

Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 8, 2018

Chris Beard

Tommy Hamilton IV

Keenan Evans

Texas Tech Red Raiders

Texas Tech - 73, Texas - 69

THE MODERATOR: We are joined now by the Red Raiders of Texas Tech, Coach Beard and his student-athletes, Tommy Hamilton and Keenan Evans. Coach, congratulations on your victory.

CHRIS BEARD: Thanks, just really proud and happy for our players. It was one year ago we sat at this table and we said we were going to do everything we could in the next 364 days to put ourselves in a better position and we've done that. I think you've got to give our players all the credit, including these two guys to my right, two of our five seniors that have really, you know, had a special season. We just don't want it to end. We want to keep playing. I want to keep coaching these guys and I want to coach 'em two more times in Kansas City and six times in the NCAA tournament.

We have a lot of respect for Texas. They're a tough team. They've overcome a lot of adversity this year with the injuries and I have a lot of respect for Shaka. They're an NCAA tournament team in my book and they're a great team with a great coach. Pleased to win for a lot of reasons and our respect for Shaka and Texas is at the top of that list.

Q. Keenan, what did the five days of rest do for you this week to help you get back? How close are you to being at pretty normal condition as far as where you might have been earlier in the season?

KEENAN EVANS: It was definitely a big help. Just staying in the training room with our trainer, Chris Williams. He stayed up there with me and didn't leave me up there by myself to ice by myself. It was big to sit out a little bit and rest it and it helped me come ready to play.

Q. Are you almost back do you feel like?

KEENAN EVANS: I'm getting there, man. I'm getting there.



Q. Tommy, in terms of the aggressiveness you guys had with getting to the basket. I guess you had a couple of passes to Zhaire. How did that help you out, getting aggressive and spreading out the floor?

TOMMY HAMILTON IV: Zhaire is one of my favorite targets. I love when he goes backdoor and we make those things happen. We came out with a game plan, and we wanted to attack them and that's what we followed through with.

Q. Keenan, when you guys were up 1, what did Coach tell in you terms of the huddles after that timeout and what did y'all do that helped y'all get there?

KEENAN EVANS: He questioned us and asked us do we want to win? We were in the same position last year. This is your senior year. You haven't won in the Big 12 tournament. Are y'all going to get stops and rebounds? And we did it.

Q. Keenan, what did you see from Jarrett in those first couple minutes where he was all over the place, 7 points and 6 rebounds?

KEENAN EVANS: He was doing it all. He was doing everything we needed him to do and more. We looked for him to make big shots and he did and we looked for him to rebound down by Tommy and Norense and getting good box outs, and he did everything we needed him to do.

Q. Keenan, what's going through your mind when you saw Texas start off cold 3-16 and 0-9 from the three. Is it tempting to let them keep shooting from so far out?

KEENAN EVANS: No, we didn't want to give them horse shots. We wanted to contest all of them and we wanted to convert on the offensive end while they weren't making shots, and we knew they weren't going to shoot like that all night. So we tried to take advantage while we could.

Q. Keenan, Coach talked about putting this team in a better position than a year ago when you were at this tournament. How would you sum up the confidence level of this team to possibly win this tournament?

KEENAN EVANS: High, high confidence. We got

everybody back. We're getting healthier by the day. We all know what we can do and what we're capable of and we're trying to play together and play for one another and we know that this is our last go-round. So we're just trying to make the most of it.

Q. For Tommy and Keenan, Tommy first, when Zhaire made that LeBron play as he lacks likes to call it, how much of a swing was that for you guys momentumwise. It seemed like everybody kicked it up on defense?

TOMMY HAMILTON IV: That's one thing we practice on. I don't know if you saw me, but I was sprinting back, too.

CHRIS BEARD: You were?

TOMMY HAMILTON IV: Yeah, and that's something we get from Z all the time, something that makes him special and he has bought into and that's what separates him from most of the other freshman in the country.

