

March 13, 2008



BIG 12 CHAMPIONSHIP

IOWA STATE CYCLONES

THE MODERATOR: We're ready to begin with the Cyclones. We have Coach McDermott and his two student athletes, Rahshon Clark and Craig Brackins.

Coach, we'll go to you first with your thoughts on tonight's game.

COACH GREGG McDERMOTT: Well, the statistics are very telling. We turned it over few enough times to give ourselves a chance to win. We rebounded well enough against a very good rebounding team to give ourselves a chance to win and we held them to 42% shooting.

And that got a little bit better late as we were pressuring when they got some easy baskets, which was good enough to win. But to win in this game you have to make shots, and we missed some free throws. We missed some front-end 1-on-1s. We had some open looks in the first half from the three-point line and, you know, missed some opportunities down deep to make shots. Our margin for error is pretty small, and when we don't cash in on those opportunities, it makes it really difficult for us to win.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for our two student athletes?

Q. Rahshon, talk about the defensive job you did on Carter tonight.

RAHSHON CLARK: Basically I just tried not to let them get the ball. I knew if he was able to get a couple shots off, good looks, that he would start getting into his momentum and start making shots so I just tried my best not to let him touch the ball.

Q. Rahshon, I was wondering if you could kind of talk about what was going through your mind there at the end when you were walking off the court.

RAHSHON CLARK: Basically that I'm going to miss this. You know, this is my final game as a Cyclone. I will always be a Cyclone but I just

won't be able to step on the floor with these guys and play with them anymore. I will just miss in this whole experience.

Q. Craig, can you just talk about finishing up the season strong like you have here in these last two games, how much confidence do you have given the improvement this team has shown even though it hasn't resulted in some of the wins you would like and some of the players coming in for next season.

CRAIG BRACKINS: I have been pretty confident. I have had a couple good games toward the end. Our team's confidence is really high right now. We're excited to just get ready and start for the next season, and we're expecting our young guys to come in next year and be really good.

Q. Rahshon, you and McDermott had kind of a little moment at the end of the game. What were you guys talking about?

RAHSHON CLARK: Basically, you know, that we were going to miss each other, miss, you know, me being here, you know, trying to win games and things like that; just that we're going to miss each other basically.

Q. Rahshon, what are you feeling right now? Are you a little disappointed just kind of the way this game turned out and kind of the offense futility you guys had?

RAHSHON CLARK: I am not disappointed. We went out there and gave it everything we had. The guys never gave up. You know, we tried our best and that's all I could ask for, even though we didn't come up with a win.

You know, we played, you know, as best as we could. I can't ask for anything more than that.

THE MODERATOR: Okay, guys, we'll let you go back to the locker room and we'll keep Coach here for final questions. Thanks for coming. Questions for Coach?

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Q. Coach, it was kind of a roller coaster season. Talk about Rahshon Clark's role and his leadership and what he's taught the younger players.

COACH GREGG McDERMOTT: I think the thing that sticks out to me the most -- and I shared it with the team in the locker room -- I asked them if my staff and I were gone tomorrow and all but a few of their teammates decided to leave as well, does Iowa State mean enough to you that you'd stay? And the answer when Rahshon Clark was posed that question was, yes, it does.

This institution and our athletic program and our basketball program in particular will always be indebted to him for that decision because that is the -- in my mind, the ultimate sign of unselfishness because the easy thing for him to do would have been to leave and nobody would have questioned it. But he made the decision for reasons that he felt were the right reasons for him, not what other people were telling him to do.

And along the way -- not a lot of people know this -- he tried to convince his teammates to stay but he didn't look down upon them when they made the decision to leave. That's the ultimate in leadership. He knew there were going to be some tough times ahead and he wasn't afraid of that challenge.

Q. You guys kind of went with a smaller line-up at times using less at the far. Do you think that forced you to take more jump shots that could have contributed to the low shooting percentage?

COACH GREGG McDERMOTT: We were up 7-2 and we went 15 possessions without scoring a basket. And I think only three of those resulted in turnovers. And if my count is right, nine of those were either put-backs or layups, nine of those possessions.

We couldn't get anything to fall. It wasn't necessarily just jump shots. We only took 10 three-point shots the first half and one of them was late in the half. So I don't think we were casting up a lot of bad shots. I think we missed a lot of good shots.

But, obviously, A&M has been successful this year in large part because they're so sound defensively. And they tried to take away what we wanted to do as we tried to do with them and defensively, as I mentioned, we played well enough to win but we're at 7-2 and the next time

you look up there, we're down 14-7. A stretch like that against a team that's -- wasn't long ago this team was almost a top ten team in the country, it's hard to come back from.

To our guys' credit, we got back in the game and made it a game in the second half.

Q. Coach, another close loss, I guess you could say. Craig had another good game. Do you feel good about these kids? Have they started to turn a corner toward the end of the season?

COACH GREGG McDERMOTT: They didn't quit. As a coach, I think that's the thing that we have to take as a positive from the last two weeks of this season is that Craig Brackins went into one of the biggest funks I have ever had a player go into. It happens to a lot of freshmen and most times they don't come out of it. To his credit, he's ended the season with two really good games.

Diante Garrett has made steady progress throughout the season and Wesley Johnson has learned to play the game when he doesn't have all the athletic skills that he is accustomed to having because he is not healthy. That will bode well for him when he's back and he is healthy because he learned to play the game in a different way. I appreciate he's been willing to do that.

But I like our young group. I like the leadership that I think our seniors and Wesley Johnson will provide next year. Obviously with the four incoming kids and Luca Staiger coming back on board and the one or two players we may add to this recruiting class, they will be looked upon in a big way to provide some good leadership.

There has been some good learning lessons from them from hanging around Rahshon Clark the last couple years.

Q. Don't mean to pick on one player, but Hubalek's line jump was 0-8 from the field. Was there something that caused that to happen?

COACH GREGG McDERMOTT: It is hard for me to explain. We got the ball to him deep where he has been successful and he had a couple roll around the rim and didn't go in. He probably let it affect his confidence, but, you know, my message to Jiri after the game, don't you dare take this away as a memory from your experience at Iowa State. You've accomplished so much. You've come so far in the two years I've had the

opportunity to coach you. This needs to become the furthest thing from your mind. You had one bad game and don't let that sour the great experience you had as a Cyclone.

Q. Can you talk a little bit more about just kind of the emotions of having Rahshon play in his last game. I mean, there are so many fans down here from Iowa State, you guys had a big crowd. He's waving, everybody is cheering him. How is the team reacting with that, too, just all that emotion, especially with all those fans here?

COACH GREGG McDERMOTT: Our fans are very basketball-savvy. And like me, they understand the sacrifice he made to stay here. You know, he's flying all over the court, seven offensive rebounds, playing on one leg. And our fans appreciate that because they understand basketball.

We were able to inch back in that game because our fans willed us to do it, like they usually do. It was just unfortunate we couldn't go on and extend a run to really allow them to impact the game because I think they were waiting to do that. Unfortunately we couldn't make enough baskets to do that. But they appreciate it like I appreciate what Rahshon has done for this program and the leadership he's provided during a rebuilding stage of our program.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you.

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