

Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 9, 2018

Bruce Weber Xavier Sneed Makol Mawien

Kansas State Wildcats

Kansas - 83, Kansas State - 67

THE MODERATOR: We're now joined now by Kansas State, Coach Bruce Weber and two student-athletes, Makol Mawien and Xavier Sneed. Coach, we will look to you first for opening statement on tonight's game.

BRUCE WEBER: Obviously, you don't have your first team All-Conference guy. You knew it was going to be tough but we talked about this is an opportunity. We've been through it before. Kam went down. The guys came together. Cartier stepped up. Other guys stepped up, and we had a great season. Now Dean is out. We felt it was best for him. He wanted to play. We felt it was best for him not to play and hope we have him healthy next week.

You can't plan for Barry going down on the first play. And he got poked in the eye and had very little vision. He wanted to play. He kept saying, I'm good and I held up how many fingers and he didn't know. So there was no way we could put him in. But I thought obviously these guys stepped up. We knew we could go to Mak without their big guy. He rose up and played well. Xavier did some really good things, 5 assists, got it into Mak, 12 points, went to the hoop, made some plays, I thought other guys, Amaad Wainwright stepped up, Mike McGuirl got an opportunity, took advantage of it. We pushed them, got it to 2. Xavier got the rebound and the shuffle and casual and they get the steal and go to 4 and then we have a couple of bad possessions. I thought the one was a travel when they got the three, and that pushed it back to double digits pretty quick and now you're chasing them.

But they didn't quit the whole time. I'm proud of them. We have a great group. They've been great since the beginning. They've had some adversity, and, you know, they've had courage all the way through. So you appreciate that and obviously we came here to win to try to get to the finals. We gave it a go. We didn't have enough and they made some plays. Newman is playing at a high level. I thought we played pretty good



D in stretches and then we would have mental mistakes at times and some switches and some reads and they got some easy ones out of it.

Q. Can you guys describe how hard it was to see Barry go down and have that physical reaction and how you try to move past that and get back in the game?

XAVIER SNEED: It was definitely hard seeing one of your brothers go down, but like Coach said, we all knew we had to rally back together and help him try to get the win.

MAKOL MAWIEN: Piggyback on what X said, it's tough when one of your main contributors goes down with injury and we had to step up and just step up and play hard.

Q. For both players, in what ways do you feel like yesterday's game and tonight helped prepare you for the national tournament? What do you feel like you can take from your performance here?

XAVIER SNEED: Definitely tonight without being with two of our All-Conference players, just showing that everybody else on the team, we got a lot of good rotations and got a lot of fight in those guys and hope we can do some damage in the tournament.

MAKOL MAWIEN: Definitely. I think just the competition, experience, really.

Q. Xavier, can you talk about Mak's game tonight? Is that something you've seen from him in practice? He's had some big games, but 29 from the floor. How well did he play?

XAVIER SNEED: Definitely seen it in practice before, knowing Udoka was out before, attacking on the inside was a big thing for us, and Mak showed up today and big kudos to him and he's made some big plays that he has been doing all year for us and he just showed up today.

THE MODERATOR: Okay, guys, thank you for coming and good luck next week. Questions for Coach Weber?

Q. Not exactly how you wanted to find out what else you had but what are your thoughts on the contributions from Mike McGuirl? Kam has

probably had the most minutes since he's been back?

BRUCE WEBER: We had to scramble as a staff last night trying to decide if Dean doesn't play what do you. Then you had different people in there. Everything we have run all year has been through Dean. I was panicked with the coaches. We take Dean out for one minute and what do we do. So we kinda came up with five, six, seven different schemes, you know, if he wouldn't go and then at shootaround when it didn't look like Dean would go, we worked them today. We had a long shootaround. It was probably too long, just trying to prepare quickly and we had to do it not only defensively for their stuff, but trying to figure out what to score. We ran some of the same stuff we ran for Dean with post-ups and Xavier is a good post feeder. Mak is, you know, he's had a great tournament. He's played well. I've told him all along, you know, his time is to come. I knew he could score and obviously it's a help, you know. I think you had one injury with Kam and Cartier had the opportunity and he stepped up and now you have another injuries other guys stepped up.

Mike McGuirl, I said all along he was the surprise of our summer. He had some injuries himself. I really feel bad for him because he made the decision to come out of redshirt. But, you know, hasn't got the minutes that I would like him to get and I know he wants. But every time he's gone in there he plays hard for us, 4 points, no turnovers, did some nice things. Kam is still trying to figure it out and 1 for 9 is not going to get it, but I think this is good for him to get extra minutes. I thought Amaad was good, gave us good, quality minutes. All the guys than we want in there gave us something. So as you learn a little bit more about your team and a little more confidence if you have foul trouble or whatever comes down the road.

