

# American Athletic Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 13, 2025

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Dickies Arena

## Temple Owls

## Adam Fisher

## Steve Settle III

## Zion Stanford

### Postgame Press Conference



Tulsa - 75, Temple - 71

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: Yeah, first off, thanks to the league. This is a first-class event. Excited with Tim's leadership here.

Disappointed, obviously, that the season comes to an end, especially the way it did. Great credit to Tulsa. They made more plays than we did and dominated the second half. It's hard to win when you shoot 24 percent 0-10 from three and then allow someone to shoot 56 percent.

But I'm really proud of our team. We had injuries throughout this season. Guys had to step up. We even see it here today. So really proud of our seniors, grateful for them. Thank you to Shane, Matteo, Steve, you know, those guys, and Jamal Mashburn, Jr. They have done a lot for this program. Some have been in it a short time, some longer.

The only other thing I would say is -- this is not to take away from anybody that was on the First Team, but the fact that Jamal Mashburn, Jr. is not First Team in this conference with 10 guys selected is absolutely crazy. He was averaging 24 points a game in the league play, he played in 23 games if, I'm not mistaken, and the fact that he's not First Team, I don't know what First Team is anymore. I don't. And maybe I got no e-mail about whether it's anything to do with the injury, how many games you missed, but again, he's a First Teamer, he's a clear First Teamer, whether it's five guys or ten guys.

Questions.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Coach, thank you. Questions, please.

**Q. Zion and Steve, besides the shots not falling, what was the difference in the second half or was that mostly it?**

STEVE SETTLE III: Yeah, we just got to make shots, we missed shots and they made them and that was the difference in the game.

**Q. Zion, did they change anything defensively against you in particular? Because you were getting to the rim and finishing a lot in the first half.**

ZION STANFORD: Yeah, I guess they keyed in, tried to deny me full court. So, yeah that was, like, one of their main adjustments for the second half.

**Q. Coach and Zion, you do mention Jamal's injury. How much does learning how to battle through that and persevere kind of future-proof you guys a little bit.**

ADAM FISHER: Yeah, I think we needed guys to step up and I think we saw Zion's growth, right? First off, from last year to this year he made a huge jump. He did an incredible job. It's a credit to him this off-season. He really worked on his game. I think for him coming back he knows our terminology, knows our system, so he can really focus on his game. He just got better and better with every game. I think you could see it. His decisionmaking with the ball in his hands. I mean, we had him guard a 5 this year. We had him play the point. He's played the 4. He's played the 3. We've thrown so many things at him. I'm really proud of Z. I think Z is a star in the making and he was awesome throughout this year as it went on.

**Q. Zion, what did you learn from that experience of having to step up this year?**

ZION STANFORD: Just staying focused, being ready when my number is called because, like, in basketball, in

any sport, like any competitive sport, one man can go down, so that doesn't mean the season is over or it's the end of the world. So once that happens, just me keeping the next-man-up mentality and just staying focused and trusting my teammates, trusting in my coaches.

**Q. Steve, what did you see on offense in that first half? It kind of felt like everything was coming to you with ease. What was Tulsa doing in the offense and how did you take what the defense was giving you?**

STEVE SETTLE III: Just tried to be aggressive. I feel like when I'm aggressive for this team, good things happen, so just trying to do what I could to put us in a chance to win the game.

**Q. You talked about Mash not playing, Quante didn't play as well, two of your starting guards. What kind of went into the decision? When did you realize that you weren't going to have both of them in tonight's game?**

ADAM FISHER: J's been working -- he did a shooting workout yesterday. He was kind of going -- it looked like good pace to him. So again, I know people are tired of hearing it, but it was day-to-day seeing how he would respond to that.

Quante I did not know about until shoot-around today.

**Q. What kind of adjustments did you see Tulsa making in that second half, especially on the defensive end?**

ADAM FISHER: I think we allowed missing shots in the second half to dictate our defense, and that's where I was disappointed because you're not going to make shots all game. But again, once Mo went out, now you're level left with very limited -- with having one guard sub out there.

So again, great credit to Tulsa, great coach in Coach Konkol. They made plays when they he needed to to win and we didn't make enough.

**Q. Adam, did Quante dislocate a finger? Did he hurt it again this morning or yesterday?**

ADAM FISHER: Not to my knowledge. He told us he couldn't play today.

**Q. Late in the game, I guess, I don't know, you didn't have a ton of options, but you had Shane out there with four fouls trying to check Odom sometimes. You got to deal with what you got to deal with defensively there?**

ADAM FISHER: I think it's been our season, right? You

start the season with 16 guys, three walk-ons, 13 scholarship guys, and as the season kept going on, we had to reinvent ourselves with some injuries, and then even today being more limited. And I thought Shane really guarded. He's a senior. He's been a great part of our program. He's been here three years. Odom's a really good player, man. Like, he's tough. He can get in the paint, he's top in assists. Like, he's a really good player and he got to his spots tonight.

**Q. As you were watching the two sort of pick-and-pop threes that Garcia hit, should it have been defended a little differently?**

ADAM FISHER: Yeah, we had to defend it a little bit better. We got to communicate a little bit more on the defensive end.

