

March 13, 2015



An Interview With:

HOUSTON

Hartford, Connecticut

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MODERATOR: Gentlemen and ladies, we're joined by Head Coach Kelvin Sampson and junior forward Devonta Pollard from the University of Houston. Coach, would you like to make an opening statement?

COACH: I'm very proud of my team. We got up five. there were some possessions that could have gone either way. There was a loose ball, there's a loose ball that I felt like we had a good shot at. We get the loose ball, we've got clear sailing and got a chance to go up 7, 37-30, I think at the time. But Harrison makes a good play, goes in and gets the basket. All of a sudden, now it's 35-32 instead of 37-30. It goes back and forth, you know. Two teams just slugging it out. I didn't think there was a huge amount of difference, I think the biggest difference was just guard play. Their guards are good. Woodard obviously's an all-conference guy. Harrison's a good guard, too. The little Ray kid does a nice job. And obviously Stiggers, tough kid, he's so much better with letting someone else make the decisions. We put him in a tough position, obviously he's not a point guard and he shows that. We gave ourself a chance to win tonight. Disappointed we lost, but I'm not disappointed in our effort.

MODERATOR: Questions from the floor?

Q. Coach, overall are you proud of your team's performance in the tournament, and do you feel like you guys accomplished enough to build on this for next season?

COACH SAMPSON: Yeah, I think it was a Temple game, we were playing at Temple, I think we were up 5 on Temple early in the second half and then, you know, you can tell what we don't have and what we need to go get in certain situations. But we came home after that game and

I looked at our schedule, I said we've got at Tulane, South Florida at home, at Tulane, I can't remember the order, East Carolina and then the first round of the tournament. I told our guys, we're going to have a chance to win four in a row and then we'll go from there. What was our first game after Temple? Do you remember? What was after Temple, South Florida at home, right? We come home, beat South Florida, go on the road and beat Tulane, come home and really play probably our best game of the year against East Carolina at home, I think we won by 18. Then we come here and beat a good Tulane team. That team won at Cincinnati, they won at Memphis, and shows you the improvement our kids made. We win that game. And today we put ourselves in position to compete for this game. This was a winnable game. So I think so. But more importantly I think our kids believed that. I believe it, but it's far more important that they believe it, and you can tell just by how they responded today after yesterday. You think about Stiggers played 40 minutes, 40 minutes, you know. I think LeRon Barnes played 39 yesterday, these guys are playing a lot of minutes but that's what happens when you only have seven scholarship guys. But proud of them, really, really proud of this team's heart and the way they came together in an adverse situation.

Q. Devonta, you struggled early shooting as a team, I think you missed 10 of your first 13. What got you going late in the first half to get back into the game at halftime?

DEVONTA POLLARD: I think it's just effort. As long as we just out there going through the motions, I don't think our shots are going to fall for us anyway, but once we turn our effort up and start to finish, start rebounding and start getting out in open court and getting easy baskets in, then half-court sit and our shots start falling, I think that was the difference, that was the change that we made.

Q. How did you feel when you got up by 5? Did you think you were kind of in control at that point?

DEVONTA POLLARD: Well, just because of how good Tulsa is, I'm not going to say I felt like we was in control. I just felt like, you know, we had a lead that we needed to keep, and down there in the stretch, you know, they made plays and we had the same plays to make and we just couldn't find a way to make them. So it wasn't that I felt like we was in control. We had the lead obviously but we just couldn't keep it for some reason.

MODERATOR: Thank you, very much.
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