Q. Bruce, when Barry went down he went down in such a way it wasn't like, oh, he's going to be out. It looked like something devastating. How hard is it for players and keeping them composed and the challenge to you, you made all the adjustments without Dean coming and a minute 17 in that's thrown out.

BRUCE WEBER: Obviously, it's hard and I went down there. I was grossed out what I saw on Barry when I saw what happened. I thought he got poked, but you get close to him and it was a little scary. Hopefully he's okay. You can't plan for that, you know, and knowing this game means so much to Barry. His family flew in today. He said, "Coach, I'm glad we won because my family was coming in today." And then they don't even get to see him play. You gotta give our guys credit, you keep battling, make adjustments. We got the ball to Mak. We thought Udoka Azubuike could score inside and we did and a few mental mistakes after we pushed

it to 2. We could never get over the hump.

Again, we got a great group. I'm proud of them. I thought we defended well at times, but once in a while some mistakes and some of that is you got guys in different spots that haven't guarded some of the actions and that and they made mistakes. Obviously, Kansas is good, No. 1 seed. We just played TCU and they're a six seed, 20th RPI, played them to the wire in an overtime game. Now you play Kansas, No. 1 seed.

So it was a great opportunity for our guys to learn and keep growing as a team and hopefully, you know, we got some good things left to get everyone healthy and play at a high level next week.

Q. Bruce, as of right now do you expect to have Barry and Dean for the tournament?

BRUCE WEBER: I would say yes right now. Again, they have an ophthalmologist looked at Barry quickly. They're doing some tests on him. His eye was damaged, hopefully not too severe that he can't come back. Dean, you know, again, we just thought, he wanted to play, we could have played him. But, man, you know, it goes sour and now we don't have him next week and we didn't feel it was worth the chance to do that.

So just hope and pray for the best. That's all we can do with both those guys. I hope we get 'em both back, but we showed without 'em we're still a pretty good ball club.

Q. Kind of keeping in the national tournament vein, Bruce, yesterday you talked about how you felt like the win over TCU basically secured you a spot in the national tournament. What influence do you feel like the team's performance yesterday and then tonight will have in terms of regional seeding if any?

BRUCE WEBER: I hope we're in. We finished fourth in the best conference. We finished in the Final Four of the tournament. You swept quite a few teams, and, again, we gotta see. I hope it is. We came back tonight and I just looked at my phone briefly I had 40, 50 texts, people saying unbelievable effort by your kids and with all the situations you still competed with one of the best teams in the country. I think we had a good showing. We've had, you know, a good league showing, some good wins and I think we have a good team. We've worked hard. I told them after this is what you work for, to get this opportunity and hopefully we get that opportunity and make a go of it next week.

Q. All the road guys Missouri has played with, maximum effort today, next-man-up mentality. Can that be continued when the two main guys come

back, you think?

BRUCE WEBER: I hope it gives those guys a little more confidence. Obviously, we've talked about it. I think I mentioned to you guys a couple times we've put some plays in for Mak because he's gained confidence and he's scoring, even facing up, doing stuff out on the court, you know. I hope Kam can be a little more solid for us. Mike McGuirl, I'm not afraid. He guards. He's got some bounce. Amaad got confidence tonight. Got to be in his hometown, play well. I think it all helps. You get a gut check game, get a foul trouble, something like that. These guys have been through it, a very tough tournament, a very tough league and hopefully it prepared them for what's coming up next week.

Q. You lose by 16, but you mentioned the pride you had and the effort. What was the message to your team as you went into the locker room after this one?

BRUCE WEBER: I'm proud of the effort. They didn't quit. We cut it to 2, made it a game. Very easily could have laid down. It's one thing with Dean and another thing with Barry, but even Coach Korn mentioned it, there are no moral victories. We came here to win. We did compete and that was my big message today. They were hanging their heads. When we said Dean is not going to play after shootaround they were hanging their heads. They had chapel, and even the guy that does our chapel mentioned, man, their spirit is down. I grabbed them. I never talked to them at pregame. I grabbed them and I said we've been through this before. You've stepped up, and they stepped up. Never could have anticipated that you wouldn't have Barry for what did he play, 1 minute, maybe?

You know, again, we came here to win the whole thing so you're disappointed. But you also have to move forward and hopefully be ready for next week.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you very much. Best of luck next week.

