

Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 8, 2018

Bruce Weber
Xavier Sneed
Makol Mawien
Barry Brown Jr.
Kansas State Wildcats

Kansas State - 66, TCU - 64

THE MODERATOR: We're ready to begin with Kansas State Wildcats, Coach Bruce Weber and three student-athletes, Barry Brown, Makol Mawien and Xavier Sneed. Coach, congratulations on your victory today.

BRUCE WEBER: Thank you. Really proud of our guys, happy for them. From the beginning I told them before the game since practice when we got back and got going in the spring through the summer and through the fall, they worked their tails off. They've had great leadership, you know. They've done everything we've asked. They're very, very coachable. Probably raised my voice, you know, other than yelling play hard and all that stuff, you know. But getting after 'em a couple times all year. They're a great group. We got down 7. We didn't have much emotion. Cartier made a couple of good plays for us, got energy going. Kam went in and made a play and Mak was very good, a lot of big plays.

Obviously we probably should have fouled on the three at the end. We had 'em in the -- but it's in that chaotic state where you're running back, and, you know, they made a great play. You gotta give them credit, but we came back. Very rarely when teams make a big shot like that do you come back with the emotional and energy that we had in the overtime period that we found to win. Barry obviously made the big play at the end. We gave him the ball and he had a chance to make the play and he came up big for us and made the basket.

Excited! Hopefully solidifies our chance to be in the NCAA tournament. Now they gotta want more, get to the finals and see what happens. But you've got to come back and win tomorrow night, obviously.

Q. Barry, could you just take us through the big play that Coach talked about where you drove for



the game-winning layup?

BARRY BROWN Jr.: He drew up a screen with Mak and we knew that the possession before, I think, in regulation they switched with Brodziansky and we were hoping maybe they would switch again a little bit. But they didn't. They did a regular ball defense and I hesitated and tried to attack the basket because in regulation I settled for a jump shot. So I wanted to attack the basket, and I was able to get fouled and knock the shot down.

Q. For all of you, when that basket goes in and they rule it's good. How tough was it to get -- that's like a punch to the gut. What was your attitude and how did you get going again to take control in the overtime?

BARRY BROWN Jr.: It was tough for us, but nothing we have never been through before. We play overtime all the time in practice and it was something we were ready for.

We knew that they were going to come with their best and I think they came out with a score right in the first possession or a foul or something, but we rallied through, weathered the storm and had some key stops down the stretch and made some big baskets.

MAKOL MAWIEN: Yeah, it was a tough shot and played through it. I just thought I would keep my energy up and motivate the team and keep energy up and try to be vocal a little bit. I knew as long as they energized us that would be a good position to win overtime.

XAVIER SNEED: Piggybacking what Barry said, we go through situations every day in practice and I felt like Coach put us in a great position to be ready for that moment when it came.

Q. Barry, you and Dean have got a lot of attention this season for your all big performances, but Mak and X had big games today. Talk about how they helped carry you guys to this win?

BARRY BROWN Jr.: Last game I found out the stat when Mak is 10 or plus points that we are untreated, so for him to have 16 points, almost a double-double, 16 points, 9 boards, 3 blocks. That's tough in anyone's book in any league, and he was tough today and we need him throughout the rest of the season, throughout

March. Xavier had great defense, some great stops. Kenrich had some tough shots, but for the most part X was in his bubble, getting rebounds, stills, talking, assists. They were great today.

Q. Barry, TCU is one of the higher scoring teams in the nation and you guys have held them under 70 points every time you played. What is it about your match-up that you guys defend them so well?

BARRY BROWN Jr.: We have great team defense and some great individual defenders. We all take on that challenge to stop when they do. They do a lot of ball screen action and a lot of post-ups, and credit to our guys we fought for over forty minutes to limit their opportunities to have some. They have some wide-open shots and stuff, but for the most part we were there in the bubble contesting. It paid off.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, congratulations. Good luck tomorrow. Questions for Coach Weber?

Q. You either play a team that swept you or a team that you swept that is really hot right now. Do you have any preference?

BRUCE WEBER: We just have to watch and see. Obviously Kansas is down one player, Oklahoma State swept them, so we have to see. We gotta come ready to play. Either one, we've just gotta be ready. I think if we shoot for one team now it's a little bit of a mental letdown. We just get ready. We've gotta be ready. This is about us and gutting it out, being mentally tough and doing the things we do.

