

March 14, 2015



An Interview With:

CONNECTICUT
Hartford, Connecticut
CONNECTICUT - 47

TULSA - 42

MODERATOR: Gentlemen and ladies, we're joined by, from the University of Connecticut, Head Coach Kevin Ollie, senior Ryan Boatright, sophomore Rodney Purvis. With this win, they'll move to the American Championship final, tomorrow at 3:15 on ESPN. Ended the game on a 16-2 run. Coach, do you have an opening statement?

COACH OLLIE: Kind of loss for words, but one word that come to mind is heart. And these guys just played with heart. We called a timeout about 3:40 to go and everybody looked at each other and said we still believe and we've got a will to win and they just dug in. They made big shots, we kept getting steals and that's just a UConn tough victory. I love my guys and they didn't falter, and we could have laid down and said no, and then that sixth man stood up and gave us that jolt of energy and we just kept playing and grinding, and sooner or later we're going to get you, and we got them at the end.

MODERATOR: Thanks, Coach.
Questions from the floor?

Q. This is for all three of you guys. What emotions have you guys felt over the last two nights?

COACH OLLIE: Well, for me, you know, it's a scenario where we lose and we don't get a bid. You know, we feel not the pressure but we feel the opportunity. When I got soldiers like this beside me, we can't lose. We put in the work each and every day, we buy into each other, and this is the outcome. We went through a lot of ups and downs, a lot of pain this year, but it made us stronger, it made us tougher and more resilient and I think these guys are really proving it now. We've got 40 minutes in front of the best fans in America.

I'll take that any day. My feelings is the same. We're going to overprepare so we don't underperform. We missed a lot of shots today, but our defense is what kept us in there, especially at the end. We got kill after kill after kill, and that's what we're about.

Q. Ryan, it seemed like kind of this program is bringing out point guards from Kemba to Shabazz to you that are just fantastic and play with such confidence down the stretch. Is there anything that you've learned playing under Shabazz to be able to go out and put on a performance like that?

RYAN BOATRIGHT: Yeah, I played with the man for three years, so I learned a lot from him with being a great leader and being on the court. The way that used to create separation and read situations to get his shot off at the end of shot clock situations, I just put it together with my had own mind and my own twist to it and I learned a lot from him.

Q. Ryan, this question's for you. When it comes to looking at your legacy here at UConn and the fact that you said back in October this was your team, you look at Shabazz, you look at Kemba. For you, what's Ryan Boatright's legacy, and how does that weigh with each night trying to win this conference tournament?

RYAN BOATRIGHT: Just win, no matter what you go through, no matter what you've got to do, you got to win. It's kill or be killed, simple as that. When you get to the post-season, it's one loss and you're done. So I just trust in my teammates, my teammates trust in us, and we trust in the coaching staff, and we go out there and we fight every day for each other.

Q. Coach, Daniel hadn't made a shot all night and then hit that 3. What does that say about his poise and confidence?

COACH OLLIE: He big-time poise, but I look at the other stats. He got 12 rebounds and most guys that's 0 for 8, they are they not doing nothing else. He still has a nose for the basketball. You look at his stats, 12 rebounds, 5 assists. And that's what Daniel Hamilton is. If you look at versatility, that's what he is. He stepped up with 2:39 on the clock, 0-8, stepped up and hit a big 3, cut it to 3. And then Ryan stepped up and hit a 3. They went down and made one free throw and then Rodney stepped up. All our guys kept believing, and we believe in Daniel. He does so many other things on the court and he keep believing in himself. That young man that has been through a lot the last week, so, you know, we just thank him for, you know, just staying with us with his grandma passing. We love him and we want him to get back on that plane and bury his grandma with a championship. We going to keep fighting.

Q. Rodney, two-part question for you. No. 1, you came out of the under four media timeout down 8. And I believe it was your off balance shot there in the lane that kind of started the run that led to all the 3-pointers. Can you take us through that play? Also, what's it like for you this year to be out on the court for all this post-season excitement and these thrilling victories?

