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An interview with:



CHARLIE FISS: We are ready to begin now with the Oklahoma State Cowboys, Coach Travis Ford and his two student-athletes, Byron Eaton and Keiton Page.

Coach, congratulations on tonight's victory your thoughts?

COACH FORD: I'm just very proud of these young men. This is three great games we've played against Oklahoma. I again have an incredible amount of respect for their basketball team and the incredible amount of respect for Jeff Capel and how he coaches and handles himself. Our kids are just -- have just continued to get better. This is just a hard-fought game. We stepped up and made some plays, we made some big shots, free throws, runners. We got some big rebounds.

I thought we did an excellent job on the big fella. I thought we did an excellent job on the big fella, as good a job as we can possibly do. We just didn't want to give him 25, and we did a pretty good job of that. It took an incredible effort by Anthony Brown. I thought he did a great job of defending inside.

We changed up how we wanted to guard him this morning. It is a testament to these guys to pick up the scouting report very, very, very quickly.

It was a great overall effort to everybody. Everybody contributed. We concentrated on this game that everybody that gets in this game needs to make a play somewhere, somehow, a big play. That's what it is going to take to beat one of the best teams in the country, special plays by everybody.

I think you can look down the list, everybody did that. Everybody stepped up and made a special play at some point.

Just a very hard-fought game. A lot of different emotions and ups and downs. We are just very fortunate to be a point ahead at the end, to be honest with you. Very fortunate, very fortunate. That comes from having a great respect for Oklahoma and Jeff Capel.

Q. Can you guys talk about how much fun it was to play in that game with the atmosphere, the 50/50 split and somebody cheering the whole night?

BYRON EATON: It was definitely fun for me, especially being my last time to be able to play against Oklahoma. It was a special game for me. You know, that was one of the main things I was talking to some of my teammates about, that we figured we would have them after we beat Iowa State. The atmosphere was great.

Like you said, it was a split down the middle. I think we had more fans, but that's always good. I mean, that's the way that you want to have them type of games, when you are playing in Oklahoma City like half, in between, you know? Just wanted to have a great fan support to come out and support us.

It was going to be a great game. I'm just happy we were able to pull it out.

KEITON PAGE: It was a great atmosphere. I think any Bedlam game is going to be a great atmosphere. Playing here at the Ford Center with the crowd split, that's the atmosphere everybody wants to play in.

Q. Byron, talk about when OU went to

that zone, when you got the lead. It looked like they frustrated you and took away some of your penetration. What did you try to do to combat that? Travis, when you --

BYRON EATON: It did frustrate us a little bit. We came down. I think we got, like, two or three bad shots. I had a turnover. We were just -- we were just doing some things -- we didn't think they would play a zone as much as they did.

When they played it, it shocked us. I should have recognized and got into something better than what I did. Once I got control of it and then I started pointing my guys in the right direction, we started penetrating and getting good shots.

We didn't make a lot of our shots that we got wide open, but we were able to penetrate the zone and doing a great job of finding other guys to get good shots for them.

Q. It has been tough against these guys over your career. Describe the emotion. You finally got one and the last one, and now you are moving on this weekend.

BYRON EATON: Like you said, it has been a tough battle for me in Oklahoma. I think that's only my second win against those guys. It has been -- like I told Coach, it has been a long time. I haven't won the last five or six tries against them.

To win the last one is going to be something very good for me, you know? Like I said, they beat me eight or nine times, but I got the last one. I'm happy for that.

We have a short memory. Got to put it behind us and get ahead for the next game to go out and get a win here.

Q. Keiton, you had big shots out there tonight. About a year ago this time you were playing for the AA state championship that's going on right now. Contrast the differences between then, now. Are there any differences now?

KEITON PAGE: It is a huge difference, huge difference. The players out there on the floor, the physicality and everything like that, tonight we did a great job. Our guys coming out screening and Byron just getting in the paint and other guards getting in the paint and finding the open man and knocking down jumpers. That's a big difference between last year and this year.

Pawnee is back in the state championship. So hopefully they get back to the state championship.

Q. Right before James shot his foul shots you went up and said something to him. Can you tell us what you told James right before he shot those foul shots?

BYRON EATON: I just told him, you know, get my back for me. I went up there and I missed one, but I put us in the lead.

I just told him, this ain't nothing big for James Anderson, it is just another walk in the park.

CHARLIE FISS: First question for Coach?

Q. What change did you make this morning defensively that you mentioned before?

COACH FORD: Well, the last two games we have been trying to double team him as soon as he got the ball.

And watching film until 2:00, 3:00 in the morning, we just -- we just kept realizing how unsuccessful it was because when we would go double team him, he would either split it or pick us apart as our defender was coming to him. He was recognizing the double team and kicking it out and making plays for other people.

