

March 10, 2010



Nebraska 75, Missouri 60

An interview with:



CHARLIE FISS: We're joined by Coach Mike Anderson and the student-athletes, Laurence Bowers and J.T. Tiller. Thoughts on today's game.

COACH ANDERSON: First, I want to put a blame on myself on this one here. I didn't have our guys prepared. Always think the first game in your tournament is the most important. You never know how your guys are going to come out, the psyche. So we talked about that, and we thought we had them prepared coming out.

But I thought Nebraska was much hungrier than our basketball team. They played hard. They got every loose ball. I thought they played looser. I thought they played with nothing to lose and everything to gain.

And I just didn't think we had the energy that you gotta have, especially in this setting, in a tournament setting, where it's one game and you're done. So that goes in terms of defending the championship, we won't be able to do that. But Nebraska, I thought they played better than we did. They outplayed us tonight.

CHARLIE FISS: Questions now for the student-athletes.

Q. J.T., Laurence, just talk about what's going through your head there when it seems like every 3 they're throwing up there, especially when they needed it, you guys start digging into leads, down to 10 or 9. They get that 4-point play. Brandon Richardson. Seemed like a lot of their 3s were falling

tonight. Talk about what is going through your head when you see that happen?

J.T. TILLER: Today seemed like it was Murphy's law, what could go wrong would go wrong; and everything they were putting up there, I see it as it was their day and they really wanted this game and it really showed in the results.

Q. J.T. and Laurence, you have a little time until NCAA bid day. What's job number one as far as is it getting the shooting turned around or something else?

LAURENCE BOWERS: I wouldn't say it was just getting shooting. I think it's just getting -- becoming a better basketball team.

I think we're a lot better than what we showed today. And like Coach said, we just gotta get back in the lab and hope we have another season, which is the NCAA tournament. If they do decide to let us in, we have to give it our all, because it's survival or go home.

Q. You talked about defensively, it seemed like it was a little bit of Murphy's law. How about offensively? Seemed like guys were trying to be the guy that could help break through, but nobody's shots were falling. Seemed like everyone was struggling with their offensive game a little.

LAURENCE BOWERS: Well, like you said, it seemed like we were trying to go get the game. One person was trying to do it because there wasn't nobody else on the team scoring anything.

And, I mean, here lately we just haven't been shooting the ball well. I don't want to blame the game on that. But it's hard to beat a team if you're shooting 35 percent. And, I mean, the games where we haven't shot the ball well, our defense can only hold us in the game for so long. You gotta put up points. Since we haven't been able to do it, we've been suffering for it.

But I think if we get another chance, I think

we'll be okay.

Q. Laurence, could you describe how your wrist is and elaborate on how you aggravated it? And, J.T., looks like you're limping a little bit. Anything in particular going on there?

LAURENCE BOWERS: Well, it was just a bad sprain, and it just got reaggravated in practice. And I just gotta deal with it.

I can't afford to go down. We already had a player out in Justin Safford, which is the key part to our basketball team. And I think my team needs me.

So I just gotta battle through it and just learn how to play with the splint that I'm playing with on.

J.T. TILLER: I'm fine. Just the wear and tear on the legs. I caught like a knee. That was it. Nothing serious.

CHARLIE FISS: Thank you. Questions for Coach.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about maybe just kind of where you feel like your NCAA tournament chances are at this point now?

COACH ANDERSON: I think if you look at what has taken place, I always say, you know, you win games and I think all those things will take care of itself.

And I thought in the number one RPI conference, we finished fifth, one game outside of finishing second. I think we'll be fine. I think we'll be fine. Obviously it's disappointing in this particular game.

I think we're a much better basketball team than we displayed today. But at the same time I think we've done -- these guys have done a tremendous job. They've overachieved. When people counted them out, they were picked seventh in the league and they finished fifth, again one game out of second place.

