

March 9, 2011



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An Interview With:

**COLORADO
COACH TAD BOYLE
CORY HIGGINS
ALEC BURKS
LEVI KNUTSON**

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with the Buffaloes. I'd like to introduce coach Tad Boyle and student-athletes on stage today Alec Burks, Cory Higgins and Levi Knutson. Coach, opening statements.

COACH BOYLE: I told the guys in the locker room sometimes you gotta win unconventionally and it's not always going to be pretty. I think today was one of those types of games.

And our guys kept fighting back, fighting back, we kept talking every time out about defending and rebounding. You look at the numbers after this game, we hold them to 38 percent and outrebound them by 12. You feel like we should have won the game going away, but I do think that's a testament to Iowa State. I thought those kids were really ready to play, and Jake Anderson was obviously feeling it today. And I thought Cory did a great job on him late.

But our whole defense got better late in the game when it needed to. And can't say enough about these three guys to my right. And our entire team. Because they fought through adversity when things didn't always go our way. So I'm very proud of our team. And you get into tournament basketball, it's all about surviving and advancing, and we survived today. And we're advancing.

So we're going to need to play better against K-State tomorrow, but that's another day.

And we're just going to enjoy this for a few hours until we get back to the hotel.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Any of you, you were down by six with three minutes left and all three of you made plays, but what was the key to pulling it out?

CORY HIGGINS: I think the key was just staying together. I know me personally it was talking to the guys every huddle just saying stay with it, no break, no break. We put everything we had in defense and rebounding and we stuck it together and we finally pulled it out.

Q. Alec, was the team a little tight early? Everybody seemed to be struggling early offensively.

ALEC BURKS: We missed some shots. That's the game of basketball. We fought back. We played hard in the second half. That's what won us the game.

Q. Alec, was it your mindset to come down and score every time down the stretch pretty much?

ALEC BURKS: No, I was just trying to do whatever my team needed me to win. If you score you score, if you assist you assist, rebound, rebound, anything to get the W.

Q. Cory, do you feel that with this win you guys are in the NCAA Tournament?

CORY HIGGINS: I have no idea. We tried not to focus on that. We have a big game coming up with Kansas State, and I think all our focus needs to be turned towards that and let everything else sort itself out.

Q. Can you guys talk about how much better you played defensively and on the glass than a week ago?

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LEVI KNUTSON: Yeah, we wanted to take away their easy baskets today. That was our focus. We gave them way too many baskets in Ames last week. And that was our focus, help each other out on defense and take away their easy points in the paint, and I think we did a better job of that tonight.

And obviously we guarded a heck of a lot better than we did last week.

Q. Alec, what kind of challenges does playing Kansas State for a third time, already having beaten them twice, present tomorrow?

ALEC BURKS: K-State is a great team. They're physical. They're tough. They play hard. That's what you've always got to overcome when you're playing them. I think if we just match their intensity, play our game, we will come out with a W.

Q. Alec, did you think that you had a four-point play there? And even though it wasn't a four-point play, did you think that was the key basket to get you buys back to even?

ALEC BURKS: I just tried to make a shot. It went in and I got fouled. I don't know if it was key or not. I was just trying to help my team come back.

Q. Levi, what's it say to the team that you shot so well in the second half with all the pressure in the world on your guys' shoulders?

LEVI KNUTSON: I think we had some tough guys, especially Andre stepped up and made two free throws that kind of put the game out of the reach there. So we had a lot of guys making shots, making plays for each other. And that's the fun part about playing on this team is we have a lot of guys who are unselfish and want to make plays for each other. We just wanted to keep executing offensively in the second half and continue to guard. And we ended up pulling it out.

Q. Alec, you had 25 points in the second half after only four in the first. Did you do anything differently?

ALEC BURKS: I stayed aggressive. I felt like I wasn't really aggressive in the first half. So I felt like I tried to come out with a different mindset, try to stay aggressive, get to the free-throw line, make some easy baskets.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Questions for Coach.

Q. Overall you guys played a lot better defensively, but for a while were you worried that Anderson would single-handedly beat you guys today?

COACH BOYLE: He was awfully good. My hat goes off to that kid. He's been getting better and better. The thing about Iowa State, you look at their record and it doesn't wow you, but I noticed a difference from the outside looking in at with their team when Jamie Vanderbeken twisted his ankle and went out. I thought Jake Anderson really stepped his game up when he went out. And then when Vanderbeken came back and gave an extra 3-point threat on the perimeter, Jake Anderson has been playing at a whole different level.

And he's a good player. And he was feeling it today. So I really think Cory did a great job on him late. He got switched off on him one time when he made his last basket. But Cory Higgins I think is one of the most underrated defenders in this conference.

I nominate him for Defensive Player of the Year. He didn't make the All-Defensive Team. But that kid, when we asked who wants to guard Anderson in the huddle, he raised his hand. And he did a good job on him.

But Jake is a terrific player, and he played awful well today.

Q. You're down six points with three minutes to go, you went on a 13-5 run to conclude it. Just talk about that.

COACH BOYLE: We had to stay positive. I think that was the whole key. You could tell our guys' heads were down a little bit, so in the huddles it wasn't the time to scream and yell; it was the time to say, hey, there's still enough time, but there's not enough time if we don't get stops. We have to shut them off on that end and we have to make some plays.

Alec made some big-time plays down the stretch. I thought the play of the game was when he drove in transition and found Levi for the 3 and cut it to one. And we were down six. Alec scored a bucket I think the previous time down and then hit Levi for the 3 in transition, got us back to one and got our mojo back. And once our guys started believing, once that play happened, I thought that gave us the juice to get over the top.

Q. Do you think your team will be a

little looser starting out tomorrow, or do you think that they were a little tight today?

COACH BOYLE: I don't think they were tight at all. We jumped out on them 6-0. I think probably the thing that hurt us the most is because our baskets came so easy maybe the first five or six minutes of the game that our guys got in the mode of, hey, this is going to be a cakewalk.

So we didn't come out tight. We jumped on them 6-0. Our guys, they were ready out of the chute. What happened in the first half is we started standing on offense. When one guy had the ball, the other four guys were standing. We're easy to guard when that happens. What makes us hard to guard is when we have movement and attacking the rim and we have great spacing and five guys are working together.

That wasn't the case in the first half. But it wasn't because of nerves or tightness, because I thought we jumped out on them. We had to call time-out when we jumped up 6-0, but we got awful stagnant offensively in that first half. I do expect us to be loose tomorrow and let it all hang out.

Q. With the way the last game against K-State ended at your place, is it going to be a tough one tomorrow?

COACH BOYLE: I'm glad we've got monitors. If we didn't have a monitor at that game, it would have been an L for us.

But, no, I think the thing about K-State, Alec mentioned it, you have to match their intensity. They're a tough, tough team. When the ball goes to the glass, it's like almost two different games. You have the game when you're on offense and defense, but when that ball goes on the glass, it's a whole different game with them.

We've done a good job matching their intensity, but we have to rebound the ball as a group, kind of gang rebound, if you will, tomorrow because that's what it takes. And obviously Jacob Pullen is a guy we have to try to keep the ball out of his hands and make him work for everything he gets. Because he's the straw that stirs their drink, there's no doubt about that.

But they're a heck of a team and they're playing awful well right now. I think they, what, won six of seven or seven of eight or whatever the number is.

So K-State is playing as well as anybody in the country right now. The good thing is our guys have some confidence and K-State is looking to even the score with Colorado. It should be a heck of a matchup.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.
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