

March 11, 2009



Oklahoma State – 81
Iowa State – 67

An interview with:



CHARLIE FISS: We're ready to begin with the Cowboys from Oklahoma State with Coach Travis Ford and his two student-athletes, Obi Muonelo and Marshall Moses.

Coach, congratulations to you on tonight's victory. We will call upon you first for your thoughts.

COACH TRAVIS FORD: Thank you. I'm very proud of our team, especially the way they responded in the second half. I thought Iowa State came in and obviously, I wouldn't say surprised us with zone, because we thought we would see some zone. I didn't think we would see 40 minutes of it. They got us into taking some early quick shots, shots that weren't falling and got us a little bit out of element. We had to regroup at halftime. Brackins had a great first half.

I didn't think we were playing with the energy level and the aggressiveness we needed to. We changed up on Brackins a little bit when we were going to double team him and when we weren't and changed it up at halftime and put in more trapping zone to try to spread them out a little bit so they couldn't come out and throw it inside.

But these two guys right here were the difference in the game for us. When you have got guys struggling from the three-point line and Obi comes in and knocks down big shot after big shot and then we got to a point where we said, "Hey, you got to throw to Marshall. We have to penetrate

the zone at some point. We have to get the ball behind the defense to get it inside to Marshall."

He responded with obviously some great baskets and good percentages. I'm just very proud of how they regrouped. This is one of those games that is a tough basketball game. Iowa State, you have to give them a lot of credit. They have one of the top players not just in the Big 12 but in the country. Brackins is an extremely special player. The way they can shoot threes, it is one of those catch 22s at some point.

Very proud of these guys and very fortunate to get the win and glad to move on.

Q. Obi, talk about your run there in that span when it seemed like you kind of took the game over and, if you would, comment on what you feel like if now you guys have played your way into the big tournament.

OBI MUONELO: I mean -- yes, I think we have.

COACH FORD: Yes.

OBI MUONELO: (Laughter) I think after this game, I think it definitely puts us in the NCAA tournament. We have worked hard to get to this point and all year coach has been talking about how we want to work hard to get to the tournament and really just drive. That was our goal, started out the year.

I think this game definitely solidifies that.

Q. Talk about the Bedlam game, shooting against the Sooners.

OBI MUONELO: It is a big game for us because they have already beat us twice and it really bothers me. We were going to go in and play the best we can and the outcome, play hard and do what we are supposed to do, we should be able to get the win.

MARSHALL MOSES: I have been here two years, and I haven't been a part of a team that has beat OU yet. This is a big-time game. If we beat them, we can advance even further in this tournament which I haven't done here either. It is

an important game to all our guys from Oklahoma here. We need to win. We need this win.

Q. Can you talk about doing battle with Brackins down the post all night.

OBI MUONELO: That was your battle.

MARSHALL MOSES: Passing the buck.

At the beginning of the game, he caught the ball and I was right there. He made a good move and I was right there on him, right in his face, and he hit it. I knew from there he was the real deal. Just like Coach has been telling us about him, he is a big-time player. I played against him before he got to Iowa State and he has become a better player now. We had to not let him go off, and I think we did a pretty decent job at that.

Q. Marshall, you said you were guarding pretty well in the first half. How happy were you to hear you were going to double team him in the second half? And how did you decide when you had to do the double team?

MARSHALL MOSES: Coaches made that decision. What they told me was don't rely on the double team. Don't let him catch the ball. Front him as much as you can. When he gets it, then we'll worry about when to double team and when not to.

My job was to not let him get it. I tried my best, and sometimes I was successful and sometimes he got it. James and Obi came over and read it very well, which is the double team we call it, and got the ball out of his hands.

Q. Talk about your three-point shooting in the second half in particular and then I don't know if you remember, you made a rebound off a Keiton Page miss that ended up being a huge rebound. It looked like it was a rebound of a guy that wanted to change things.

OBI MUONELO: Second half, I just felt comfortable with Byron passing the ball. I had won the first half and I think I was 1-3 in the first half but they all felt good coming off my hands.

I knew when I came back in the game, we needed energy off the bench. I wanted to come in. I hit a big shot. Whenever I hit a shot, usually I'm going to shoot it again. (Smiling).

Next one I got I shot it again and it went in. And then the rebound, that's just me getting back to my old ways earlier this year, the way I used to play. Just being aggressive and wanting every board. I wasn't trying to make a statement or

nothing like that. I was just going to rebound like I was supposed to every time.

I went to go get the rebound and I got it. That was all.

Q. Obi, tell me about the crowd. You were down in the first half. Rallied a little bit in the second half. Was the crowd a factor? Were you aware of it?

OBI MUONELO: Definitely, our crowd was huge for us today. Whenever -- sometimes we get the ball on offense, they start getting loud and clapping. I think that gives us confidence to go get a basket. They were huge, big defensive stops all day today. Our crowd helped us big time.

Q. Can you talk about Obi, his playing time has dipped the last month. Can you talk about how much you will need him though as the games get bigger and the opponents better and more important?

COACH FORD: Great question because in the past three or four days in our coaching staff meetings his name has been brought up more than once because we saw him getting down a little bit.

