

# American Athletic Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 13, 2024

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Dickies Arena

## Wichita State Shockers

### Paul Mills

### Colby Rogers

### Ronnie DeGray III

Postgame Press Conference



Wichita State - 88, Rice - 81

THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and get started with an opening statement from Coach and then take questions for the student-athletes.

PAUL MILLS: One, just a salute to Rice. I mean, Travis Eevee and Max Fiedler, you can just see by their numbers. I mean, up until Travis missed those last two shots he was 5-6. The last one was just a heave. And then Max Fiedler with 12 assists, it's just a really good basketball team.

Very proud of our group. The level of energy's probably indicated by the 18 offensive rebounds, and sometimes when you come into this game, you have an idea about whether your guys are excited to play, just through their energy and effort, and I thought it was that case. It wasn't a defensive clinic by us, by any means, but I thought we did two things really well, is the O glass and had contributions from a number of people.

Then, to be able to have 22 assists on 35 buckets versus just the six turnovers is a tribute to just intellectually what our guys were trying to get done.

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions, please.

**Q. Looking ahead to tomorrow, Memphis, obviously 2-0 against you guys this year, but you did have them on the ropes at their place. What kind of comes to mind when you think of that matchup?**

PAUL MILLS: One, they're a really good team. They have got multiple pieces, they're obviously playing really well. I think any time of year, especially when it's March, you're

just excited to play. We're excited to play Memphis.

THE MODERATOR: We're joined now by the student-athletes. Questions?

**Q. The energy at the start maybe a little troubling, you guys get down 13. Was there anything that flipped? What did you see that just really changed the rest of that half?**

PAUL MILLS: Yeah, if you look at it on the plus-minus side, like I thought it flipped when Ronnie came in. If you look at the numbers, Ronnie's a plus-20 and there was a 35-point difference between Dalen and Ronnie. So I thought Ronnie came in, there was physicality, and by no means at all am I saying anything negative about Dalen, but I just thought Ronnie's energy and how he was able to dial in. Ronnie's blessed with a number of physical gifts and I thought he was able to use 'em out there, specifically in some switching opportunities.

Then I'll tell you the other thing, especially late, when X got in the game, I thought our guard-to-guard switches were really good. They were able to get two back doors to open the game and ended up in an and one opportunity. But I thought Colby and X, Harlond, did phenomenal job on the guard-to-guard switches, and then I thought Ronnie's ability to switch and then his physicality was kind of the switch.

So when we had that lineup in, which is pretty much all we played the last five minutes of the game, then if you look at those runs, that was the lineup that was in. But it's a tribute to guard-to-guard switches and then Ronnie's physicality.

**Q. I asked Coach about tomorrow's matchup. Obviously, you guys were up double digits on Memphis at their place. Playing for your season, so you're going to be motivated regardless, but knowing that you might have let that one slip away, is there any extra motivation for this matchup?**

COLBY ROGERS: I wouldn't say extra motivation. I think the most motivation is just that it's March. It's win or go

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home at this point. I don't know how much more motivation you need if that's what's on the line. We're excited to go against anybody they put in front of us, no matter who it is. It's another opportunity to go out there and give it our all and try to get a win.

**Q. Four points in the first five, six minutes, and then you score 20 of the last 23 possessions. 48 points on 23 possessions. Just what stands out to just that incredible run you guys had on offense in the first half?**

PAUL MILLS: One, we were able to make some shots. If you look at it, I thought Kenny established himself there in the paint and was able to get a number of shots around the rim. Bijan was able to get downhill and additionally make some lay-ups, and then you had offensive rebound put-backs right there in high-foul areas.

So even when KP left, because his interior presence really vaulted us, but I thought Quincy came in and got O board opportunities and put-backs, got one from a Bijan assist. So I thought all of it, and then Colby made a shot late, Ronnie was making threes there in the first half, and so I just thought we were taking good shots and we were aggressive.

But I thought what catapulted it was Kenny's job around the rim that gave us -- when you do that, teams have to squeeze it a little bit more and it opened up perimeter shots for these guys to my left.

**Q. Colby, I heard that you broke the school record for most 3-pointers in a season earlier in the first half. Kind of like, what does that mean to you? Did that help you continue this game? I know it got a little bit tough there in the second half, but you really pulled through in the second half, and you had like, what, two 3-pointers back-to-back? So what was that like?**

COLBY ROGERS: I didn't know I broke the school record until you just told me.

