

March 11, 2010



Kansas – 80
Texas Tech – 68

An interview with:



CHARLIE FISS: We'll introduce Head Coach Pat Knight and his student-athletes John Roberson and Mike Singletary. Coach, your comments.

COACH KNIGHT: Okay. I'm really proud of these guys. We've had a rough three weeks. Losing seven in a row. And we came in the tournament figuring if we could just win one, the first one, it would give us a chance to be considered for the NIT. And being able to win like we did yesterday and play as well as we did, especially after losing seven in a row, I don't know how many teams really could have done that.

And that was big for us yesterday and today to go against a number one team and to compete, play as well as we did, I think it was a very good two days for us.

And now instead of being in a slump that we had for three weeks, we now have some momentum going into NIT if we get selected. So I'm proud of these guys. They played their butts off today. And many kids would have quit after the three weeks they had. They came back, won a game we had to win yesterday, and then gave Kansas everything that we had.

And I can't ask for more from a group of kids.

CHARLIE FISS: Questions for our student-athletes.

Q. John, I'm just wondering how different the game feels if you take the lead. You had a chance, down I think it was 65, 63. At least a chance to tie it at that point. Do you think if that happens, maybe, I don't know if this is a different outcome, but it feels different?

JOHN ROBERSON: Yeah, I put the blame on me. I had a chance to hit a free throw and I missed that. And then I had a little shot to tie it up, missed that. I put that on me. I thought if I would have hit those shots it would have changed the game for us. But I didn't get it done, so...

COACH KNIGHT: I'd like to intervene on that, at least the kid had the guts to take the shot. So many kids would have backed off of that. That's what makes players like Bird and Magic so good. They want the ball in their hands at crucial times. I wouldn't have wanted anything more, in anybody's hands than these two guys. It just didn't fall for them. I appreciate him feeling bad about it, but at least he had the guts to take the shot.

Because I wouldn't have taken it. I would have passed it off to Calbert Cheaney or somebody like that. I have to give him credit for at least taking it.

Q. What did you guys do particularly in the first half to disrupt them so much on defense?

JOHN ROBERSON: We just played hard. I think, Kansas, we were a little bit intimidated by them. But this time around, we knew we could, if we played hard we could have a chance. We just played hard. We were communicating on defense. We just followed the

game plan.

MIKE SINGLETARY: I think we just -- we controlled the boards a little bit, and that's a big key whenever you play teams like Kansas because they offensive rebound like crazy.

We controlled them from getting a lot of offensive boards, and we made some shots. We knocked down a few buckets. I think that's what kept us in the game?

Q. You guys get a little bit of accomplishment like the Coach said, it was a rough three weeks, and you know to kind of turn it around and win a game and give Kansas everything it wanted?

MIKE SINGLETARY: It always feels good to get back that winning taste in your mouth. After the three weeks we had, it was a rough three weeks for us. We just wanted to come out in this tournament and just play hard and just put everything, lay everything on the floor. And I think we did that in the two games, and we gave Kansas all they can handle. They're a great team. And we were right there with them?

Q. John, how do you fight the feeling that in this case a team like Kansas is inevitable? You know they'll come back, even if you're ahead by ten you know they'll come back. How do you fight off that?

JOHN ROBERSON: It's hard, but I think the coaches did a great job of calling timeouts when they were making runs and when we were ahead in the first half for a little bit. We knew they were going to make a run.

But it's just all about not making turnovers and you know helping them out and helping them make a run. And we kind of did that. We kind of had a little bit of a stretch where we had turnovers and we let them get a conversion and make shots, wide open shots. So if you can take care of the ball and control the boards, I think you can stop them from making a run?

CHARLIE FISS: Thank you.
Questions for Coach.

Q. The last 5:55, after John tied it up, you had two buckets. Was it you guys getting shots that didn't fall, or do you feel like they ramped up their defense a little bit, what do you think happened there?

COACH KNIGHT: I think it's both. Even John, we were talking about it in the timeout.

I just asked him is there anything you guys want to run, one of our entries.

And he talked about they're so solid in their half court defense that if we could try to get a couple quick buckets. But I mean, they are solid. You drive the ball. Cole's there to help. They helped down in the post. They rotated really well. They're as solid as a team we've played from a half court situation.

I think we missed some shots. But that's part of playing good defense. You force a team to make shots by pressure. But then the problem is if you start playing faster they want you to do that, too, because they're so good at that. But that's why they're so good. But it caught up to us. We made some mistakes, and the good teams will capitalize.

You have a chance to tie it. They go down and hit a 3. Now they're up 3. Come down, if we don't hit a shot they come down. So now they're up 6.

But that's what good teams do.

Q. You guys had your defensive problems coming down the stretch of the season. Now you put together two good defensive games. What's the difference there?

COACH KNIGHT: Kids just listen. You know, they followed the game plan the last two games. I don't think they did it very much the three weeks. And I was careful about talking about that. I mean, you don't want to throw kids under the bus, especially when you're going through a losing streak that we did.

