

March 11, 2010



Kansas State – 83
Oklahoma State - 64

An interview with:



CHARLIE FISS: Joined now by coach Frank Martin of the Kansas State Wildcats and the student-athletes Jacob Pullen and Jamar Samuels. Coach, congratulations on your victory. Your thoughts on today's game.

COACH MARTIN: Obviously, we went out, and our guys were phenomenal in practice the last three days. And we got back to some of the things that makes us a good basketball team.

We obviously played a very good Oklahoma State team that we have a tremendous amount of respect for. But it's a three-game journey in three days, and that's one down. And we can't get overly excited, because right away we got another hard game tomorrow night.

So I can tell you I'm happy. It's the first time in my career I get to use a second suit at the Big 12 tournament.

CHARLIE FISS: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Jamar, we had seen you do some things this season. Talk about that first half.

JAMAR SAMUELS: I can't even really explain it. The past couple of days in practice I've just been trying my hardest trying to go out and help out my teammates the first five and everybody on the team, know what I'm saying? Just trying to get this win, trying to get the Big 12 championship.

Q. Jacob and Jamar both, right, he hits a 3 right at the end of the half, you guys are going off. Jacob, what were you yelling at him? You obviously were happy but what were you saying to him? It seemed like quite a bit of stuff going on there.

JACOB PULLEN: The whole game I was telling him he could control the game. We've played games this season where Jamar, he has the ability to just control the game like as far as rebounding, and he's a mismatch because he's a 4 man that can step out and shoot the ball and really get to the rim and get to the free throw line. Sometimes he has a tendency to fade away. I try to keep motivating him, telling him this is his game to take over, keep rebounding and keep scoring the ball.

Q. Coach was establishing a big lead early, was that something talked about in practice leading up to the game?

COACH MARTIN: We just wanted to score one more than him. It's tournament time. You want to play your best. You want to do everything in your power. If you have a choice, that's the way you would like to do, go into halftime up 25. That allows you to play zone, because you've got to win three games in three days. And save some of the wear and tear for the next couple of days.

But it's tournament time. It's about surviving and advancing, and when you win a game at this time of year, you're happy because you get to play again. And that's -- we just wanted to score one more than them. We weren't interested in big leads or anything like that.

Q. Jacob, you guys got production like you got from Samuels off the bench. When Oklahoma State got in foul trouble, had to go to their bench, they didn't get much of anything. Could you tell there late in the first half, when you got into their bench, that you really had a

big edge?

JACOB PULLEN: Yeah, we figured out that they didn't have a lot of depth, especially inside. We really tried to attack the rim and get the ball into the paint to put them in the position where they had to make decisions whether to foul or just give up easy layups. So Frank did a great job continuing their own plays to Jamar and Curtis to really keep attacking and telling us to attack in transition so they had to foul. So we put them in a tough situation.

Q. Jacob, after losing two straight games to come in here and build a 30-point lead, what do you think a game like this kind of says about you guys to everybody else?

JACOB PULLEN: You know, we lost some games, but we understood what we did wrong. As a team, we didn't play the blame game like I said before. We didn't come into the locker room and say it was your fault we lost this one, and your fault. We understood as a team we didn't play well those last two games. We wanted to come out and be physical and do the things we did, and we started on the defensive end. We tried to limit them from getting open 3s and transitioning, they're a really good three-point shooting team. So we tried to little things we usually do defensively during the course of the year, and we had to get back to doing that.

Q. You lost to them, it was weighing on your mind. How much did it weigh the loss coming into this game and how much did that play into your emotions at the start?

JAMAR SAMUELS: I think the couple losses we had to them, I just think they outphysicaled us, and we just weren't really ready to play. But tonight we had it on our minds, and it was somewhat of a revenge type of game.

We had coach Brad Underwood they outrebounded us for at least three or four days. We took that to heart.

Q. Jamar, what did you guys do to keep James Anderson out of a rhythm there in the first half. What did you do to do that?

JAMAR SAMUELS: We just tried to pressure him as much as possible. And it kind of worked a little bit, but you know what I'm saying, James Anderson, he's a great player. He's going to score his points. But I think we did a great job pressuring him tonight.

Q. Jamar, just talk about your aggressiveness and the passion you played tonight as well?

JAMAR SAMUELS: I haven't played with as much passion the last few games. I wanted to come out here and show I still had it. Six boards, Coach Underwood said it's good but it's not enough, and hopefully we'll be playing a good Baylor and a good Texas team, and I have to get more than that.