Q. Did you see him running and what was that like when you saw him make that play?

KEENAN EVANS: It's great. I remember when he first got here in the summer he was making those plays. So that's what we expect of him. Jarrett got ahead and slowed him down for Z and he made that play and it gets us going, energizes the bench and everybody on the court and kind of stopped them from going on the run that they were on.

Q. Keenan, just looking back on it, getting this first win in the conference tournament, what does it mean to y'all? Coach said he was challenging you to win this game. What was it like to know you met the challenge he gave you?

KEENAN EVANS: Feels good. It's still a long road. We got another one tomorrow, so we've got to not get too high and too low and get on to the next one.

TOMMY HAMILTON IV: I'm just happy to be a part of this with these guys, you know, man. My career never meant that much to me, but, you know, it's kind of hard to deny it being around them and being in the locker room with them. It's just fun.

Q. Obviously, Young went off for a lot of the game. What did you guys do to stop him the last couple three minutes because he didn't score after he hit a really big hoop?

KEENAN EVANS: During timeout Coach was like who was going to step up and take that challenge and I told him I would. So I was trying to get on him and make it as tough as I could and was trying to make it as hard for him as I could and stop him from being the high guy.

Q. Keenan, I was curious what was the scouting report on Jacob Young averaging 5 points a game?

KEENAN EVANS: We knew he was streaky and could turn into a big-time shooter. We just lost a couple and slipped up on some stuff and he got hot and he just kept going. They kept feeding him.

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

Q. Chris, that stretch at the end where Keenan gave you a little breathing room first with that 18-foot jump shot then the free throws. Was that the Evans that you have seen all year long up until the injury and how good was it to see that guy again after the second half against TCU?

CHRIS BEARD: He's one of the best players I've ever coached. I think he's one of the best in the Big 12 that translates to him being one of the best players in college basketball. It's not just his talent. It's his courage. He wants to be in those moments. He wants the ball in those moments and it's been a maturation process for him. Started playing for Tubby and took a lot of bumps, helped them get to the NCAA tournament as a sophomore. Last year he was a leader, All-Conference player, doubled up his numbers and now this year he's one of the best players in college basketball. Tonight, we've been in these situations before. He has the ability and the courage to take games over.

Q. You'll either face Baylor or West Virginia two entirely different styles of game, but you've split with both. Do you have a preference?

CHRIS BEARD: No, just -- this league is so good, you guys have seen it, every game has been a 1-possession game in this tournament so far. No, there's a lot of things that I am looking forward to, but playing against another Big 12 team is not one of them. We have extreme respect for West Virginia and Coach Huggins, and Baylor and Coach Drew, two teams that are going to be in the NCAA tournament. So I'm not looking forward to playing either one of them, but I'm looking forward to competing again in this tournament.

Q. First time you guys have made a semifinal since 2005. I wonder if you could reflect on that accomplishment and also what it might mean for you next week as a way to prepare for the NCAA.

CHRIS BEARD: I was here in 2005 working for Coach Knight and we had some success in this tournament, played a change-up game against Coach Sutton and Oklahoma State. When you build a program there's going to be a lot of firsts. You've got to do things that haven't been done before and those are things to reflect on after the season which we definitely will and

right now we are just trying to stay in the moment. I respect the question. I would give the guys all the credit. These guys have a chip on their shoulder and they're trying to do things that have never been done before at Texas Tech. I am really appreciative and thankful to be a part of the ride with these players.

Q. What would you do as far as preparation for NCAA next week?

CHRIS BEARD: That's a good question. In your nonconference schedule and your conference schedule you prepare for everything. In the Big 12 we're fortunate enough to be part of the Big Monday from time-to-time. So it's just like the NCAA tournament situation, Thursday, Saturday, Friday, Sunday. These situations, back-to-backs, we've been here before in our multi-team tournament at Connecticut. We played Boston College and Northwestern in a similar situation. We will remind the guys of that. We've prepared for that. There is nothing that could pop up in March whether in our schedule or in practice, and it's ultimately our jobs as coaches is to prepare our guys. So even though tomorrow will be a tough game against a great opponent, in a lot of ways we're prepared for this back-to-back situation.