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Bill Self

Malik Newman

Devonte' Graham

Kansas Jayhawks

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THE MODERATOR: We are ready to begin with the Kansas Jayhawks, Coach Self, and he brought two student-athletes, Devonte' Graham and Malik Newman. Coach, we will call on you first for your thoughts.

BILL SELF: Well, I thought that it was unfortunate for K-State and certainly with Barry to go down and Dean not being able to play, so we would not want that at any time. With that being said, I thought K-State played hard. I thought they played smarter than us. Certainly their big kid, Mawien, was the best player in the game, without question. We were fortunate enough to make plays to get the W and we will look forward to getting a good night's rest and playing tomorrow.

Q. Devonte', you guys opened the Big 12 with the loss of Udoka and now here you are two wins in and headed to the championship. What's been the key for you guys during this two-game stretch?

DEVONTE' GRAHAM: Just playing confident. We know we don't got the inside presence. We've been talking about driving the ball, trying to get to the lane, trying to play faster, and just trying to execute.

Q. For Devonte' and Malik, just going back to what you said about playing with confidence, in what ways did you see evidence of that in the second half when K-State made a 2-point game, 3-point game and you were able to pull away again?

MALIK NEWMAN: We know that basketball is a game of runs. Those guys, they did a great job of going on a run but we were able to withstand the storm and we just had confidence in one another that we were going to get stops, make rebounds and make plays for each other.

DEVONTE' GRAHAM: Like he said, it's a game of runs, and at this time of year we have played each other three times. They know our plays, we know their plays. So every time we called out a play they knew what was coming. So it was about players making plays, so



when they went on a run we knew we had to step up and make shots.

Q. For either of you, when you knew Dean was not going to play and Barry caught a hand in the eye or something, did you feel like you relaxed a little bit at that point and then maybe K-State was able to get back in the run the second half?

DEVONTE' GRAHAM: I think so, maybe a little bit. I felt like we came out. We was good and when Barry went down. I feel like we took our foot off the gas a little bit knowing that our best two players had got hurt, unfortunately, and that's something we can't do. We need to be better than that and play hard no matter who is in the game.

MALIK NEWMAN: Basically what he said, we can't relax no matter who is on the court and that's something we did. Devonte' was right.

Q. Devonte', this time of year not only tomorrow but next week as well, what can you take from some of the other Kansas point guards, whether it's Frank, playing with him last year or some of the other guys you've talked to about the key to taking your team deep into the tournament?

DEVONTE' GRAHAM: Just staying aggressive, leading, talking, doing all those little things, you know, making sure guys' heads are right and focused. Not thinking about nothing else but playing basketball and winning.

Q. Just talk about 3-point shooting, you had 7 threes in the first half, 11 for the game. Obviously you were getting some spacing and Malik you were getting a lot of open looks throughout the whole game. Spacing, how important was that?

MALIK NEWMAN: I mean, it's very important. Because we had four perimeter guys that can go get a shot, or they can make a shot. It's important that we get those guys the opportunity to drive and things like that and I think that's what opened up the 3-point lane was just driving and being aggressive.

DEVONTE' GRAHAM: Just like he said, we always talk about spacing and driving and driving to pass, mainly. Once you drive, the defense has to react and either help or you're going to get a wide-open layup. We spot up and just be ready to shoot.

THE MODERATOR: Guys, congratulations. We will see you tomorrow night in the championship game. Questions for Coach Self?

Q. Bill, it seemed like they really tried to go at the rim a lot offensively, pretty much the whole game. Do you assume that people are going to challenge you guys until Udoka gets back?

BILL SELF: I think they'll probably challenge us even when he gets back, but certainly there was no resistance at all with Mitch and Silvio guarding Mawien. I hope I'm pronouncing it correctly because he was by far the best player in the game, and he whipped us. We usually don't trap the post. We haven't had to with Udoka. We will trap anybody else on the post with the 5-man, but we usually haven't trapped with the 5-man. So that would be something we hadn't practiced much. We did it the second half to try to get him to thinking and we had a decent possession one time.

But really disappointed in how the perimeter players allowed the easy entry passes, but more so with our big guys. Just got caught dead behind and absolutely gave no resistance, you know, to him, making basically uncontested layups.

Q. Bill, what quality to you like best about your team, and what keeps you up nights?

BILL SELF: I could tell you right now, if I sleep two hours tonight it will be more than what I probably think I should after how we played tonight.

But I do like the fact that the guys are somewhat resilient. Usually when bad things happen they can find some way to have some great possessions or whatever, just like last night we were down 10 to Okie State. Tonight they cut it to two or three. They cut it to two and we made some plays after that. There's a lot of things to like, but certainly when you're that small and, you know, K-State was that small tonight, too. But when you're that small and you have to play scrappier and smarter and tougher, it can be frustrating sometimes because we play to our skill set rather than actually getting after people.

