to try to use our bench some today. Marcus Dove, even though he would be down as a post-player, he is a perimeter player in our opinion where he can drive the ball and we just wanted to really try to take away the dribble penetration. They really drove it at us in Austin. They drove it hard in Stillwater, too, but we just felt like we had in some way had to get the dribble penetration under control. So we -- again, we did, we started even as it went on, we would compact it a little bit more and just said, hey, let's get in it. We can close down the lane.

On the kickouts, let's try to run them off the line. Early in the game, again, the rebounds came from dribble penetration, whether they -- whether we -- if we helped up, which we did, which we don't want to do, they had a couple dunks that way and dribble penetration, we rotated over to help. We felt a zone maybe could slow some of that down, just to try to stop the dribble penetration.

CHARLIE FISS: Coach, thank you.

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