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Baylor – 67

An Interview With:

**OKLAHOMA
COACH JEFF CAPEL
CARL BLAIR
CADE DAVIS
STEVEN PLEDGER**

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by the Oklahoma Sooners head coach Jeff Capel and his three student-athletes, Carl Blair, Cade Davis, and Steven Pledger. Coach, opening comments.

COACH CAPEL: Our guys are really good. I knew we were ready to play. I knew we would come in with confidence. We had two really good days of practice. I knew we were prepared for this game. I thought defensively we did a good job. To outrebound this team that's big and athletic like they are, it was really good. And I thought offensively we executed.

I thought Carl was tremendous all game of running our team, getting us in stuff. I thought we attacked the zone really well. I thought Steven did an outstanding job, and Cade, on LaceDarius Dunn. I think Cade, the run he's had over the last six games, he's been really, really good and very happy for him. Happy for our team. Look forward to the opportunity to play against a great team tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for our student-athletes.

Q. Cade Davis, you guys knocked them out with that 18-to-2 run in the first half. Was that the key to this thing? Because it seemed like they couldn't get back off the canvas after that.

CADE DAVIS: When we built that lead, we wanted to make sure we kept pushing it and kept trying to knock them back even more. We didn't want them to get back in the game at all and have any hope of any momentum.

And so we just -- we knew we had to keep playing good on the defensive end and we knew our offense would come from that.

Q. Carl and Cade, can you talk about when you heard Perry Jones wasn't going to play tonight, what that did to the game plan and also how it affected you guys mentally, if at all?

CARL BLAIR: I think we were prepared either way. We were coming into the game confident. I felt we could win if he was playing or not.

But, I mean, it sucks for their team that he wasn't able to play, but I feel we just attacked the game with the same game plan. We knew we had to come out there and outrebound them and play hard, and that's what we did.

Q. Steve, could you tell me what you did defensively to get up on LaceDarius especially early and take him out of their offense?

STEVEN PLEDGER: Just wanted to force him left and make everything hard for him, just try to be in his face and everything.

Whenever he shot the ball, I just wanted to put my hand up in his face. I got pretty long arms, so I think that definitely helped me.

Q. Did you defend him a lot the first two games, and, if so, did you do anything differently this time?

STEVEN PLEDGER: The first game not so much, but the last two games I definitely defended him well. It was nothing that we hadn't worked on before to help me out.

Q. Carl, what is it about Baylor that

seems to bring out the best in you? You're three rebounds short of a triple-double tonight.

CARL BLAIR: I don't know if it's better, but I was just excited to play in the Big 12 Tournament. I think -- I don't know why I keep having good games against Baylor, but I was just really amped up to play today, just help my team get a victory.

It didn't matter who we played today, I was just ready to go.

Q. Cade talked about this is quite a run, six straight games, over 20, just seemed to be feeling part of that senioritis or just explain the last three or four weeks?

CADE DAVIS: It's just me trying to play as hard as I can, trying to do the same thing I've always done, and the ball seems to be going into the hole a little more than it is. I know my game is so limited from here on, and just trying to do whatever I can to help the team get another win and help us to advance.

Q. Carl, can you talk about how your game has progressed as the season has gone on, making the adjustment from UNO to the Big 12?

CARL BLAIR: Just coming in and working hard every day, just trying to stay confident. Just the main thing, I feel like I just work hard. That gives me confidence for the game. So I just try to stay loyal to working hard, just staying in the gym. And I feel like Coach has been putting me out there and just learning as I gradually go and trying to get better every game.

Q. Cade, talk about how this team managed to keep it together during the long losing streak and to put together a nice way to finish.

CADE DAVIS: Well, Coach is always telling us to stay positive and to continue to fight, not give up. And I think our guys did that. They've always competed and always played as hard as they can. And we knew that at some point it was going to break for us, and we were going to come out on the positive end of things. With a win against Oklahoma State at the end of our season, gave us some momentum coming into the Big 12 Tournament.

When we knew we had Baylor, we were confident, not overly confident, but we were happy with that, with that pick, and we knew we were going to come in here and do the things we needed to do to win.

