

# American Athletic Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 14, 2024

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Dickies Arena

## Tulane Green Wave Ron Hunter Sion James

### Postgame Press Conference

North Texas - 81, Tulane - 71

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

RON HUNTER: Yeah, we thought we played hard and I thought we had a great effort. We just turned the ball over way too much. It's one of the most we ever, this year, to be honest with you, just didn't make the winning plays to take care of the ball, but I thought our effort was there. We battled a really good basketball team and just came up a little bit short.

But proud of our guys and we'll get better. It's just a tough year for us in a lot of different ways, but we'll definitely get better.

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll start with questions from in here.

**Q. You guys made a really good run at 'em there in the second half and got it pretty close, got it down to two, four. Did North Texas just have an answer every time you guys got tight there?**

RON HUNTER: Yeah, I think it's more we kept turning the ball over in critical spots, and then we got it to a one-possession game, and I think they hit three threes with the clock running down at zero that were kind of desperation shots. I think all three of 'em kind of broke our back a little bit.

Again, one of the things we've been fairly decent with is taking care of the ball and the last couple weeks it's just been -- it's kind of been an issue for us. It kind of caught



up to us today because, again, most of their points, even in the first half, were all from our turnovers. You just, especially you have low-possession games when you play North Texas and you just have to value the ball.

**Q. It seemed like CJ was a particular threat tonight for North Texas. What did you see out of him that ya'll couldn't --**

RON HUNTER: I thought he played a really good basketball game. I did. I thought he made some -- not even just his timely shots, but I thought his physicality was really good. He did a good job of guarding Kevin Cross for a little bit. I thought he was a difference in the game, to be honest with you. The young man played a very good game.

**Q. Sion, you scored a career high. You did everything you could in this game. Where do you feel like you guys came up short, in your view?**

SION JAMES: Like Coach Hunter said, turning the ball over, make it really hard against a team like North Texas, who -- there's less possessions in a game against them. When we give up 14 possessions where we don't even get a shot at the rim, that hurts. They just made the timely plays and we didn't. I can think of a few 50/50 balls that they got and would make a three out of it with two, three seconds on the clock. Like Coach said, it's hard to beat a team like this when you don't make those plays.

**Q. This had some similarities to other games in that were you in there the whole second half but couldn't make the one crucial play to kind of get over the hump. The turnovers were a little different, but did you kind of feel like you were just one play away from getting back and getting right there and just couldn't do it?**

RON HUNTER: Yeah, I thought -- you know, it was weird. We were going to start Tre Williams. The last three days our practices were incredible and he gets hurts in warmups, he twists his ankle, and we had a package that we felt really good about with Tre, and taking Tre out, it really just messed our rotation up. We had to play -- Asher did a great job.

But we were shorthanded on some of the things and we started the game off well, but I couldn't get to the bench. When we got into the bench, we just -- again, they went on a run and we couldn't kind of get back. We never got it back to the way we started the game once we did that.

But Tre's absence was big for us today, especially at the start because we had a package that we felt really good about. Although we had a great start, it just really cut into our depth in this game.

**Q. What happened to Tre? How did he hurt himself in the warmups?**

RON HUNTER: Typical Tulane year. We were doing a defensive slide and he just rolled his ankle and it just blew up. That's kind of the year we had. Anything that can go wrong kind of went wrong for us in every type of way. We didn't even practice hard this week so we didn't get injured and he gets injured in warmup. So, that's a fitting way for us to end the year. Unbelievable.

**Q. It was a long season for you in every kind of way, you started off in China, do you feel like that affected the team down the stretch at all?**

RON HUNTER: Yeah, you know, I'm taking a couple days. I love coaching these guys, and this was a more aberration. We're going to be really good, man. I just, I feel bad for the seniors, but we got some good young players, we got some really good players coming in. So what I need is to take a couple days, work on my golf swing, a couple things of tequila before I go to bed, life's going to be good.

**Q. You have a decision to make down the road, but just where do you think things went wrong for the team this year?**

SION JAMES: It's tough to say. Feel like we had all the pieces we needed. I felt like we did a lot of things right, but at the end of the day we weren't able to finish games at the end, which really hurt us down the stretch. We had stretches of great offense, great defense, but we also had stretches of bad offense, bad defense. It seemed like in every game, especially during that losing streak we had and another game like tonight, where we just didn't make the timely plays. More than anything, that's all it is.

THE MODERATOR: All right, thank you, Coach.

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