

American Athletic Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 15, 2024

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Dickies Arena

Charlotte 49ers

Aaron Fearne

Lu'Cye Patterson

Dishon Jackson

Postgame Press Conference



now, you know they played Sunday, they have had to go game, game, game, like, they're on a roll. They have won seven of their last nine games. They believe. They believe right now. And credit to them, credit to their coaching staff and their players.

When we played them at the back end of the season, I mean, they played us really hard when we played them at their place. They played really tough and they have continued to do that. When they were having the season that they were having, it's definitely a challenge mentally to stay locked in and keep believing and they should be really proud of themselves to be able to continue to do that and put themselves in the position that they have put themselves into. It's awesome to see.

So, yeah, it makes it difficult to sit there all week and we just were a little off today. We looked a little tired, just didn't quite have those game legs, for whatever reason, because, you know, we played pretty well against East Carolina up there, played us last game, and just couldn't keep it rolling today.

Q. You mentioned the matchup with Temple earlier in the season. That was before the run started, winning seven of their last nine games. I was curious if you noticed anything different from today's Temple team compared to when you beat them earlier?

AARON FEARNE: Probably not. I mean, they still play hard. When you get to playoff basketball, the physicality goes way up and we definitely felt that today. We talked about it. We knew it was going to be that. You have to be able to go deal with it and execute the ball pressure, making leads, posting up, working off ball screens. Like, it's all really, really physical and you have to be able to deal with it.

But, no, I don't know if I see anything drastically different to the way they're playing. I think they were playing hard and as you guys know, a lot of the games in this league have been so close the whole year, you just need a little bit of luck to go your way and get a little bit of momentum. We had our patch during the year when we won eight in a row and won a lot of close ones, and they're having their little

Temple - 58, Charlotte - 54

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

AARON FEARNE: Yeah, obviously disappointed that we, obviously, couldn't play better tonight, is really the disappointing thing. We didn't shoot the ball great and didn't think we did a very good job of keeping them off the glass in that first half and taking care of the ball. There was some scheme things that we wanted to take care of that we didn't quite do well enough. I mean, they shot, what, 19 percent in the first half.

We defended pretty well, but turned the ball over and gave them some second-chance points, so I think we could have probably put ourselves in a better position than what we were at halftime.

In the second half, they were able to get on the rim and get downhill and they made some pretty tough shots. But ultimately, at the end of the day, we just didn't shoot the ball well enough.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

Q. This was the first game back in almost a week. How do you think that that break influenced the result of tonight's game?

AARON FEARNE: Yeah, I wouldn't say that our preparation during the week was great, just from a team perspective. So that probably hurt a little bit. I also think, too, when you get some momentum like Temple's got right

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patch now.

Q. For any of you, when you're looking at that week off prepping for this, not knowing your opponent, how difficult is it to prepare for this game with potential three different teams you have to face?

DISHON JACKSON: I think a lot goes into that, but I just, I mean, I think we just didn't come at this the right way. I don't want to say we underestimated our opponent, but I feel a lot of times when we play teams twice, like, we think it's going to be the same thing, but in reality they, their fight is different. So Temple just came out today and they were, they had a different fight in them today.

Q. Was there anything specific you saw defensively from Temple in the second half that really slowed down the Charlotte offense?

AARON FEARNE: No, the physicality was the same. They used their bigger lineups, their smaller lineups, we did the same. They were able just to get down hill and get to the rim and we just didn't shoot the ball well enough. You got to be able to go make some shots and we weren't able to do that today but their physicality in the first half, second half was the same.

Q. I want to ask, if the NIT were to extend an invite is that something that you guys would accept?

AARON FEARNE: I mean, yeah, I think any time you get an opportunity to play post-season play, I would definitely love to be part of that. Another opportunity for the guys to play and grow, and as I said to them in the locker room after the game, they have achieved some unbelievable things this year. First year in this league, just the enthusiasm and passion that we've been able to bring back to our program at home has been inspiring and there's some exciting times ahead. But just like this program experienced last year, we played in the CBI and it was an awesome experience. I mean, playing post-season play, playoff basketball it generally is very physical and competitive and you learn to perform under that pressure to keep moving on, because you know if you don't, then you're done. The world that I come from, in the pro game, obviously you have playoff series, so it's a little different, but it's still that same intensity, physicality and desperation. So if we get an opportunity to play, I would obviously love to be part of that.

Q. When you guys look at the team this year, obviously had a lot of highs and lows going through non-conference through the streak in conference play, what do you think, if there was one thing this team could have added to put you guys over that hump what

would it be, what was missing from the recipe?

LU'CYE PATTERSON: I don't really think anything. We stuck together since the summertime, since we lost our head coach this season. I mean, I don't think there was anything missing. I think we proved that we could beat any team in this league this year, it was just a good day for Temple today and hat's off to them. I don't think anything was missing from our team. Sometimes you just fall on the short end of it, of the game.

Q. For the players, obviously to kind of add on to the previous question, you both have some eligibility left and I mean just assuming the NIT doesn't extend a bid, how does this, the success of this season really fire you up for next year?

LU'CYE PATTERSON: I mean, any post-season tournament, NIT, NCAA Tournament, I mean, I'm down to play, especially for the senior guys with like Rob and Jackson, I wouldn't want this to be the last time they go out like this wearing a Niners jersey. So whatever presents, the NIT or anything, that's good momentum coming into next season, so I'm down to play if that opportunity presents us.

Q. Just looking through the American Athletic Conference this season and just what you can say about the level of competition, not just here for this game tonight but in general what this competition has presented and what this conference, in your opinion, represents.

AARON FEARNE: Well, obviously we're very grateful to be part of this league for year one. Obviously the exposure to play and ESPN, to represent our program, our university, country-wide as this league is is obviously fantastic for all involved. We learned a lot. We grew a lot. We know we need to be better. So obviously we'll get to the debrief part of this and keep working through that. Players can get better, we can get better as coaches, the program can get better, keep growing. But, yeah, it was excellent. The league was so competitive, so many close games, obviously it kind of came, the regular season came down to that kind of last couple of weekends and we were kind of playing playoff basketball to position ourselves for this moment here. That was obviously really fun to be part of that. Yeah, it's been an excellent opportunity to be part of the league and look forward to being part of it moving forward.

Q. I know that Charlotte won the CBI last season and this year first season leading the program, but where is this program heading, in your opinion, as far as the trajectory of the 49ers?



AARON FEARNE: Well, I mean, if I go back to year one, so six years ago, where the program was and where it is today, it's gone 180, there's no doubt about that. It's been slow growth year after year. This year was a build on from the previous five years of what we've been able to implement and grow and develop and acquiring better talent year after year and performing at a better level and like I said earlier, just the enthusiasm and passion in the community and support for these guys has been, it's been awesome. It's been awesome to play at home and get on the road and play in this league. So, look, I think it's very bright, I'm extremely excited about the future ahead, and we'll keep growing this thing.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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