But honestly we didn't change anything from the first Kansas game to this game, and we didn't change anything from the first Colorado to the second game.

I think they just focused and they listened and played as a unit. And it's not all five guys. Man-to-man defense it takes one guy to not do his job and then everything goes kaput, because now you've got guys having to help with the rotation.

It gets pretty messy. And finally, these last two games, I think we had all five guys on the same page.

Q. Pat, it looked like Darko gave you a lift knocking down some shots. Could you talk about the offensive contribution you got from him?

COACH KNIGHT: That was huge. Because he's been missing that shot the last couple of weeks. But he's allowed to shoot that shot and now for him to hit it, because he's going to get open. A lot of big guys defensively don't want to come out that far, ten to 15 feet to defend it. So with our offense, it helps us when you can hit that shot down there. It opens up things. Especially after he hits a couple now they have to come out and guard him, now it opens the driving lane. It was big for us. It helped us keep us in the game, not just by him scoring but it brought attention to him and now I think some of the other guys got some easy buckets that we wouldn't have gotten if he would have missed those shots.

Q. Pat, how good were you feeling at halftime, forcing them into some uncharacteristic mistakes I thought for them?

COACH KNIGHT: We felt good. Because it was a 20-point turnaround. We were down 22 up there and just out of it. And then just to be down by 2. We felt good. But we know how they are. Like we talked about earlier, a team like that you know is going to come back. If you get them up ten they can come back. They're so potent from an offensive/defensive standpoint. You just can't get too happy with yourself.

But since what we've been through we try to keep our guys' confidence high and praised them for the job they did. In the back of your mind you know it's Kansas and you try to keep fighting along with them.

Q. Pat, Aldrich, does the guy's just very presence alter games, and is there anybody like him in the college game today? Doesn't look like he has to move and he alters shots?

COACH KNIGHT: I think we've got two of the best defensive big men in the country. I think those two you'd have to add Udoh to that. I mean, they changed things around. I mean, when you drive now, you really have to go inside and out. You can't drive like you're in high school go off one leg like it's the lay-up line because they're going to get it. The other thing is he is good on the help side, on the drive side you're focusing on the man guard and now you go up and all of a sudden here comes Cole or Udoh covering from behind. You don't see it. That's what championship teams need. I think that's why Kansas is one of those teams, why can't they win it all. Bill is a buddy of mine, I don't want to put pressure on him, but I think to be that good you

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have to have that presence. And I think Scott's got that, too, with Udoh. It makes all the difference in the world. You can talk about I'd like to have that player or that player from a guard or wing situation, but if you want to win championships, you want that guy like Cole or Udoh because they make such a big difference from the defensive end.

If you make a mistake on the ball, at least you know you've got somebody there that can back you up.

Q. You talked all season long about this team needing to show improvement last year to this year. Other than the winning record and a possible NIT bid, what did you improve on the most and what did you need going into next year?

COACH KNIGHT: You know, again we were good offensively. We put together halves where we score 50 some points. But defensively I think we improved.

Now, overall, you look at the stats, it's just a little better. But last year we didn't have, we didn't put together any good halves of defense. We've had halves where we kept teams in the 20s, the 30s, but now we've just got to get to a point where you do it for two halves. And again defense would be a focal point right after we get done with this season. Because offensively I like what we have. I mean, we have enough. We're more talented, we're more athletic but we're more athletic to the point where I think we should be better defensively.

And like we were talking about the post presence, we've got to work with Robert and the new big guys we're bringing in just getting a post presence. Because that can really help you from a man-to-man situation. Now that we've got a guy that's always there on the help line. He doesn't have to be a huge shot blocker. Robert is big enough to cause some problems. And so defensively, again, we just have to improve. But I'm thrilled to death with these guys. We've got more talent. We're more athletic. They played hard. They played all the way to the end. I didn't have a problem during the three weeks. I have people call me: Are you doing okay? What are practices like? They're waiting for me to talk about my kids are a pain in the butt, they've quit. I had no problems. It's like we're sitting there 25-2 the way they competed. And so these guys have been a joy to coach.

They're my kids, and I look forward to next year. We'll have six seniors. Great core of returning. Yeah, should we have won more games, I think so. I think we could have won three or four more in the league. And I got lucky as a coach. I keep getting better just like my players. I think people kind of confuse -- they kind of put my dad and I together like we're one in the same. This is only my second year of coaching, and it's in the Big 12. So many of these coaches have had the opportunity to start on a smaller league.

I'm like the amateur boxer that decides to go pro after golden gloves. And they tell me go fight Muhammad Ali. So I'm working on that. I have to get better each year. And I've got to go back and see what happened with those three weeks. There's got to be something I could different not to fall in a rut like that.

But overall I'm pleased with these kids. I love these guys, and I really look forward to having them all come back next year.

CHARLIE FISS: Thank you,
Coach.

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