Q. Chris, I think Texas had four stars with ten points. I was curious if you defend them different. Are they a little bit more unorthodox and they're not that accurate of a shooting team?

CHRIS BEARD: They're a dangerous team. It starts with their overall talent level. You've got in my opinion three guys that could get drafted this year. They're really, really good players. As with all teams we have really good players, sometimes you can't take the coaching for granted, but I've been doing this a long time. I don't think I'm better than anybody else, but I promise you nobody watches more film than me and nobody loves basketball more than me. Shaka can really coach. A game like today when Jacob goes off that's not just Jacob, that's Shaka instilling confidence in that guy and he's given him the ability to take big shots all season long. Today that paid off for him. Certainly they're a tough team. If you want to stop the said the three-ball can get you and if you want to stop the three-ball, the inside guys can post up. I think as they continue to get healthy, and Bamba didn't have his legs today. We all know he is a much better player than he played today although he played really good. I think they're a team that can make a real run in the tournament.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you very much. We'll see you tomorrow.

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Shaka Smart
Jacob Young
Matt Coleman
Texas Longhorns

Texas Tech - 73, Texas - 69

THE MODERATOR: We are joined now by Texas Longhorns, Coach Shaka Smart, his two student-athletes are Matt Coleman and Jacob Young. Coach, your thoughts on tonight's game?

SHAKA SMART: We're extremely disappointed that we came up short. Texas Tech deserves a lot of credit. They battled. They made some big shots throughout the game. But certainly in the second half they made shots down the stretch when they needed to. These two guys really, really fought and battled, I thought when we had five guys on the floor who played with aware your spirit, I thought we played pretty well, but that was not for forty minutes and to beat a team like Texas Tech, I say a 40-minute game, and you've got to have five guys out there connected around one cause. So very, very disappointed. But obviously we have more basketball left to play.

Q. Jacob, are you now the secret weapon for Texas and what got into you tonight? Career high?

JACOB YOUNG: I don't see it like that. I see it as my teammates pushing me up to be who I am and do what I do, and that's what they know me for is making shots and being a fighter. That's basically it. I couldn't do it without my teammates.

Q. Jacob, with all due respect to what your teammates were doing, did you feel like you were in a zone out there when all of the sudden you hit your first six threes, things like that, what's the feeling like for you as a shooter?

JACOB YOUNG: Felt just like practice. I got in my zone and never got out of it. I told myself I'm going to keep doing what I'm doing and just keep trying to fight for my teammates and everybody on the staff.

Q. Matt, you guys got off to a poor start again shootingwise. How demoralizing was that for the team and how much does that take out of you guys trying to fight back all game long?



MATT COLEMAN: As a point guard you have to stay level headed and continue to support your teammates to take those shots because they're open, shooting with confidence. I don't want them to stop shooting it, because I know they can make it at a high level. The biggest thing is not getting frustrated, letting that bother you on the other end of the floor, the defensive end. We did get to a rough start, but as the game got on we got more comfortable and shots started to fall in our favor.

Q. Matt, as far as the future what do you feel like you guys took out of this game? You were looking at a sense of urgency and maybe in a play-in game, but do you feel like you got what you came for?

MATT COLEMAN: At all, we left a lot on the table. Coming into Kansas City it was a tournament we felt like we could win, so I feel like we came up short. Our focus was Big 12 championship, this was my first year playing in it. It was an unbelievable experience and a great opportunity and I looked at it as a gift. But we did come up short and my main focus was winning because I felt like as a team, as a group we could win this.

THE MODERATOR: Okay, guys, thank you. Questions for Coach Smart?

Q. Shaka, how do you feel about your team? Do you feel comfortable where you guys are going into Sunday?

SHAKA SMART: We just lost a tight game, so we never feel great after a loss. I think Texas Tech deserves a lot of credit, but there's a lot of things we will look at when we watch that tape and we'll say, if we would have done this a little better or this a little harder or been a little more connected in this area, we would have won. After a game that's where your focus is.