So with that being said, I think we've done what we are supposed to do. Obviously the winner of this tournament is the one that gets the automatic bid. And we were fortunate last year to do that.

Q. The players had talked yesterday about how much this tournament meant to them to defend their title, yet when they came out they seemed a little bit flat. And they were disappointed in that. As a coach watching them all year long, can you kind of explain why

something that meant so much to them they came out with so little energy at first?

COACH ANDERSON: I think, again, it goes back to me. I guess I'll take the blame for that. I thought we were prepared. I really did. Obviously we were playing a team that we played early in the year. We shot the ball well at their place.

But I think if you look at this team, a lot of things have taken place with this team. Justin Safford went down and now we've got to make adjustments. And Laurence got banged up a little bit. And so with a team like ours, things have to go right. And obviously we didn't shoot the ball well.

But, again, coming out the way we came out tonight, I thought we would come with more energy. We are an energy team. We're an attacking team. I thought we settled for more jump shots than we did in terms of attacking, getting to the basket in terms of the free throw line. If you told me, hey, Coach, you're going to have four turnovers and we get beat by 15, I'll be scratching my head, wondering whoa.

But you have to put the ball in the hole. And guys -- I can echo it, too. What could go wrong did go wrong. We had them with the shot clock running down and they just throw it up and it goes in. It was a day for Nebraska.

Q. You were talking about preparing the team to play. Looking to the big tournaments, do you go ahead and continue practicing at this point, assuming that you're going to play in the NIT or the big dance, or do you wait and see how everything shakes out and then go accordingly?

COACH ANDERSON: We'll get back. We'll get back in the gym and do some things. And get prepared for what's going to take place. I'm confident that good things are in store for this team.

Q. How fixable do you think some of the offensive problems are now?

COACH ANDERSON: I think it's fixable. We've just got to continue to trust one another. We are getting some good looks. Tonight we just -- I didn't think we attacked the basket. We're an attacking team.

Our defense has been the strength of our basketball team, so I think it creates some easy opportunities for us. But, as I say, as you keep

having to adjust, you know, with this basketball team, I think it's very apparent now that we miss a guy like Justin Safford. No question about it.

Because your rotation -- now your rotation is kind of changed a little bit. But Zaire Taylor, Kim English, we counted on those guys to knock down shots for us. Marcus Denmon. And for some reason they hadn't. Hopefully with a little time, maybe a little rest, those guys can find their rhythm and find their groove. I think it's -- shooting is rhythm. I know we're a much better basketball shooting team than we've been showing here lately. I really do.

So it's something I think confidence has a lot to do with it when you put the ball in the hole. It's about confidence.

Q. Dixon was having a pretty good game providing a pretty good spark off the bench. Then he picked up three fouls in 48 seconds. How much did it hurt to lose him?

COACH ANDERSON: I think he was one of those guys -- as a coach you try to find someone that can spark you. And he was that spark that we needed. And before we could even -- he got those fouls and then before we can get him out he got the fifth one.

I thought that hurt us, because one thing about our team, it's kind of like a chain reaction; you get somebody going, then it can trigger somebody else. Shooting is kind of contagious. And I guess missing, too, is kind of contagious, too.

But I know in my heart we're much better. We shoot the ball a whole lot better, I know, in practice. And we've shot it well in games.

Q. What changes did you see in this Nebraska team than the previous three times you all played them?

COACH ANDERSON: I thought they were much more hungry. They've had tough ball games where they've been in it. It's one of those games where everything went right for them.

They were making shots beyond even the 4-point shot, the shot clock running down. Seemed like every loose ball they got. And we made a run at them and, boy, for some reason it just didn't take place for us. They beat us on the boards.

We beat them both times, I think, at their place and our place on the boards. They were more aggressive. When you put the ball in the hole like they were tonight, then it makes you a little bit more aggressive.

Again, I thought they came out and they were a little bit more relaxed. They just played loose and had fun, I guess.

CHARLIE FISS: Thank you, Coach.

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