RONNIE DeGRAY III: That's awesome. Congrats, bro.

PAUL MILLS: Congrats.

COLBY ROGERS: Yeah, I mean, it feels good to be in the record books for something. It's a tribute to all the people that helped me along the way and all the hard work I put in and the coaches that helped me, my parents. It's a tribute to them. So just being able to do it at Wichita State, it's a blessing, especially sitting out last year and then having to wait and then coming in this year having a pretty good year, and the team around me that has confidence in me

and wants me to keep shooting. So it feels good. I didn't know until just now, but yeah, it feels good.

**Q. Colby, take me through that last 3 that you made, kind of the dagger. It looked like just that exit screen play that you guys run, tell me about how you prepare yourself to take that shot and what you're looking for coming off that screen.**

COLBY ROGERS: I work on those type of shots all the time, and then with 5 on 0, it's just being locked in, being dialed in, knowing that most teams are probably fouling me on that, but if they don't, to be ready to shoot. Nate gave me a half a second -- I forget, was it you passing?

RONNIE DeGRAY III: I screened. You're welcome.

COLBY ROGERS: Great screen by Ronnie. I forgot who passed it.

PAUL MILLS: X.

COLBY ROGERS: X gave me a good pass and just being ready to shoot, have confidence in the shot, shooting it with confidence, and just trying to put my team in the best position to win. Fortunately, it went in for us and gave us a kind of a good lead going into the last possession of the game.

But, yeah, just coming off ready to shoot and all the other four guys doing their job as well making sure the defense guards it a certain way that allows me to get open.

PAUL MILLS: I'll add something to Colby's comment. We changed that play in the middle of it. Again, that's a tribute to these guys, to be able to execute that on the fly.

**Q. What was the change?**

PAUL MILLS: We called a different play and then with about 16 seconds to go, we called a different one. That's pretty impressive. I've been around these guys enough to -- Colby values IQ. He'll tell you that's what he wants one day when he's coaching, to have players with high IQ. But for us to execute that, specifically Colby, to make the reads, to make the screen, to make the pass in the middle of the play in that environment speaks volumes.

**Q. You touched on Ronnie's impact on this game, probably goes beyond the box score, even, put up great stats, but tell me about, what are the little things that he does that just swing games and really impact winning?**

PAUL MILLS: Yeah, I would tell you that one of the things

that -- Ronnie's very astute. He kind of knows personnel really well. He knows when to get the ball out of somebody's hands and make somebody else make a play. We didn't know how naturally gifted he was. He just had an inclination to do it. So we had to scheme something into our process in order to make sure we could take advantage of it.

But those are things probably that don't ever show up. At the end of the day, that was a screen assist that he gave Colby on that exit screen play. He's going to do all of those things. We put him in a shake action late that I don't know we've ever ran before. Never with him. We had him on a go in order to go get a paint touch finished. He was able to make plays around the paint and then I thought he shot the ball with confidence. When it wasn't falling, he was doing different things. There's a lot that shows up, but intellectually, he was really -- he's really good at knowing what his assignment is and fulfilling it.

**Q. The record for Colby, I think he has, man, like 23 the last four games. Tell me about how impactful he's been and just to have that kind of record, just kind of speak more on just the impact he's had this year for you guys?**

PAUL MILLS: Yeah, I tell you, I expected Colby to make seven threes a game, so only making five and a half the last, he's kind of underselling his ability. Again, I think that the foot work that's required in order to generate shots, I have mentioned to these guys, I've been blessed to be around a lot of really good players, and what you realize is the most faithful win. The guys that just show up every day, and to Colby's credit, Colby's in the gym, and that's how this stuff works. The people that put in the time usually showcases itself. So the fact that he was able to, given the prestigious, rich history at Wichita State, to be the all-time in a season, that's, I'm happy for Colby, because it's a testament to his work.

**Q. Ronnie, tell me about your mindset. Season on the line, looked like you came out with an aggressive mentality. Just what was it like playing today, and did it feel like something a little extra with the season on the line?**

RONNIE DeGRAY III: No, I feel like, you know, each and every day just to go out there and compete. I think today I, Coach Mills told me last game I wasn't as aggressive as I could have been, so I took that to heart, just to be aggressive and take what the defense gives me. I thought today, just shooting the ball, just shot a lot with confidence. Even when they closed out hard, just play off two and make plays for my guys or even for myself. At the end of the day, just going out there and competing. I'm not ready

to go home yet.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, coach.

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