So we made the decision to go ahead and try to full front him as much as possible and have a weak-side defender behind him and leave weak side open -- we would leave the weak side open.

We knew the three-point percentage, and I said we're just going to -- we're just going to have to hopefully hope they miss a few shots. Let's try to front him as much as possible and deny him the basketball as much as possible, front him. That's not something we normally do. That's the only game I can ever remember us fronting.

And then we wanted to play off the four-man to clog it up as much as possible and pretend we were going to double team at times. But our guys, for a different type defense that we normally play picked it up very, very, very well, very well.

Again, I think we did a great job of limiting his touches. I think our half-court trapping was very, very good. It got them out of being able to come in and throw it straight inside. That's what they did to us the first two games.

We calculated almost 75 percent of the time they would come down and make one pass

and throw it inside. We said that's too easy when you are trying to go against the best player in the country. We have got to make it a little more difficult than that.

And all that's great. We can come up with all these game plans, but the players have to go out and execute it. I thought Anthony Brown for the most part did a tremendous, tremendous job.

Q. (Indiscernible)?

COACH FORD: We shot around. We went over to a local high school and shot around.

Q. I wonder if you can just talk about the gutsiness that your two six-foot and under guards showed out there tonight.

COACH FORD: I had a little talk with Keiton today. I thought he might bring it up, but I had a little talk with him. I set him down. I said, "You are playing too much like a rouge player. I know you are playing with Byron, Terrell and James and you kind of stand over on the side on offense and hope they drive and kick it to you. We need you to make like you are in high school. Don't be afraid, make things happen. You are a heck of a player. Don't just think that you need to just be a rogue player standing on the side, get involved."

I thought tonight he was a little more active. He got off the dribble a couple of times. Had a little stuff to his game as I call it, rather than just catching and shooting which I thought he had gotten into a bad rhythm of just doing that.

Byron, you know what you are going to get from him. You always got a chance. Teams do a good job of trying to stop his penetration, and they did a good job going zone but he still figures it out. He still figures out how to do something positive.

What I like, he did it last night, he did it tonight, he made some -- last night he made a crucial turnover but he hustled back and stole the ball. Tonight he did the same thing. He went in and made a crucial turnover and stole the ball again. That's a progression from earlier in the year when the guys make mistakes they let it affect them for the next five minutes. That's an attitude we have been working on to get past a lot of these players is don't live in the past. Let's move on. That's not the way we play.

The tempo and the style of basketball, the up-tempo style, you can't -- we are not worried about possessions. We are going to get it back. There is going to be a lot of shots taken and a lot of possessions. Move on.

I think our team has done a much better job the last month of doing that.

Q. Can you comment on the question that I asked Byron Eaton about the zone and you went through a couple time-outs and changed some things up and then had more success. What happened in that period when you got the lead in the zone?

COACH FORD: We just made a few shots. We got inside the zone. I thought their zone was very good. It stopped some of our penetration.

But last night we played against 40 minutes of zone. I thought we would have handled it a little bit better. We did the same thing we did last night. Early in the game last night we took quick bad shots. We were relying on three-pointers only.

Well, even in time-out, once Marshall fouled out, I told our guys we have to rely on threes, even more so don't be afraid to shoot because we don't have that inside weapon that we had with Marshall. I told them to catch and shoot it. If you are open, we need to get shots up.

We started screening a little bit more in the zone. I thought we need to get a little more action on the baseline to get them to start thinking who they are going to guard rather than just ball screen for Byron, driving and kicking. They got pretty comfortable with that. Oklahoma got very comfortable with that.

We had to start using different looks. Actually went to our man-to-man plays against their zone, and it got us some pretty good looks.

Q. Along those lines, Byron seemed to be able to get inside when they were playing man or zone. When he got inside the zone, was it key that he kind of went in under control? Sometimes he pulled up. Was that important against the zone tonight, just take it all the way every time?

COACH FORD: Obviously, Byron gets in the middle of about any defense. A lot of times it comes down and once he gets there -- it is about decision-making for him. Is he going to make the right decision or not? Shoot? Drive it? Pass it?

I thought he did a great job of adjusting because I thought he went to the hole early in the game, didn't get some fouls that he maybe normally can get or didn't go his way. He said, all

right, I'm not getting those so I need to start pulling up for jump shots and he did a better job of doing that.

He found guys when they were open. He shot when he needed to shoot and he passed when he needed to pass. It is no secret the last three minutes of the game we are going to put the ball in his hands and let him do his thing.

CHARLIE FISS: Coach, again congratulations.

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