RODNEY PURVIS: Well, of course it's exciting to be out here fighting with my brothers each and every night. This is a great opportunity for us. We've got our home crowd in here. As far as the play that I made, Coach just continued to tell me to stay aggressive, you know, so I went to the basket, I was able to finish. We was able to get stops mainly, that's what we pride ourself on, is our defense, and along with the defense, came the 3s and the things like that. So we continued to play defense. Our offense is going to take care of itself.

Q. Ryan, for most of the game, Daniel struggled and Rodney struggled from the floor, you were kind of doing it yourself again but they stayed with it in the last couple minutes, made the big shots. Is that, in your mind, the difference between this team now and maybe a month ago or two months ago?

RYAN BOATRIGHT: Definitely. These guys will tell you they self, earlier in the year when they was not making shots, they was having a

rough game, they get down on they self. They lose confidence in they self and stuff like that. Throughout the entire game you guys, both of them, I kept telling them we need you, keep your head, man, you going to make a big play, especially Daniel, he was going to make a big play. I knew it because they was keying in on me and Rodney on each side of pick and roll. He stayed with it, he said, boy, I got you, man. He stepped up and made a big 3.

Q. This question is for Ryan. You were shooting 55 percent tonight behind the 3. At what point in the night did you feel that was going to be your area, that was going to be your stroke for you?

RYAN BOATRIGHT: The second half of the season has been -- that's been my area where I have to score. Guys, teams are so scared of me getting in the paint and causing havoc and scoring and creating plays for each other that I knew that's where I was going to get my shots. Earlier in the year, I was shooting it okay, after I seen what they was doing, every day after practice I put up a lot of shots because I knew that's the shot they was going to dare me to take, and I've been working on it all year and knocking them down.

Q. Couple weeks ago in this building, you guys beat SMU by a good amount. What lessons from that game are you going to put into tomorrow?

COACH OLLIE: It's going to be a whole different game. They're a better team, we're a better team. We're going to go down and get back to the hotel. My coaching staff is incredible. They stayed up 4:00 in the morning. We grinding, watching tape, and we going to do the same thing. We'll take a rest on Monday but it's no time to rest now, we're going to go back, we're going to break down SMU, their last couple games and just know it's going to be a fighting, like we always say. They the best team in our league. They won the conference hands down against Tulsa that last game. There's no better way than go through the best, and that's what we're going to have to go through to win a championship. It's going to be a great game, game atmosphere, and I can say I would not want it anywhere else but the XL Center, and thank God we got it here and our crowd is going to stand up together with us and give us the victory that we need.

Q. Ryan, talking what Coach was just talking about. The crowd all night is just begging for a run, every time you get a stop. You're down nine with five left. How big is it that it pushes you guys or inspires you when that crowd is going as it is?

RYAN BOATRIGHT: Man, when you're tired and gasping for air and things ain't going your way, that crowd is the thing that pull you through. The screaming and emotion and the support that they give us all year through our ups and downs, we just want to continue to fight and give them a show and give them something to cheer for.

Q. Kevin, in the three games in this tournament you've held them under 54 in each game. What has worked defensively for you guys?

COACH OLLIE: Just playing hard, playing aggressive. We went back to fundamentals after the Temple loss. That's what we do, it's called Chicago shell. We get in there each and every day. These guys roll their eyes when I call their names out, but that don't bother me, so we give back to that Chicago shell. We do it over and over again, and it shows up in crucial times like this. And Amida has been great, too. Phil has been great for us. It's just not all our perimeter guys, and I know they get a lot of credit, but Amida is backing shots, Phil is moving his feet, and Rakim is coming in and playing a hell of a defensive effort, too, when he gets his minutes. I know everything is going to be written about our guards, and they're great, don't get me wrong, but our bigs are showing up. It don't show in a lot of the stat sheets, but they do a lot of our dirty work for us. We do it as a team. Everybody say Ryan is the leader, which he is the leader, but all these guys when they struggle and they still playing defense, and yeah, Ryan is carrying the load on the offensive end, but these guys are still playing defense, so we all do it as a team. And it's not a one man show, it's a team, it's UConn. This is what we believe in, and our time is now, and we've got 40 more minutes to get it done.

MODERATOR: Thank you, gentlemen.
FastScripts by ASAP Sports.