I think that's -- and you can say with Svi and Malik that's okay and maybe Devonte', but Lagerald and Marcus have to be guys that are tenacious and we're just not right now. We need to get better at that. That's what keeps me up.

Q. When this K-State team is at full strength with Dean and Barry, where do they rank with amongst the teams K-State has had with Coach Weber here?

BILL SELF: I would say right at the best. I can't remember if they were his teams or Frank's teams, was

Jacob ever with Bruce? He wasn't? But they've had some really nice teams that were really solid. All his teams are.

But, you know, when we shared the league with them, I can't remember all the personnel, but that was a team that didn't beat themselves at all. This team has those same qualities. I think Dean Wade is terrific. I think he's a pro, and Barry Brown, if he didn't make first team he had to be sixth or seventh in the voting to make first team. So they have two players on their team that are as good as any team that has two players in our league and I like their team and they'll give anybody problems in the NCAA if they were just healthy. Unfortunately they're not and it's unfortunate that we're not. But hopefully we can have some miraculous recoveries in the next four or five days.

Q. What Devonte' said at this point in time you're going to play somebody for the third time tomorrow. The fact that they know your plays and you guys know their plays. In a game like that is it what he said that it's just kinda coming down to players making plays?

BILL SELF: I think it always is. I think the second time you play a team in conference play, I think it's more players than plays. In a conference tournament like this when you get, you know, 30 minutes to prepare, I think sometimes your stuff can work, especially if you haven't played 'em for a while. We haven't played K-State since January 29th. So us going over their stuff and them going over our stuff you can't do that in 30 minutes or an hour max when you do a walk-through and know it well, because you practiced during a season if you play Tuesday and then Saturday, at least Thursday and Friday you're guarding their actions and stuff like that. So I think in the postseason sometimes it can be a little bit of an advantage, but Devonte', if he's the one who answered is right, it's time for players to make plays. When you get in the NCAA tournament, maybe your plays work better, but in conference play this late it's players making plays more than plays.

Q. One of the guys who is doing commentary on another tournament said whoever comes out of the late game is going to care about this a lot more than Kansas because they've won their championship, they've got bigger fish to try. Do you think your kids -- it's not that big of a deal tomorrow?

BILL SELF: No, no! If you play you might as well win! That's how everybody looks at it. I get a kick out of people saying that they'll go through the motions or whatever. Now, I do think teams with edges have advantages over teams that don't have an edge, so we have to create that edge going into tomorrow. Just

because you don't create that edge doesn't mean you care less. It's because you didn't get yourself as mentally ready to play.

I'm excited to see how our guys react to playing tomorrow because we won two games with Udoka and I think it would mean an awful lot to our players to be able to win three without Udoka. But we gotta play a lot better than we did tonight and that's no disrespect to K-State and they were so shorthanded we didn't take advantage of that opportunity like we should have.

Q. Coach, you had it at 13 at halftime and all of the sudden K-State has got it down to 2 or 4 in the second half. What's going through your mind and what are you telling your guys?

BILL SELF: I thought they played better than us, but I also thought a lot of it was self-inflict because I didn't think our energy level was very good. Obviously we couldn't guard the big kid, and offensively we didn't play very smart. So when they've got it down to 2 or 4, and team falls are 7 to 1 that's a coin flip game. But what we did do we got some stops. A big play was the shot clock violation. It may not have seemed like a big play, but that was a big play. And they got it -- whatever it got to, it went from, like, 4 to 11 like that and then we were able to keep them at a distance.

So that's what I was talking about, even though we didn't play well, we played well in the most important possessions to be able to keep 'em at distance.

Q. Bill, you were talking about players making plays this time of year. How does Devonte' compare to other lead guards you've had in the past? How is he different? How is he the same? What kind of chance does he give you to make a deep run in March?

BILL SELF: I think Devonte' gives us a good chance, but he needs Malik and Lagerald and Svi to help him. Devonte' is not like Frank that puts his head down and drives it, although he's getting better at that. Devonte' is a pick your poison kind of guy, if they back off he'll shoot it, he won't try to drive it. But he's not the guy that we can say give him the ball and let him go score. So he's one of the best leaders if not the best leader that we've every had and good guards give you a chance to win this time of year and I love him, I think he's a terrific player and he's had a terrific year. But he's got to play smarter than what he has in the first two games and hopefully we will see the real Devonte' tomorrow night.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you very much.