

American Athletic Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 14, 2024

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Dickies Arena

Temple Owls

Adam Fisher

Hysier Miller

Steve Settle III

Postgame Press Conference

Temple - 75, SMU - 60

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

ADAM FISHER: Really proud of these guys. I think our connectivity and our togetherness has really shown. Our defense, we really picked it up the last couple games with our activity and our rebounding. So really happy for these guys. I thought everybody played a part in it and we needed everybody. Certain nights certain guys will step up and that's what our team is about, being there together, being together throughout it, and doing it for a full 40.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

Q. Yesterday you said you thought tonight was going to be your best night. How much did you believe that when you said that?

HYSIER MILLER: I just want to give credit to my teammates. They had played a heck of a game tonight and they allowed me to make some plays. Coach allowed me to make some plays. So I'm happy that I was able to bounce back, but it was a full team effort. It wasn't just about me, but I was happy that I was able to make some plays tonight.

Q. Steve, did you sense SMU feeling game pressure forcing things as it progressed in the second half?

STEVE SETTLE III: Yeah, the coaches had a great game plan. We just tried to execute that as best we could. We got some of the best coaches, so we just trusted them and



did the best we could.

Q. Y'all fell into a double-digit hole kind of like the first time you played 'em, but you climbed out of it. What was the difference tonight that you were able to not only climb out of it, but build a big lead and ultimately win?

HYSIER MILLER: Our togetherness. I feel like that's been the growing theme of our team since December. We got a lot of guys that step up to that leadership position and kind of hold us together and we just didn't blink. Last game we was down 0-15, so --

What was that coach you said we did a little bit better?

ADAM FISHER: I think we were down 15-0 there and I think it was, like, 15-7, so big improvement.

Q. When you say togetherness, is there anything in particular that you can point to?

STEVE SETTLE III: We've just been emphasizing tight huddles and just playing for each other. This is March and knowing what we got to do we just got to stick really together. Everything has got to be tighter, the huddle's got to be tighter, we got to communicate louder and just have each other's back out there.

Q. It seemed like you were sort of on the verge of the breakout that happened in the second half and then eventually it did. Can you tell us a little bit about what changed in the locker room, if anything, and how did it play out in the second half?

ADAM FISHER: I think the locker room stuff didn't change. I think we were really strong with the basketball. I think you saw the trust the players have in each other. I think maybe the first game we took the air out of the ball a little bit and versus the 1-3-1 and did some stuff, so today I think we just said, hey, we're going to empty the tank, we're going full gas here, and these guys attacked, attacked, and made big-time plays, so really great credit to our players.

Q. Yesterday you guys had one of your best halves in

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the first half against UTSA and today you guys really put it all together in one of your most complete games of the season. What kind of is the difference from yesterday to today to playing as well as you did?

ADAM FISHER: Our main message since we've gotten here is to get better every day. That's always been our goal. I think we got better. We had to use film and even rest. You need that during these tournaments. So I think we just keep sticking together and I know you keep hearing that word a lot, but it is. This group is together. There's a lot of things we did in the summer to bring us closer together, get to know your teammates, get to know your coaches. I think that's all we're trying to do, is we want to get better. We got to get better tomorrow morning when we watch film, we got to get better when we watch film in the afternoon, and then get better tomorrow night.

Q. How important was tonight's game for you just having as much success as you did on both ends of the floor?

STEVE SETTLE III: It was big for me. I don't think I played as well as I could yesterday. I don't think my energy was good. So to flush that and bounce back like I did today, I know I'm a big part of this team, I'm a big leader on this team, so I got to bring it. It starts with me, and I just tried to do that tonight.

Q. I noticed on the alley-oop to Jahliil there in the second half, he had a big smile on his face. He just looked like he was having fun. So I know this attempt to win five games in five days may be stressful, but how much is you guys just putting that aside and focusing on having fun?

HYSIER MILLER: That's the name of the game. If we're having fun out there, we'll be able to communicate, we'll be able to find guys, we'll be able to just make the right plays. So kind of thinking about the five games in five days, that's not really our mission. Our mission is to make it to tomorrow. So luckily we got through it tonight, so we got Charlotte tomorrow, so that's our next focus. If we play on Saturday, if we play Saturday, then so be it.

Q. You've got this roster with 10 different body types and very different games and it's different combinations. How do the different combinations of all the skill sets work?

ADAM FISHER: I think it's a great testament to our coaches and our strength and conditioning program, our athletic training program. It's getting us ready to be able to play whoever we need to. Each matchup's different. Everybody presents different things. You saw a UTSA

team, right, that can score 90 at any point. This team we played tonight, SMU, great respect. Coach Lanier is one of the best in this business. They're defensive-minded and they lock in.

So we adjust to what we need to do, but everybody's ready to go and everybody that comes in really contributed. That's why I look at some of the stat sheets. Like, I thought Quante Berry's minutes were huge tonight. He came in the game for a little under eight minutes and he was great. That's what you need. That's what a team's about. If we had 12 guys that all did the same thing, it doesn't work together. So when we put the roster together, we want it to fit like a puzzle, and we're starting to see that come together here.

Q. When Harris went out, what was that impact and then when he came back in, did you see that was he not quite moving?

HYSIER MILLER: Just huge credit to Harris. I got to spend some time with him. It's a long story, but he's a good player and his team, they needed him, I feel like. I was sad to see him get hurt. You never want to see a player go down, especially when you got an impact like that on your team.