Q. Cade, all of you guys, if you could answer, you have Texas next. They beat you by 20 in Austin, 16 in Norman. What will you do against the Longhorns?

CADE DAVIS: We'll get our game plan going tomorrow. And we know we have to get back in transition and stop them from scoring the easy buckets and we have to make sure we keep their big guys off the board. Check Hamilton. He's a great player, good scorer, make sure we limit his shots and get to their other shooters.

But we have to play a good defensive game like we did tonight and the offense will bring it, will come to us as the game goes on.

CARL BLAIR: I feel like stick to the game plan that Coach gives us. It will put us in the best position to get a victory tomorrow. So just stick to the game plan and play hard and be ready to play.

STEVEN PLEDGER: Definitely to piggyback what they said, stay with the game plan and stop transition buckets and rebound. We definitely have to stay on the boards.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Questions for Coach.

Q. You guys did a lot right, obviously to get going there in the first half. But could you specify what Pledger was able to do defensively on LaceDarius Dunn?

COACH CAPEL: I don't think it was just him. One of the things we did, we copied the same game plan we had when we played them in Norman. We wanted to try to crowd him. We wanted to try to push him to his left, and then we wanted to be in gaps. We didn't want him to see any open space.

And Steve did a good job on him, picked up a couple of fouls. Cade did a good job. I thought our team defense was really good. I felt we helped on some of the pin-downs they had where he couldn't get in there and curl.

Again, our guys, they just fought. They did a good job on him.

Q. Same thing I asked Cade, how did this team manage to keep it together through that long streak?

COACH CAPEL: You have to. You have opportunities to continue to play. One of the things I've told our team a lot this year is to control what you can control. Don't worry about what we can't

control. We can't worry about the past, we can't control the past. To continue to fight, to continue to believe in each other and continue to give great effort every day.

I think for the most part we've done that all year. We hadn't had as much success as we like. But this team is not as talented as our team last year, but it's a way better team. To have more conference wins, more wins overall now is a testament to these guys into how much they've fought, how much they've stayed together and competed together all year.

Q. Would you talk about from a coaching standpoint how you kept your poise and the pace you wanted in the second half when they're trying to make their runs?

COACH CAPEL: Well, we knew they were going to try to make a run. One of the things we talked about was executing our game plan. We thought it was a good game plan. Our guys did a great job of executing it in the first half.

I thought we attacked their zone really well. One of the things, anytime we play them we want to make them go to man to man. And they did that. We were able to score. Our guys have a lot of confidence.

We were able to get some stops and get out in transition and get some easy baskets. In the second half, it was a continuation of that.

The one thing we did change a little bit was we wanted to go do double Acy a little bit quicker. In the first half I thought we waited for a second and we allowed him to put the ball on the floor.

Against us, he's just too big and too strong and too athletic. So we started going on the pass a little bit. Walton made a couple 3s, but we didn't mind that. We didn't mind A.J. Walton or Ellis or Stargell or those guys trying to beat us from the 3. That's what we wanted. We wanted to try to take away as much as possible inside. We wanted to block out. We wanted to do as good a job as we could against LaceDarius. And I thought we did that.

Q. You just talked about letting them try and beat you from 3, but you held them to 21 percent from 3-point range. What did you do to shut them down from the outside?

COACH CAPEL: We shut LaceDarius down. That's it. Those other guys, I don't mean this in a disrespectful way, I just don't think they're

great shooters. And fortunately for us we played the percentages.

It's a new building. They didn't shoot it well in this building today. So it worked out in our favor.

Q. You guys shot 57 percent. You said all year long set screens, move the ball, all that. Is this one of those kind of games that was sort of the dream game you were hoping to get more consistently all year?

COACH CAPEL: I wish Fitz would have played better, but those other four guys that started for us played well. I thought our bench was good. C.J. gave us great minutes. Tyler, I loved the way he attacked the basket that one time in the second half. I thought Barry Honoré was good really defensively, his voice, just providing what this team needed in that moment with Andrew out.

The one blessing about Andrew, he only played 23 minutes, so hopefully he's pretty fresh tomorrow. We're going to need him to be.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

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