

Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 8, 2018

Scott Drew

Manu Lecomte

Terry Maston

Baylor Bears

West Virginia - 78, Baylor - 65

THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome Coach Scott Drew and the Baylor Bears to the interview room. The two student-athletes are Manu Lecomte and Terry Maston. Coach, we will look to you for an opening comment.

SCOTT DREW: I thought West Virginia did a great job. They caused us 22 turnovers, and I thought Jevon's three at the end of the half took away the momentum from Tristan's dunk, and now it gets to 6 points and Miles hit some big threes today, 5 from 6 for threes and they were deep and late in the shot clock. When you get down double digits against West Virginia it's hard to come back.

There are certain teams we match-up better with. West Virginia is one of them that we're not -- we're glad if we never have to play them again this year.

Q. Guys, I wonder if you could describe the cumulative affect of facing that press for forty minutes? I know they turned you over 22 times, which was a season worst, but just describe what it's like to have to go against that for forty minutes.
MANU LECOMTE: It's a great press. It's a great team. They turned us over 22 times. The coaches put up a great game plan and I know we've made a lot of mistakes, but I'm proud of my guys that we fought until the end.

TERRY MASTON: I think fatigue and frustration sets in especially when you start to turn it over a lot. But like Manu said, I'm glad we kept battling to the end and we just have to take care of the ball next time and just work a little harder in practice. That's about it.

Q. Manu, you guys cut the lead to 2 early in the second half and then Miles hits three straight threes. How difficult was that to maybe come back from that?

MANU LECOMTE: It was tough because he got hot



and we should have done a better job us guards of closing out to him and taking it away. But, again, it came off of turnovers, so it's the same thing. We've just got to take care of the ball better.

Q. Terry, you guys got out to an 18-9 lead, looked like you had chances to expand that. How difficult was it not to stretch it out?

TERRY MASTON: It was very difficult. We try not to dwell on it because we had to play in the now. We couldn't worry about the lead that we had kinda blown. We just tried to keep going and stay positive and we got a couple of traverse, they got some great momentum, couple of fast break dunks and they just played good overall.

Q. Selection Sunday, 5:00, I guess. Do you guys feel like you guys have done enough? Are you going to be a little nervous?

MANU LECOMTE: I think we're good enough, but it doesn't matter now. We've just got to wait and see.

TERRY MASTON: Same, pretty much just waiting and seeing.

Q. Guys, how different are they when Esa Ahmad is playing like he did? I know he had 21 points. He was effective in the late run in the first half and then also early in the second. What does he do to make them different?

TERRY MASTON: I think he just plays hard. He's a great scorer. He has wide hands on defense in their press and he plays with a lot of energy, especially with a guy that's 6-8 moving around with those guards out there like Jevon Carter and Daxter Miles. That's just a great part of his game.

MANU LECOMTE: I think he's a very good player, gave us trouble in our zone, catching the high post and stuff. Again, the coaches put up a great game plan defensively, and we tried but he's a very good player, like TJ said.

THE MODERATOR: Guys, thank you. Good luck next week. Questions for Coach Drew?

Q. Coach, what is the feeling like for you and the staff now that -- you've said as long as you're playing you're good well now you're not playing

anymore, it's out of your hands. What's the feeling like?

SCOTT DREW: The positive part of things are we are playing the No. 1 RPI conference in the country. We were the seed. Ten of our losses were to ranked teams most in the nation. Zero losses in quadrant 3 or 4. So we don't have any bad losses, and we're the fifth best team according to KenPom on the Big 12, and it's a great conference, a great league. There are certain teams that you match-up better with, and others that you don't. West Virginia we knew was a tough match-up. We actually completely changed our game plan from Game 2 to this one, and I thought early on it worked. In the last 8 minutes in the game in the first half, you get to 18 points and then all of the sudden you're stuck. I think the fatigue and that press wears on you.

When they got momentum going into half, I think if we could have finished with Tristan's dunk, one-possession game, it's a lot different. So when you're playing them you don't need them hitting half-court shots. They're good enough without that.

Q. Scott, what did y'all do early to get that 9-point lead?

SCOTT DREW: Well, our defense was really good early on, especially. They were 22%, 4 for 18 and then all of the sudden our traverse allowed them to not have to face our defense and when they started scoring then we had to face their press.

When we were getting stops, then we could get out in transition, not have to face the press. When they scored they set up and that wasn't good for us.

Q. You said you changed up the game plan. What were y'all trying to do to beat the press? Trying different things?

SCOTT DREW: Well, we played in space in the half-court early on, and as far as the press break, the first time we played them we used three guys the entire time, second time we used three for the first half, switched to just two up and that was more effective. So we started the game with two up and that worked fairly well until the 8-minute mark when -- and when you're not scoring, it does tend to affect you defensively and everywhere else. I think that was unfortunate for us.

So, again, their pressure -- at some point you're going to make a mistake and if you're not scoring on the other end, getting high-risk/high-reward stuff it makes it tough. When we turned it over and they scored, then you get down in double digits, that's a tall feat.

Again, if we could go back and start the game right there from 8-minute mark when we're up and play it

again, I would love to do it. I don't think Coach Huggins will, though.

Q. Huggins was pretty eloquent when he thought there were no bubble teams in this conference. He thinks everybody should make it. How are these next 72 hours going to be for you as you sit and ponder as far as what your team's chances are may be in the next week or so?