In terms of Sunday, we have had a really good year, a ton of ups and downs in terms of adversity we've been hit with, I think our guys have responded with great resolve, great togetherness, great fight. I think when you come out of this league, obviously you go through the fire and we have and we've got a ton of great experience and a ton of great wins. I think we put ourselves in good position, as I've said all along when I get asked. I'm not on the committee, but certainly the way that we've played over the last couple of weeks,

you know, we look like an NCAA tournament team.

Q. Shaka, how do you think Mo played tonight and take us through the process.

SHAKA SMART: I thought Mo played well. It was back and forth whether he was going to be able to play and then he went through a workout today, went pretty well. So the athletic trainer told me he could play 10 minutes. So, you know, it's tough as a coach because 10 minutes, it's a 40-minute game. He's a really good player. So put him in. In the first half he had 7 points in 7 minutes, 4 rebounds. Played really well. The second half we put him in again. He was helping our team. I thought he brought good spirit, but the athletic trainer said maybe a couple more minutes but that's about it. So he ended up playing 14. I thought he played really well. Obviously the way he played we would have loved to have had him for 29, 30 minutes. But the sports medicine department at UT does a great job, and they decided the best thing for him right now is to come in and play the minutes that he played. So hopefully he can grow from that and be able to play more next time.

Q. Shaka, Jacob told us it felt like practice for him out there. How often have you seen that version of Jacob in practice that we saw on display tonight?

SHAKA SMART: He does that all the time in practice. That was the guy we recruited a couple years ago. It's funny because when we lost last year up here it was our last game, and a couple media members said, hey, is he a Big 12 player because he had struggled his freshman year and he was tonight! Pretty damn good Big 12 player tonight. He has that in him. The challenge for him is playing with poise and being calm and collected when things get frantic, and I thought tonight he did that. He took a real step. He still has a lot of growth to make, but really, you know, he's got a warrior spirit about him. He's extremely competitive. I told the guys in the locker room. I said, if our whole team had the competitive spirit that he had in that game we're in here feeling really good about ourselves. Pleased with that. Effort from him and hopefully something we can build on.

Q. I think you had four starters with 10 points and you mentioned if everybody else played with the same competitive spirit. The fact that you didn't play that well but you were competitive, what did you take from that? Do you feel like maybe Kerwin Roach kind of tired out a little bit?

SHAKA SMART: I got to get to the bottom of why he wasn't himself, because he wasn't. The reality for us is when we've played well, particularly since we lost Andrew, we've gotten contributions from pretty much everyone that goes out on the floor. They haven't played perfect but the formula for us in the big wins

we've had in the Big 12 has been we've had really everyone go in and give us solid time. In some of our games everyone has gone in and played really well. Without sounding like it's oversimplified that goes a long ways toward your team playing well. Tonight J.Y. was terrific. I thought Matt was really good. Mo gave us good minutes in the time that he could play. I thought we had some other guys that struggled. Obviously those guys want to win. We've got to help them have a clear mind for doing what goes into winning. Our two juniors tonight, those are our oldest guys, we need to help them be better. End of the day that's on me and them. That's what it is is figuring out a way for those guys to be the best version of themselves because they weren't tonight.

Q. You mentioned that you're hoping that Mo could play 29, 30 minutes. Do you have a sense that he might be able to get to that level next week or is it wait and see?

SHAKA SMART: I don't know. This toe saga has been very, very interesting and you know, Mo wants to play. He was mad at me. Every time I took him out of the game he was mad at me. I said, Mo, what if you play 25 minutes and then you get hurt and then the trainer says to me you were supposed to play him 10 minutes. On the flip side, we're trying to win the game. So I would have loved to have had him out there longer. We were in this position one time before with another player and it's a tough spot. Literally during the game he's negotiating to play more. The trainer is negotiating for him to play less.

But, yeah, we're hopeful. He couldn't -- when we played last week he couldn't come close to playing, so he's come a long way. Yesterday he wasn't quite there. Today, obviously, he was well enough to score 10 points in 14 minutes. So hopefully he can get some more rest over the next couple of days and hopefully that thing is feeling better and we can get him out there for as much time as he wants to play and we want him to play.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you so much. Good luck next week.