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Texas – 82
Iowa State – 75

An interview with:



CHARLIE FISS: Let's go to questions first for Coach, then we'll have the student-athletes here in just a second.

Q. Coach, can you talk about the contribution you got from Damion and Dexter tonight? Seems like this is the time of year you would want to see your seniors start to step up?

COACH BARNES: I thought both guys were good. But I thought our interior guys, Matt Hill's minutes were huge. He did some really good things. I thought Jai Lucas played maybe as good a game as he's played out there tonight. But Dexter and Damion again, you look at what he did. 16 rebounds, he just became a man on the boards. He just went and got everything.

But we got great play from our interior. I thought our guards, for the most part, took pretty good care of the ball.

Q. You started Gary tonight. He had a pretty big game for you, played a lot of minutes in the last few games. Could you talk about what's he's been doing lately, and, in particular, what he did tonight?

COACH BARNES: Again, he's done a good job. We knew they were going to come out and double early. We thought we were ready for that.

And again, we were, really, for the first time we were posting him on the first side more so than we were Dexter tonight and letting him handle the ball and looking to pass out of it. We knew they would double. He's done a really good job defensively. And, again, you look at him on the boards, again ten rebounds. And it's hard when you -- Damion was just a man out there on the boards tonight.

But Gary's been good. He's been good for a long time. Like you said, Dexter did some good things. But overall I thought Matt Hill's minutes were really big, too. I really do.

CHARLIE FISS: Let's move to our student-athletes. Gary Johnson and Damion James and Dexter Pittman. Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Damion, you seemed to have a look on you tonight that you were going to win the game tonight no matter what anybody else did. Where did that determination come from?

DAMION JAMES: To be honest, before the game, we were getting ready to run out, I told my teammates, I'm like, me and Dex and Mas are only promised two more games. And I was like I'm not ready to go home. So we gotta do whatever it takes to win the game.

And I really focused on my defense, because I have let my team down on defense, I was just focusing on that and I was going to let everything else come to me.

Q. Damion, looked like you were having more fun out there than we've seen from a couple of months from you. Was it fun tonight?

DAMION JAMES: It's not fun when you're losing, man. And I just felt like we got right back where we need to be, like we were at the beginning of the year, attacking on offense and defense. When you're doing that you're having fun.

And we came out. We executed our game plan early, getting rid of the ball and making a lot of plays out of the post. We couldn't let this game go.

Q. Gary, you started for the second time tonight. Did that change your thinking at all, and what's happened to your offense that's come on so much lately?

GARY JOHNSON: I had four assists tonight. I think that's big, because I don't usually pass the ball.

COACH BARNES: It's kind of unusual.

[Laughter]

GARY JOHNSON: I think that opened up other opportunities for me to score, just trying to get everybody else involved.

Q. Dexter, seems like with the three of you in there together, you somehow get -- even though it's three big guys taking up space, you get more opportunities. How does that come about?

DEXTER PITTMAN: Because it's hard for a team to double both of us. So I mean, like Coach said, we were running 45 for Gary. Whenever he would come across, they'd double Gary and I'd look for the short corner and not be wide open, because my man would leave me and go over there and Gary passed the ball to me. It's kind of like a high-low set.

Q. Dexter, this is a spot where your game kind of came together last year in the Big 12 tournament. Did you think about that the last few days, and did you do anything similar as last year?

DEXTER PITTMAN: Yes. It's another season. Everybody is 0-0 right now. It's post-season. Like Damion said, we have to come out and play it like it's our last game because we were only promised two games. But we live to fight for another game and that's tomorrow against Baylor.

Q. Speaking of Baylor, if you guys could just talk about that, that last game, what kind of taste it left in your mouth and what you're looking forward to tomorrow?

DAMION JAMES: To be honest, we just come out and play our game. Coach said they had 15 dunks. That's never happened. So we gotta take it personal.

And that's all we're going to say about that situation. We're going to take it personal and see how it goes tomorrow.

Q. Damion, can you talk about Gary's game a little bit. Have you seen kind of a light switch go on in his game?

DAMION JAMES: Man, if Gary and Dexter are playing like that, our two guys inside that really dominate, because both of them can dominate the ball game inside. So we've just got to keep them guys going. And he was unbelievable, a double-double tonight, and Matt Hill played a great game for us coming off the bench, him and Jai. We have to keep those guys going. We have to run through those guys and just continue to play hard.