There is no question he's probably been a little disappointed, but I tell you, he has handled it well. We have made statements over and over again in our staff meetings, we got to get Obi ready to go because he is going to be a factor. We can't win without Obi. We need him playing 20, 25 minutes.

And I think he let not starting affect him a little bit, which is very natural. We understand that. We totally understand that. And I think tonight he just put all things aside and said, "Hey, I will do whatever I can to help my team win and not worry about things I can't control necessarily." And he responded. As he said, I think he nailed it, he looked like his old self. He looked like he did in the first 10, 15 games of the year when played with a high level of energy.

When he works that hard, he camouflages some of his weaknesses that he has. And he made huge shots. That shot after shot was just big, very big. And then his rebounding was obviously huge, huge key for us.

Q. Coach Ford, was there something you did strategy-wise intentional to get the results of limiting them to five offensive rebounds? Was that something --

COACH FORD: Nothing other than obviously concentrating on that. Our goal, especially in this game, is to make sure -- make them take as tough a shot as possible and hold them to one shot as you do any opponent.

No great strategy, no great strategy. I think Iowa State puts a big emphasis in putting back in transition and trying to take us out our fast break so they may not send as many guys to the glass as some teams do.

In our last game against Oklahoma, I didn't think we pursued the ball very well. We didn't get 50/50 rebounds where it could have gone to anybody and the other team came up with it. We concentrated on that the last couple days. If there is a loose ball or a long rebound, we have to pursue the basketball, go get it. I thought we did a better job of that tonight, as a group, as a group.

When you look down, we had a guy with six, seven, six, nine, four. That's what we need because obviously we are not very big. We don't have one guy that can go out and get 14, 15 rebounds consistently. So we have to do it as a team. Everybody has to do their job when it comes to rebounding.

Q. As an old point guard, I'm sure the fact you only had five turnovers has got to please you, too.

COACH FORD: Huge. Especially in a game that was a little slower than most. When you play against a team that played as much zone as they played, possessions are extremely important. We weren't shooting the ball very well. Shot 45 percent which is not a great percentage for us.

When teams usually shoot a high percentage, a higher percentage than we shoot, usually not very good for us.

It was very important that we got as many shots as possible tonight. You look at it, 64-47. That's a huge stat, a huge stat when you are not making shots. The more opportunities you get, the better. And that was huge.

Q. Bedlam has come to the Big 12. You will be facing off the Sooners right here between Norman and Stillwater. I got to ask you a personal question. In your opinion, is Oklahoma City a neutral site for this rivalry?

COACH FORD: Oh, man, tough questions. Yeah, I think it is a pretty neutral site. I think you will see a lot of orange in the stands tomorrow. You will see a lot of red in the stands tomorrow. It will be pretty equal, I think.

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I don't know. I guess we'll see. I haven't been around long enough to probably know yet. But I know we'll bring our people out. I know you will see a lot of orange in here. You will see a lot of red as well. I guess it is pretty neutral, I guess, yeah, to answer your question.

Q. In Norman the other day you said you didn't play well and you only lost by four. How much confidence does that give you?

COACH FORD: I meant we didn't shoot the ball that well. We made some mistakes. Again, we've got an incredible amount of respect for Oklahoma and I have got an incredible amount of respect for what Jeff has done there. Again, I think they are one of the best teams in the country with the best player in the country, without a doubt.

We understand the challenge at hand. We had a few opportunities in that first game that we just didn't convert. But, again, when you are playing against great teams, they seem to make a lot of plays. We will have to play a near-perfect game. We will have to play a very special game and hope some things go your way.

Again, we understand the challenge at hand. We just need to go out and play hard. This was a big game for us. I think getting by this game was huge for us, just getting past this game was very important for us.

Q. I asked Marshall this. What was the key to deciding -- or how did you decide when you would double Brackins? How did you go about doing that? Is that a secret?

COACH FORD: A little bit. Don't want to give it all out. (Smiling).

No, no huge secrets in this game. We wanted to try to make him put it on the floor. We wanted to go stretches. We were doing it a lot of times time-out by time-out. Maybe in time-out we will do what we call red, double post. The next one maybe we take it off now. Let's not. Maybe stun at him, fake at him and act like you are going to double the post.

And once we got a 10-point lead, we took it off for the fact that I just didn't want to give up any more threes. At that point, I thought we had enough points. And twos weren't going to hurt us at some point where threes could really hurt you. That's one of the reasons we took it off later in the game.

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Q. It was a pretty short period of time?

COACH FORD: We had a specific game plan starting the second half. I was not happy -- I take that back. I thought he made some tough shots. I thought he made some tough shots. He makes some of the toughest shots I have ever seen just watching him on tape. He made some tough shots.

I thought we let him have the ball too easy in the first half. So we wanted to do a better job. Marshall's job was -- we told him not to worry about the double team. Your job is not to let him have it. If we don't double, fine. That's not your job. Your job is to not let him get the ball deep in the post. Make him work for everything he is going to get. Try not to let him have the ball. I thought we did a better job of that in the second half.

CHARLIE FISS: Coach, congratulations.

COACH FORD: Thank you.

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