I should have talked about our defense, not only holding them in the 60s, but it's overtime and held them in the 50s. Mak was important in that and Barry's match-up with Alex Robinson and we emphasized Williams and Xavier, because his improvement in the last three years has been amazing. So our defense has been consistent. That's got to be the thing that's there if you're going to have a chance to win tomorrow night.

Q. Coach, talk about when Barry and Dean didn't have their best games today, but you had several other players step up. Talk about that, how important that is?

BRUCE WEBER: When we've been our best -- we've had great balance, you get guys in double figures, four of them, you share the baseball, assists. Both teams are playing their hearts out and you're playing them a third time. Last year our Baylor game was a hard-fought game. The West Virginia was a hard-fought game. I don't know if people appreciate that double round robin and having 1-10 where anybody can beat anybody on a given night.

So the balance is important, Mak, in fact, John Underwood from the Big 12 said that 14 has come a long way. Mak has slowly and surely become more of an offensive threat, he's rebounding. He is playing hard. He understands it. I thought Cartier did a couple of good things. We were struggling. He got a couple baskets for us when we needed it and Xavier had a big one in overtime because they jump off you. You have a letdown. They make the first bucket. Xavier makes a pull-up in the paint. So we had good balance, even the bench, Levi gets 6 points, 3 rebounds, Mawdo goes in and gets a basket. Kam struggled a little bit, but he's still trying to work his way back. But balance is definitely a key for our team.

Q. Bruce, for the rest of the day what's the plan? Will you guys go back out there and watch the KU-Oklahoma State game?

BRUCE WEBER: A lot of them have family here. They don't get their family. Our guys are from such long distance, obviously, except Dean. So we told them they have the 30 minutes media. Go out and see their family for 15 minutes. They want to go back. They're hungry. The game is on TV. They can watch it there. Their families can come and enjoy time with them and be around them. Then we will go to dinner and start our planning at that time, the scouting. The coaches obviously will scout and get the game plan together. We've got the scouting reports from both the last times we've played them. It was a little longer than obviously than TCU, but they've got to relax and enjoy the opportunity, the special environment. Kansas City does a great job, great venue, great crowd. Big 12 does a great job with the tournament.

Q. Do you have a preference in terms of who you play? You guys except Oklahoma State in the regular season and KU would give you a chance to move up seedingwise?

BRUCE WEBER: We've got to worry about ourselves and getting ready. Oklahoma State has played us as well as anybody of late, to beat Kansas the way they have done is amazing. Last night they played at a high level, and Kansas is, you know, they're going to be a No. 1 seed. So they got us twice. Once we had a shot at the end, the other one they kind of kicked our butt. But, you know, we just gotta worry about ourselves, getting ready to play with some emotion and energy.

Q. Coach, you said you weren't in the tournament for sure until the last minute and you said that helped you because at present kept everybody's mind focused. First thing you said was if this doesn't get us in, I don't know what will, are you afraid there will be a letdown, we got what we needed?

BRUCE WEBER: I don't think so. We came here to

win the tournament and do something no one has done in K-State history and they have that mindset. Do something special. I would be surprised and disappointed if we didn't have a great effort, make every shot, I don't know. But they will come and fight tomorrow night I promise you that.

Q. Coach, back to your defense, you guys don't play the dramatic defense, obvious defense like West Virginia. It's much more subtle but so effective. How do you describe your defensive style?

BRUCE WEBER: I went recruiting yesterday afternoon and sat with one of our former players Dee Brown from Illinois, and he said, Coach, it's nothing like it used to be because Dee would press full court and we would trap and all that stuff. But the game has changed. I said, Dee, how many people ball screened at that time? And that's all TCU does. They go out and ball screen. It's 5 on 4, and we had to change things. Even from the last time we played TCU they got us on a bunch of back doors. We talked about being compact. I think it's good, solid scouting reports. We got guys that care about defense which is not always the case in this day and age. Barry from day one wanted to be a defender. We've gotten Xavier to believe in it. Mak, I said he's one of the best ball screen defenders in the country, and Dean has great read of things. It's solid.

Making them earn things. They did get a bunch in the paint especially in the first half, I think 22 points. But we did a better job. We've tweaked. We've changed. You have to. Coach Keady told me years ago, if you're not flexible in this game you are not going to last long because you have to change as the game changes. I have to fight Coach Lowery all the time because he wants to do it the old way sometimes. But we have adjusted. We've done what we used to do and a little bit of new stuff and got guys to believe into it.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you very much.