CHARLIE FISS: Thank you, guys. Questions for Coach.

Q. What do you like about this, the three big-guy power game you're using in there?

COACH BARNES: Well, again, I think you look at it like tonight, we had Dexter on the backside. What happens is it really gives him a chance to -- I mean, you look at him tonight. Dexter had four offensive rebounds on the backside.

So when he rebounds, it's very, very difficult for guys to get to him when they do double him, and Gary does a good job. Dexter does a good job passing out of it.

But we were really trying to get the ball moved from side to side. And, you know, Damion, I thought, did a good job. He's big enough to pass over the top of it. We put the ball inside, and, again, we knew they would double us.

But, again, I just like, one, defensively we've done a pretty good job with that lineup, too. And again they're a very hard team to guard. You go back and look, and I've said coming in, coming down the stretch, they've been very, very close in a lot of games and they've had a lot of tough luck.

Offensively they just execute so well, and tonight at the end they started bombing the 3s, and again, I like the lineup. I do. And it all depends on, sometimes, match-ups.

But from game to game, that's what it will be based on. From here on out you have to look at match-ups where you can get guys on the floor. Tonight was a night we thought Jai could have a

pretty good match up on the end, and offensively I thought he did a good job with the ball. There were a lot of things that happened tonight. It wasn't just those guys. But this time of year you need to do what you've got to do, and that's kind of where we are right now.

Q. You mentioned match-ups. Is part of the reason for that lineup because Gilstrap is a pretty good size?

COACH BARNES: Again, they're pretty good. But again, Matt Hill does several things. One, as you watch tape, Brackins, those are tough guys. You put some length on them at times where you try to get them to shoot over a taller guy. But Matt did a really nice job of screening, popping, keeping the ball moving. That's where -- he does subtle things. And he did a really good job. I thought Jai did a good job of that for that, for the most part, getting the ball moving. When we bog down, we don't visualize and see what we need to see. But again, it was a good team win.

Q. Rick, Gary Johnson's game, he's got the mid-grade jumper going, does it look like he's looking to score more than he ever did in his career?

COACH BARNES: You go back to the beginning of the year when we started, I said no one on our team, I think, had improved more than Gary. He spent a lot of time with his jump-start. He feels comfortable with 15 feet. We feel comfortable with him at 15 feet.

But tonight a couple of times we told him we wanted him to drive it, which he did. When he got himself in trouble early, he was coming around. He was getting below the block, and he had nowhere to go.

And I just told him to space up, space out. And he did. And we cleared out for him, let him go. But, again, defensively he's played on both ends. I think he's really worked. He's played enough minutes now that what he does tonight, we expect it from him.

Q. Was it just match-ups or is Jai ahead of J'Covan now?

COACH BARNES: Well, I don't know. It depends -- again, I was happy with Jai. We came back after the Baylor game. Sunday went in, had a real hard practice. I was impressed with the way he responded, impressed with the way Matt responded. And so, again, we felt tonight that there was a match-up here he could handle. He

played very well at Iowa State when we looked back at the tape. And Jai does a lot of subtle things for you. And so we put him out. I thought he was ready, and he handled it very, very well.

Q. You said a lot of good things happened tonight. Can you remember the last time you were able to say that?

COACH BARNES: You know, I don't know what day of the week it is right now. I don't know if my memory can bring it back that far. But we did some good things -- I think our next-to-last game was Oklahoma, right? We did a lot of good things in that game. We've done that. But I thought tonight our mindset was good. I thought Damion James, again, he was terrific.

I mean, what he did, couple times I got on him for a couple of shots he took because I thought he should have kicked it. But yet what he did on the boards -- I mean, he came over and said I'm getting them all. I don't think he liked the fact -- I mean for two days I just kept talking about Marquis Gilstrap led the Big 12 in rebounding in conference play. Every time I said it, I'd look at him. I could tell he kind of took it personal. I kept saying to him, now you understand he's been the leading rebounder in the Big 12 in conference play. And he corrected me one time in terms of overall games. I said no, I'm talking conference. And tonight he came out and did what he's known for.

CHARLIE FISS: Thank you, Coach.

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