When he came back in the second half, I kind of wanted to attack him, kind of got a quick drive on him, kind of -- you could tell that he was kind of thinking about it, but it's March, we're all going through stuff. I mean, I don't think anybody would want to spare me or care if I'm hurt, so I just hope he continues to get better and his injury's not serious.

Q. When you get in the second half and you see Jahliil hit a three at the buzzer and then you see Hofman taking baseline 20 feet for a reverse layup, do you feel like this might be -- it could be our night?

STEVE SETTLE III: Yeah, we just practice, we show up every day, we get our exercise in. Yeah, that was pretty cool to see Sam take that. That was new. But, you know, you got to score.

Q. Your team this season endured a 10-game losing streak to bounce back to a place where you are finding your most success later on. What can you say about navigating through that and just what it is about the resolve of this team to be playing better basketball at the most opportune time in the season?

ADAM FISHER: Again, thanks for the reminder every night about the 10-game losing streak. Appreciate that.



I thought we were playing good basketball in spurts of it. I really did. I thought there was a lot of games where we were getting better and I think winning's a skill. You have to learn to win and we were really close. I think it was six or seven of those 10 and then we were able to get over the hump. Again, I know it sounds coach talk and cliché, but we want to just keep getting better. That's always been our goal. We don't focus on the score. We focus on doing the right things, playing Temple basketball for 40 minutes or however long it takes, and that's our goal, and I thought even some of those games that didn't go our way, we were getting better as a team.

Everybody wants to play their best in March and that's been our goal since we started the first day of practice. Our thing -- we had a quote the first day at practice, was begin with the end in mind. And you want to continue to get better and do your best and you're seeing us come together.

Q. For this season, going off of that, just the most rewarding part of the season of this campaign so far for you as the head coach of the team?

ADAM FISHER: It's these guys, being around them, being around them during wins, losses, seeing these guys grow as a team together. We all have jobs because of these young men and it's just great to be around them. Our group is entertaining. Some of them think they're funnier than they are, but it's great to be with them and I think during that tough stretch our shoot-arounds, our practices, were the same. We had the same approach. The same we did today, same we did during that streak, and I think that's really a credit to our players.

Q. What's it been like to be on this run with each other and to see these moments of some of those close games that didn't end in your favor and now those games are turning in your favor and you are playing a better brand of basketball right now? Just what you could say about sticking with it and, once again, that resolve and seeing the team come through and have so much success at a time where the world is watching.

STEVE SETTLE III: It's a good feeling to see your work come into fruition, but like coach said, we showed up every day with the same mindset, so to see it pay off is great for us.

Q. Someone talked about the shooting that you guys have had. Early in the season you guys going through a shooting slump, you said you're trying to instill the confidence in your guys to take the shots. Since your Memphis game, you shot 40 percent from the field, you

shot 50 percent tonight. What are you seeing from your guys? How have you been able to instill that confidence throughout the year, especially throughout this stretch?

ADAM FISHER: It's a credit to them. They don't just show up for practice. All these guys put in extra work, they all have great routines, they all do extra. So I think when you see that and you have a passion to want to be in the gym and want to get better, as coaches, we're going to believe in 'em. No matter what they shoot, hey, keep shooting, keep shooting. I think you're seeing our guys believe in each other. Like, they're excited for one another. When somebody makes a shot, like, they're happy, the bench is happy, and I think it's the work they put in. That's what they know. You only know what's inside. Like, these guys know I see 'em in the gym, I see 'em in the gym, so I think that's what excites them and that's what gives them the trust, is I see the work they're putting in and now it continues to be successful.

Q. The past couple days up here I've noticed you take questions about that losing streak with a sense of humor. You have a sense of humor with the guys up here. How important is that to your team's identity and how much of that is kind of fueling that confidence that you talk about and fueling now the winning?

ADAM FISHER: I think -- look, my wife doesn't think I have a sense of humor, so I'm glad you said that.

I think it's -- you got to be loose and locked in. You can't play tight. You can't change your approach. Like, I know who I am. I have to coach the only way I know how. I love these guys. I'm hugging 'em. That's just who I am. I wear my emotions on my sleeve a lot. And you got to take that same approach. I think these guys will probably tell you, when I yell, they perk up a little bit because it doesn't happen all the time. So I think you have to be who you are. I think our team has their personalities and it's a great mesh.

Q. For the players, do you think Coach is funny?

HYSIER MILLER: I think Coach is funny. He's been a cray funny guy since I met him, so...

STEVE SETTLE III: Yeah, he's funny.

HYSIER MILLER: Even in like tough times, he'll try to bring a joke out to kind of brighten up the room, so he's got some good jokes.

Q. Any favorites?



HYSIER MILLER: My memory is --

ADAM FISHER: Next question (laughing).

Q. Wonder now, going to the third night in a row, now playing, anything you can do special energy what now you're playing against a team that's going to be fresh.

ADAM FISHER: I think there's two ways to look at it, I've been a part of teams when I was assistant that had the double bye, you don't have a chance to compete and play and have that energy. So there's two ways. I like playing. I'm happy with where we're at, I think we have to keep our momentum going, but they are going to be fresh and Charlotte's a great team. They had a great season. Ton of skilled guys. We know it's going to be a big challenge I think we just have to keep that same approach and our only focus we're locked in on one day at a time we have it on the board we don't have the full bracket we only have part of the bracket and each day we erase the team put the next team up and that's our locked in focus.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

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