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Jamie Dixon

Kenrich Williams

Alex Robinson

TCU Horned Frogs

Kansas State - 66, TCU - 64

THE MODERATOR: Welcome TCU, Coach Jamie Dixon and his two student-athletes, Alex Robinson and Kenrich Williams. Coach?

JAMIE DIXON: Good one for them. Obviously two really tight games, about as tight as you can have it, two NCAA tournament teams playing in March. So obviously a great game for a Big 12 tournament. You look at the numbers, about as even as you can have. Rebound numbers are the same and field goal percentage the same and they got to the free throw line, you can see the difference there. We played good. I thought we could have played better. I'm proud of our guys. We played hard. I don't know that we finished it off as good as we had. We had a good lead and just didn't get it done down the stretch. I'm disappointed to have that lead and let it get away from us, but we know why it did and we're going to learn from it and get better for it.

THE MODERATOR: Our two student-athletes are Alex Robinson and Kenrich Williams.

Q. Alex, what did you see coming down court at the end of regulation you were able to find Desmond for the game-tying 3-pointer?

ALEX ROBINSON: Everybody collapsed on me and I saw Kenrich and Desmond over there and the guy was closing out on Kenrich, so I skipped it through the corner to Desmond.

Q. Alex, the free throws at the end it looked like you looked to the bench. Was that maybe to get your form down? What kind of advice were you trying to get at that point right before you stepped to the line and then just moving on from that. What's the process of trying to get over that and look ahead?

ALEX ROBINSON: I think the whistle blew or something like that. So I was just seeing what we were going to do, or if Coach was going to call something or



anything like that. Looking forward. Just gotta move on and continue to work and get better and learn from the situation.

Q. Describe K-State's defense. They seemed to be in your face at all times and they hold you down below 70 points all three times you played?

KENRICH WILLIAMS: They do a good job of just pressuring the ball, denying sometimes. Sometimes they're in the gap. They're a good defensive team and that's a good reason why.

ALEX ROBINSON: Like Kenrich said, they're a sound defensive team. They're always in gaps and things like that and communicating on defense.

Q. Just trying to defend them in the post how difficult was that today? Mak had a pretty good game for Kansas State and I think he tied his career high and he's a mismatch problem. They haven't had that kind of presence in the paint. Talk about how he adds something to their offense and defense.

KENRICH WILLIAMS: He does a good job of getting in open spots, getting easy dump-offs, getting himself open. Defensively he's long. Plays good defense.

Q. Was his mismatch a problem for you though?

KENRICH WILLIAMS: No, he wasn't.

Q. For both of you, I'm wondering how big of a swing of emotion is it to go from the euphoria of tying the game and going to overtime and then to lose so narrowly in the quarter finals of the tournament?

ALEX ROBINSON: Well, I mean, it just didn't go our way. We've got to keep fighting and looking forward and get ready for the tournament now.

Q. For both players, you guys both had great games. What do you take from your performances today and how do you take what you learned today into wherever you play next in the postseason?

KENRICH WILLIAMS: Well, it's going to be like this for the rest of the year, for the rest of the games left. We know it's lose or go home so we're going to go out and play hard. Just do what Coach says, offensively and defensively.

ALEX ROBINSON: Like Kenrich said, get back in the gym and get ready for the tournament and focus on the next game.

THE MODERATOR: Guys, thank you for coming. Questions for Coach?

Q. You mentioned that you figured out what didn't work down the stretch, why you guys weren't able to keep the lead. What can you pinpoint there?

JAMIE DIXON: Couple shots we took and turnovers. Bad shots we look at as turnovers, and they got to the line. They got to the foul line. We couldn't let them get more free throws than they got and they got more than we got. So I think those are the things that stood out.

Q. What are the next few days like for you as you plan for Selection Sunday?

JAMIE DIXON: You get a day off tomorrow and prepare. Everybody is in the same thing. Somebody is going to lose tomorrow. Three more will lose today. So one day off, another day off. It's not a big difference. So you prepare, you get ready, and we've played guys a lot of minutes. So in some ways that can be productive, and we'll try to get better. We will watch some film because we had a 9-point lead and we let the thing get away and we've done that a few times, especially on the road and call it what you will, but we've done that. We did it in the last game against Tech, too, as well. We continue to put people at the line when they have trouble scoring against us, and that was the case here again. Call it what you will, but they're getting more free throws than us and eventually that's a bad thing.