CHARLIE FISS: Thank you. Questions for coach.

Q. Denis Clemente's decision-making tonight seemed like it was at the highest level I've seen all year, ten assists and just two turnovers, could you talk about Denis's play?

COACH MARTIN: He was great. He's been great all year. People don't understand -- when I say people, I don't like how that sounds. But people that are not at our practice every day and see us play every single game don't understand just how tuned in he is with what we have to do.

He's got tremendous pride. Sometimes he takes some shots early in transition. That's okay. That's who we are. And I have allowed him and Jacob to do that. They've earned my trust where we can do that. But as far as the understanding of distributing the basketball, what we want to run, that last play where Jamar made that 3 at the end of the half, that's all Denis.

I was trying to run something else. He overruled me. That's the kind of trust that you have in a good point guard. And obviously that was the right call to run at the time. And he zoned, and he's got the heart of a lion. He has tremendous pride. And where I was happiest with him today was the effort that he defended with.

He just pressured the ball tremendously. Our assist numbers were also up, because we jumped up and made shots. And that usually helps your assists. But he just -- he started that defense up at top and really disrupted their offense. And that's where I was proudest of Denis today.

Q. Do you remember the last time that you had a player outrebound a team in the first half? That's what Jamar did. Could you talk about what Jamar brought to the table tonight?

COACH MARTIN: Jamar's a sophomore.

A lot of people -- he's a young kid. He has tremendous talent. He's still learning his talent. He's still learning just the consistency with which you have to approach every day. In the past, when he's had these kind of games, then he slipped for two or three games, that's normal young kids. That's life.

When he plays with the enthusiasm and the effort that he played with today, he's a heck of a player. And he spent a lot of time in the offseason working on shooting the basketball. Obviously, you guys see him now where he's earned the right to shoot when he's open.

You guys should have seen him that year he came in where he red-shirted, he couldn't shoot a free throw. The ball would leave his hand and everyone would put their head down. You don't know where it would go.

And he's worked at it. And like I tell him and the rest of the team, when you earn the right, then you can go do those kind of things. And I'm happy for him.

Q. Was there any thought to starting Jamar in the second half or getting him in any earlier than you did in the second half?

COACH MARTIN: No, we have a rotation kind of set. And we're going to stick with it. We understood that we had that big lead at halftime. So we played a lot more zone than we normally would in the second half. We were just trying to get home, and we were trying to shorten the game, shorten the possessions, limit fouls. Obviously by doing that, then we allowed them to get a little bit of a rhythm.

But, no. The two teams that are playing here in a minute got a lot of big strong guys, those front line guys their minutes had to be down. With that lead, we had to just get home. That's what we were trying to do.

Q. I'm sure this is something you have done before this season, but did you extend your defense, in the first half, particularly trapping, was that to kind of get everybody just fired up and going? It seemed like kind of everything fed off of each other.

COACH MARTIN: That's who we are. People that watch us play, that's what we've done to everybody. And the other day when I addressed the media, I said I've kind of gotten away from that a little bit. It affected the edge we play with. That's who we are. That's how we're going to play from now until when the season ends. That's what

we've worked to build as a program, is to play with that tenacity, that edge, just that relentless defensive pressure.

Now, on some teams we'll extend it more than on others. Today we thought we needed to extend it to try and disrupt so James Anderson couldn't just come down and catch the ball in comfortable spots.

Q. If you could define your message to your team entering this tournament, what might that have been?

COACH MARTIN: Let's play the way that we've played all year. Let's take a chance to do something special. I told our guys that back in September, I said, you know, you guys have busted your humps for this program, to grow as a team, to grow as individuals. Well, this season it's our time.

And I hadn't said that to them in a while, and I told them before the game today. I said, remember what I told you back then now. We've gone through all these lessons and all these games to prepare for this time of year. And the whole secret is you don't want to erase all the good we did as a team because we don't play well -- we don't play as good as we are supposed to this time of year. I just wanted to get back and play the way we've played for 90 percent of the season, not the other ten percent. And those guys, listen, we lost -- I don't mean to give you a long answer here -- we lost to Ole Miss in Puerto Rico. The next day in practice, I didn't have to say boo. It was an unbelievable practice. That's what we had for the last three days. I said you ain't coming now, then you're not playing and you and me are going to have some issues. And they were unbelievable in practice.

Our practices the last three days, tremendous edge to them. And the way we play, that's how we gotta practice, because it carries us right into games.

CHARLIE FISS: Thank you, Coach.

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