

March 11, 2009



Oklahoma State – 81
Iowa State – 67

An interview with:



CHARLIE FISS: We are joined by the Cyclones of Iowa State University and Coach Greg McDermott and his student-athletes, Craig Brackins and Jamie Vanderbeken.

Coach, your thoughts on tonight's game?

COACH GREG MCDERMOTT: The zone did what we hoped it would do in the first half. They made some good adjustments in the second half and probably the most important one was they played Obi more minutes. We had a hard time getting to him and he made us pay for it when we didn't get to him. They were a little more aggressive on Craig in the second half with the double teams. When you play 37 minutes and you see double teams and physical play, virtually every time you touch it, it wears on you as the game goes on.

I am proud of my team. They competed for me all year. They didn't quit on each other. We just didn't quite have enough bullets in the gun tonight.

Q. Craig, what did you notice from the crowd tonight? Obviously you know you are playing a road game in a neutral spot. Did you guys notice it as a big factor?

CRAIG BRACKINS: I noticed they had a lot of fans. We had a lot of support, too. So I mean, it felt like a road game but I felt we did pretty

well and we should have executed a little more but that's how it goes.

Q. Craig, what was Moses able to do to make him so effective inside tonight?

CRAIG BRACKINS: Moses had a really great game. He was very aggressive on the inside. His confidence was up. So when you have that going and the way they can shoot it, I mean, they are a really tough team to guard when that happens.

Q. Craig, Coach said it was a tough game for you tonight. Can you talk about how tough it was.

CRAIG BRACKINS: It is a very tough game, it was tonight. They came out with four guards in the big. The way they can shoot the ball is very difficult to guard. The way Bryan Petersen can lock on, they are a tough team to guard. I thought we did a pretty good job of doing the best we can.

Q. In the second half, they said they tried to kind of change up when they double teamed you, like they didn't come at you every time. Was that difficult at all to read or figure out what they were doing? Was it a little bit tough to get in a rhythm against them not knowing what they would throw at you?

CRAIG BRACKINS: It was because in the first half I didn't feel like they fully committed to a double team. In the second half they did. I had to watch my back every time I caught the ball.

I felt they were still shading in the middle and trying to trap me and not going to the middle when I caught the ball. So they just did a really good job in the second half of trying to make it difficult for me.

Q. At what point do you make the decision about whether or not to come back next year or try to make a jump to the NBA?

CRAIG BRACKINS: I don't know right

now.

Q. Jamie, you stepped up pretty big tonight and a few other role-players made some key shots at key times. How much confidence does that give you next year knowing that some people besides Craig can step up whether he is back or not?

JAMIE VANDERBEKEN: It is just like we knew we had a lot of good players here. It is just finding the right rhythms and stuff. I think we had a pretty good core coming in next year. With the shooters and what Craig can do inside, I think we will be able to surprise a lot of people next year.

Q. Coach, when you saw the draw and you saw you were going to be getting OSU in the first round, what was your reaction to that knowing you were playing here in Oklahoma City not too far from their campus?

COACH MCDERMOTT: Last time we played in Oklahoma City we played Oklahoma. So... (smiling). That's kind of the way things have gone.

You take your draw and you get ready for it. There is a lot of talented teams in this league, and regardless of who you were going to draw, they were going to present a certain set of challenges. And Oklahoma State certainly falls into that category. They are unique in that James Anderson who some day is going to be a NBA off-guard is playing a power forward. For us to use our size to our advantage, one of our big guys has to guard him. That's just a very difficult matchup. We did a good job getting to James and making his looks tough.

One of the keys of the game is we needed to get to the free-throw line more than they did. We fouled them four times for eight free throws the last four possessions. Otherwise, they only shot six free throws and we shot 23 but we didn't step up and made them. Had we shot free throws like we are capable of, it could have changed the game. I thought that would be a telling statistic at the end of the game.

Q. Is that the most you played zone in a game all year? And it looked like in the second half did you switch up the alignment a little bit to make it look like they were getting a little bit of a rhythm?

COACH MCDERMOTT: They got into a rhythm against our 2-3 zone so we switched to a 3-2 zone in the second half and tried to switch

where we were on the floor. By far the most zone we played in any game.

Out of respect for Byron Eaton's ability to drive the ball, we couldn't keep him out of the paint in the second half in Stillwater and we put him on the free-throw line a bunch.

Over the course of the season, not a lot of people have zoned Oklahoma State. We just thought if we could make the right rotations and the right reads we could cause some problems and we did a better job of it the first half than we did the second.

Q. Could you talk about the challenges that Obi and Marshall provided in the paint for you guys tonight and for Brackins in particular, too?

COACH MCDERMOTT: When you have four shooters out there with you, it is a post-player's dream because you cannot leave Keiton Page, James Anderson or Obi Muonelo. Oftentimes he was able to catch it deep. When we tried to help, we were late. He made tough plays over top Alex and Jamie, really strong, physical, aggressive post moves.

Against a team like Oklahoma State, you have to give up something, and I guess we had going into it a lot of their respect for the ability to shoot the three-point shot. So we took our chances with Moses inside.

Q. Obviously it is no secret that Craig's name has been bandied about for him to make the jump into the NBA. When do you sit down and talk about the pros and cons of making that decision?

COACH MCDERMOTT: Those conversations are ongoing because as soon as it comes up for a guy that's 20 or 21 years old and your name starts to get thrown around in that regard, as a coach you better address it because it will weigh heavily on his mind. I think that's human nature. I think all of us would probably feel that way.

So we've talked about it some and just made the decision during the season that he is going to try to stay as focused as he can on helping his team win basketball games and then when it is over, we'll sit down and talk about it.

Spring break is next week. He will go back to California, spend some time with his family and decide exactly what their plan of action will be. My



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IowaState - 03-11-09

job is to provide him as much information, do as much research as I possibly can and try to provide him with sound advice so when the time comes to make a decision, it will be an educated decision.

Q. Coach, you tied the game at 50 with 12 minutes left. From there it kind of started to get away from you. What changed at that point that you saw the game start to slip away?

COACH MCDERMOTT: At 49-48 we turned it over three straight times. There was really an opportunity there for us, I think, to make a move. That was also the stretch where I think Muonelo scored two three-point shots and a tough 17-footer from the elbow fading away. He was really the difference in the game. The last five or six games he hasn't played the minutes he's played throughout the season and his minutes weren't as productive as they have been during the season.

So he was really the wild card for them. They had somebody step up and have really a great night.

Q. You talked earlier about the tough game that Craig Brackins had to play. Can you talk about just how tough that was on him tonight.

COACH MCDERMOTT: Every game is tough for Craig. He has seen every imaginable defense that there is. I think people, if they hadn't seen him play until tonight, got a taste of what he's capable of. He can score -- he can score really hard baskets. That's why the NBA has an interest in him because he is so talented scoring the basketball different ways.

His body has taken a pounding during the season, the number of minutes he's played and the physical style of defense that has been played against him over the course of 32 games will take its toll. I think he has held up remarkably well and has been very consistent. Another double-double tonight.

CHARLIE FISS: Coach, thank you very much.

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