Q. When you've had so many of these kind of games, is there a growth process or scar tissue or is there both?

JAMIE DIXON: I mean, you know, we've gotta find ways -- we've had an interesting season because our wins have been blowouts, we've beat ten people by double digits and we've lost games on the road, couple home ones early, nothing recently and this is semi neutral or whatever you want to call it, but, you know, I go back to the same things, it's the free throw hurting us, today was turnovers. We have been high on turnovers. We were leading the conference in lowest turnovers, lowest in the country, and that's been hurting us now. And ultimately our defense has not been what I wanted it to be. It's improved and it's much better, but it's still not where it needs to be to finish things off when you're struggling to get some. I look at our numbers. We shot 46%, you know, it's only 14 turnovers. We were way up on the rebounds, but it turned the other way in the second half. They were more physical than us, way more physical. That was

clear, evident. Their philosophy, what they did to Vlad was clear. We knew it was coming, but clearly more physical than us, especially in the second half.

Q. Building off that, if you ask a Lehman they may not list Kansas City as one of the better defensive teams in the league, but they clearly are. What do they do that gives you so much trouble?

JAMIE DIXON: We beat them by 10 the other day, so we shot a good percentage in that one. Really the turnovers, I guess. We shot 47%. That's low for us, but not that low. Most people will take that, and we had some foul trouble and there were some situations, and I think we had too many turnovers. But I don't know that they caused them. We've got to finish plays in transition, and I don't know that that's their defense that caused that. Usually it's transition, but we make the free throws. They don't make the free throws. You're asking different questions, and that's what it got down to and we can't get beat at the free throw line. When we've lost we've got beat at the free throw line. It's that simple.

Q. Coach, talk about how Vladimir played and going into the tournament and double figures, your leading scorer?

JAMIE DIXON: We wanted to get him more touches. They were obviously fronting the post. We knew it was coming. They were physical with him. They threw two bodies, sometimes three at him and that's the thing.

He's gotta get to the line more than four times, considering what they were doing. But he made some nice passes I thought out of the post. Obviously he was 5 for 9, made the free throws down the stretch, so he did miss one. So we have got to continue to get the ball into him. He's a hard match-up especially with our shooting, because you've got to guard our shooters, and he has been passing so well out of the post.

Q. He took one 3 today. Did K-State do anything to keep him from getting the shot? He shot 57% or something.

JAMIE DIXON: I don't think he's shooting that high, with all respect. He was 0-2. They were both good looks. They didn't go down. He's a good player, and were you talking about Vlad? Yeah, he got a couple good looks and they didn't go down. We shot a good percentage, 7 for 17, 41%. People will take that, 3 for 17, 3 for 15, it comes down to free throws, down the stretch free throws. They got more and made more.

Q. As you await Sunday, how do you think the committee will view you and the rest of the league and what are your thoughts on the quadrant system?

JAMIE DIXON: It's going to play out here and we'll see.

We'll see how the other teams around us do. We'll drop in the RPI we think. But you never know how the other teams around you are. But we were 20, 19 today. We put ourselves in good position. We feel we should have won these two games down the stretch, but we didn't. It's two of the same things, shot selection a little bit late when we had the leads and foul line. Gotta get to the foul line, gotta make more free throws. So we gotta get more free throws than our opponent. That's a big goal for us.

As far as the league, it's the best. I never thought it would be possible to get nine teams in the NCAA tournament, but we're giving it as good of a shot as you possibly can. So it will be a great boost for our conference to get eight, nine, whatever it may be in. It's remarkable. What we did in nonconference was remarkable, and I've been in good conferences. But top to bottom this provides the greatest challenge. It's a great conference, and I think people are recognizing it more and more. Obviously, we don't cover the biggest of cities in the east and west. But I think people are really getting a good idea of how good this conference is. But now we've got to go do it in the NCAA tournament. We can say it and say it, but then you gotta do something about it.

Q. What are your thoughts on the quadrant system?

JAMIE DIXON: Quadrant system? Let's see what happens first. Just talking about it, a lot of talk and speculation. But it's really the same thing. Just a little different look and things. But with the quadrant you've still gotta pick a metric to use, and so, you know, they're picking the RPI. Depending what they're going to use. So there is still which one are you going to use or how are you going to use them or how many? A lot of things factor in. I know guys like to talk about their indicators and their eye test, but the numbers are about as objective as you can get. We've done real well in that as far as our program, but certainly the Big 12.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you very much.