SCOTT DREW: I like his answer. Coaches tend to worry, though. At the end of the day if I was on the committee I agree with him and what he said, but we're not on the committee, and hopefully again the things they have asked us to do, play good teams, play good schedules, not have bad losses. When you play top-25 teams you rack up losses. In this league you do.

Q. I was wondering, you've seen this league in a lot of different seasons and each season is different. If you had to play a tour guide this year of what has made it exceptional, I wonder what you would highlight?

SCOTT DREW: Well, first of all, you look at the tournaments we all won in the nonconference. It's hard to win tournaments, and we had a lot of teams win tournaments in the nonconference. Normally every other game you're facing a great player or two great players and in this league it starts with point guards, and to me it's never been better top to bottom with point guards. If you have great point guards you've got a chance to win any game.

Then you look at shot blockers. It's the best the league has every been with shot blockers and then you fill it in with everything else and you're like, this is really a tough league.

I don't know how many NBA players we'll have, but I know we have a lot of really, really good players in this league that when you game plan you're like, that's a problem. That's why I think we're all so successful in the nonconference in our tournaments.

If we could go back -- everyone has injuries and you've got to deal with them, but, I mean, we were undefeated when TJ was healthy. We lost him and I wish we would have had him in a couple of those nonconference games. When he's rolling we're really good and it gives us another weapon confined of like with West Virginia. Esa Ahmad was tremendous tonight, but when he first came back I thought it took time for him to get acclimated. He was a looked a little heavy, a little slow. Right now he's playing like he was last year and because of that I think their team is better now than they were in the beginning of the year because he's such a weapon for them, really knows how to operate their defense.

Offensively he can score and he can score inside, he can score outside. So, again, I think every one of the Big 12 coaches are excited to face somebody different. Especially one thing in coaching that's tough. We all talk about talent and teams and leadership, but there is something to be said about confidence and swag and when you're losing games, adversity hits you and when you're in a great league you have more adversity than if you're playing in a league where you get two or three losses. So every coach and every team is dealing with that.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, we will let you go and good luck next week.

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Bob Huggins

Esa Ahmad

Daxter Miles, Jr.

Jevon Carter

West Virginia Mountaineers

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THE MODERATOR: We are ready to begin with the Mountaineers from West Virginia, Coach Bob Huggins, three student-athletes, Jevon Carter, Daxter Miles, Jr., and Esa Ahmad. Questions for our student-athletes?

Q. Guys, the half-court shot, what kind of momentum did that give you into the second half?

JEVON CARTER: It gives us a little bit of momentum. They had a put-back dunk. A dunk can change the game. I guess that 3-pointer just killed them right there with it. That's a big momentum changer. It was big for us going into halftime. We came out and played with the same energy from the first half.

Q. Guys, what exactly does it do for you guys when Dax is hitting threes like he did tonight?

ESA AHMAD: It's big, you know. We got a lot of threats out there on the perimeter, Jevon, Beetle and Dax, once he gets hot you've seen what he can do. That was big for us.

JEVON CARTER: Same thing he said, when Dax is hitting it makes the game much easier for everybody else because he's an unbelievable scorer and when he get hot there ain't no stopping him.

DAXTER MILES, JR.: My teammates was finding me, and I was just trying to find the gap.

Q. Esa, I was wondering about what you thought your responsibility was when Sags sat down, what you thought you needed to do to help the team.

ESA AHMAD: Sags is a big presence in there. He rebounds the ball, and I wanted to be aggressive on the glass and put a body on their big man. You know, just trying to be a presence down there.

THE MODERATOR: Okay, guys, congratulations and look forward to seeing you tomorrow. Questions for



Coach?

Q. Coach, I was wondering about the press and how effective that was and what you thought the key to that was tonight?

BOB HUGGINS: Well, it's accumulative affect and we had one stretch where I think we got the ball three times in a row and that's when we kind of were able to open the game up a little bit and that's what we hope it does for us. It's going to be interesting on Sunday with basically four teams from the Big 12 on the bubble. What do you make of the decision the committee has differentiating between the team you just played and three other teams that are going to be on the bubble as well?

BOB HUGGINS: Why are they on the bubble? I don't understand why we would have four on the bubble. We have been all year long, the best conference in the country. When you play in this league and you play everybody twice it's not like -- we're not one of those leagues where they play the best team like once every three years, you know?

We play everybody twice. Familiarity, this league has great coaching, not good, but great coaching and we've got really good players. So I don't understand that. You put any of those other people in here that are so-called "bubble teams" and see what they do playing 18 games in this league.

Q. Looks like Esa has hit a groove the last four or five games. What does it do for you guys differently when he's scoring and rebounding like he's been over the last two or three weeks?

BOB HUGGINS: Gives us another threat and he's a guy who can -- he can score inside and outside, and we really need him to rebound. Baylor outrebounded us the first two games even though we were fortunate enough to win, but they outrebounded us and that was a big emphasis this week was to make sure that we rebounded the ball and it was a big emphasis to Esa. But he was better in the press. He gets three steals. I thought he played really, really well. And he was the guy who I think when we struggled a little bit against the zone to start with he was the guy who we were really trying to throw the ball to.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Coach.

