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Texas Tech 82, Colorado 67

An interview with:



CHARLIE FISS: We'll start with Colorado: Coach, an opening statement.

COACH BZDELIK: First of all, congratulations to Texas Tech. We jumped on them early, 18-8. They came storming back, and we never recovered from their run. I told our players after the game that successful people only momentarily get discouraged.

We accomplished a lot this year as a young basketball team. We need to, when we reflect back on the year that -- the way we finished the year and the things we accomplished both on and off the court, we're building this program the right way, in a very competitive way. And we need to understand that.

It's hard right now. But we need to keep things in perspective.

CHARLIE FISS: Thank you, Coach. Questions for our two student-athletes.

Q. Alec, after you guys got off to such a good start, what do you think happened that changed the game?

ALEC BURKS: I think everybody started staying in place and the ball started sticking. We weren't passing, giving our teammates better looks. We were trying to do it ourselves and be the hero. I feel like that was our downfall.

Q. Did they do anything different from the last game, or did they just do what they do better --

ALEC BURKS: They just made shots. They scored more. That was the name of the game. They did it better.

Q. You guys have been good at taking care of the ball all year. What happened the second half of that first half where you guys had quite a few turnovers in a row?

DWIGHT THORNE II: We just got complacent, as Alec said. We weren't making the right passes and weren't being sure in our passes. But we can always -- turnovers we can always control usually if we play defense and get back and play hard. We didn't do that.

Q. Dwight, it's a tough way to end your career, but can you assess your career? And I know you're disappointed that you didn't get to post-season play, but how do you see this team next year moving forward?

DWIGHT THORNE II: This team is going to be a good team next year. I'm the only guy leaving, to have everything pretty much coming back. So I'll be excited to see where they're headed and with the administration and with the support from the community and see the direction they're going. And it's going to be up.

Q. Alec, you started a little slow and then you really got in the flow. Did it just take a while to get into the rhythm of the game?

ALEC BURKS: No. Other teammates was just making shots, so I didn't feel like I had to do anything right away because we were scoring. But then I saw people wasn't making shots, so I was trying to help my teammates to get a win.

Q. I want to ask about wrapping up your freshman year, and, obviously, you're disappointed today. But overall, how would

you assess your season?

ALEC BURKS: I think I had a good one. I had a lot of ups and downs. I feel like I learned from my mistakes from the start of the year to the end of the year. I feel like I played better. It was a great freshman season for me.

CHARLIE FISS: Thank you. Questions for Coach.

Q. Jeff, did Texas Tech do anything different or did they just play well?

COACH BZDELIK: They seemed to have -- they were a step quicker than us today. They stayed in the possessions longer in a more disciplined way than we did. They seemed to come up with more loose balls than we did.

It just seemed like they were just -- they had an edge to their game that we lost after we started off in such a good way. And give them credit for what they did well, and we'll leave it at that.

Q. Do you think despite today's loss the way you guys finished the season will carry over into next season, which you guys project as the year you'd really take a step forward?

COACH BZDELIK: We've taken a step forward this year. And we need to just keep taking steps forward. We've won three out of -- we finished our season winning three out of our last four. We're knocking on the door. We just need to bust it down and bust through it.

I told our players that -- they all feel awful. I do, too, with the way we finished it. But at the same time, as I said in my opening statement, we need to keep things in perspective and reflect back on the things that we were able to accomplish and move forward.

If you look back, all you do is get a stiff neck. And we just need to keep moving forward. We need to get stronger. And we need to learn from this. We need to defend better. We need to rebound better. We need to go out and recruit and continue to strengthen this basketball team.

Q. Jeff, when a team gets an 18-day lead and remembers what happened four days earlier, there's that human nature that they let up a little bit or was it mostly Tech turning up the next gear?

COACH BZDELIK: Well, I think it's a combination of both. I think, again, you have to give Texas Tech credit. They responded. They hit us back and we didn't respond very well.

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Yes, I guess you can refer back to the human condition of the situation. But at the same time that would be an excuse. And mentally tough teams, physically tough teams, that's where toughness -- that's one of the definitions of toughness, is to play as well as you can controlling what you can control, with turnovers and effort, defense, staying in your stance longer, cutting hard offensively, sharing the ball. That's the discipline of all of that needs to improve. And that's my job, is to get them to understand how important playing through each and every possession, how important that is.

And Texas Tech did a better job of that tonight.

Q. Coach, a lot of coaches have said that players make their biggest improvement from their freshman to sophomore years. With that in mind, what do you think Alec is capable of over the next off-season going into his sophomore year?

COACH BZDELIK: It's interesting. A couple of days ago he got on the scale and said, hey, I gained two pounds, Coach. And he'll continue to get stronger, which is very important to be able to defensively -- he moves his feet well. We have to improve his defense, his positioning. We're working on that. It's getting better. But ten extra pounds of added strength will allow him to slide and chest and keep people in front of him. It will enable him to defensively hold his position better.

Offensively, I mean, he does a great job of driving it to the basket and avoiding charges and making good decisions. Now he'll be able to finish a little bit better with that added strength. When he takes a hit he'll be able to control his body a little bit more, which he does a great job of anyway.

You know, shooting the 3, for example, he improved that drastically from the start of the year to now. You saw tonight he just rose up and shot it, whereas in high school he never shot from that kind of distance. So his strength from his fingertips to his elbow wasn't quite there like it should be.

And through the course of repetition, repetition, repetition of shooting long shots like that, he developed that strength, kept his form, and he shot the 3 better.

His head and heart are in the right place. He's a wonderful young man. And he's a very special player right now and he's going to continue

to grow and he's going to be one of the very special players in this nation. Not just this conference, but in this nation next year.

CHARLIE FISS: Thank you, Coach.

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