**Q. As the fouls kind of started to pile up in the second half, did that kind of change how y'all defended at all and maybe kind of let them start to grow that lead for the first time all game?**

ADAM FISHER: You know, I think we played hard and physical. Look, it's something we've done all season long. We missed 11 free throws. I think we're top 5 in the country in getting to the foul line. So we did what we wanted. We just had to make the ones when we got there, and you're not going to make all 35, but you hope to make a little bit better percentage.

Then defensively for us, again, we had to manage some fouls, but again, great credit to them. They were the tougher team in that second half.

**Q. Coming in your second year, you came in with Steve. I remember you mentioned he's the guy that you recruited. Even before that you came, you knew him prior to coming to Temple. How tough is it going to say goodbye to a guy like him? He's been consistent in the lineup, somebody you've always been able to rely on.**

ADAM FISHER: I actually got to know him once I got the job. He's one of my favorite people I've been around. The number one thing I remember about Steve, and I don't know if he'll recall this or not, the first phone call I had with him when we tried to recruit him, I felt like I had known him for years, and I thought him and I hit it off well. It was good conversation, not just basketball, but life. And look, if we can go find 13 Steve Settles to have on your team, that's what you want. He comes from an amazing family, great support system, handles his business off the court, comes into work every single day, does it the right way.

When you're trying to build a program, that's the kind of guy you want. That's the leadership I want Zion Sanford to see. This is what a fifth- or sixth-year guy does so that Zion does that when he's back here. But he's been phenomenal. He's had a great, great season, a great two years, and he's made a great impact on Temple.

**Q. You talked about a little bit ago how you start with 16 guys, and 13 of them scholarship. Now today, you go down to nine, even eight after Big Mo gets hurt. Obviously not the result you want. Can you talk about the toughness and resilience your team showed you throughout the year even through the result today?**

ADAM FISHER: Yeah, look, when we put the team together, and I say this all the time, we did it like a puzzle. And we thought we had all the right pieces. But if there's one thing this year taught me is you have to learn to adjust the puzzle. So once -- I could be wrong on this -- I think we had, I don't believe we had one game this season where all 13 scholarship players were available. So now you have the puzzle pieces. And now you lose a couple guys early in the year. How do you figure that out. So we started 4-4. Now you got to re-invent. Now we figure it out. Now we go on a run. Now we're getting better. Now we're 14-8. Now the second leading scorer at the time in the country gets hurt. Now you have to refigure out how you get better. And through those games you have some other guys. So guys got to step up and make plays. I tell these guys all the time, nobody feels bad for you, right? It's part of the game and I think we got to see a lot of growth from a lot of guys, especially our younger guys. How many teams in this league are starting two freshmen? We started three freshmen two games ago versus South Florida. Like, we need our guys to keep getting better, and I think when you stay in our program you get better. Look at Zion's numbers from last year to this year. That's what I expect to see from all of the players, them get better as we go through it.

**Q. You talk about building that puzzle, and now you're going to be entering the off-season rebuilding that puzzle once again. You're losing a handful of key contributors like Steve, like Jamal Mashburn. How do you kind of approach this off-season now, especially with revenue sharing coming into play, and how are you looking to build that puzzle once again?**

ADAM FISHER: Yeah, things have changed. And we know, we've been working on the revenue share, the NIL. Like, we need to be competitive. We need to be competitive in our league in that number. Since I've been here NIL has not been as competitive as where we want it to be, but I think we're going in the right direction. Then we got to assess -- the first thing you got to do is meet with the

guys and figure out who is coming back. And then you got to recruit those guys to come back. And then you got to figure out what pieces do you need. And that's, you put this thing together. I joked, it's my second year in the league, and you get to know teams, but there's so many new players in this league this off-season, so we'll go back to the drawing board, we'll piece it together, it starts with getting our returners back, retaining guys, and then we figure out what we need from there.

**Q. Zion, do you feel a sense now like I, you know, I'm going to step up, and not me, you, take charge of this team to some degree really?**

ZION STANFORD: Yeah, I feel like next year will be me answering my years of being an upperclassman. So upperclassmen are known for being leaders and showing the underclassmen how to do things, how the speed, how the strength is, just being a mentor to the younger players. So I feel like that will be my role next year.

**Q. With respect to Jameel Brown, could you say now, is he going to apply for a hardship redshirt?**

ADAM FISHER: Yeah, you know, we'll talk with compliance and go through some things. We talked about it all season long, can't really file anything until after the season. So we'll go back and revisit that with our compliance people and Jameel and his family.

**Q. I don't want to sound like second guessing, but have you ever sat there over the last month and said, Gosh, maybe we don't, Jamal wanted to come back after missing two games, and maybe I shouldn't have brought him back so early and just held him out?**

ADAM FISHER: Yeah, no, I don't second guess it. We've trusted him. He knows his body better than anyone. He's been the decision maker. We supported him and had gotten him the treatment. But like I said, he practiced multiple days prior to that game and looked like he did all year. So, no, I don't second guess it.

**Q. You mentioned like the toughness, the versatility, the resiliency of the team this year as it dealt with various injuries and stuff. How does that factor into your recruiting pitch as you try to build the puzzle for next year and beyond?**

ADAM FISHER: The biggest thing we really wanted to add this year was having great depth. We thought that was a big thing for us. So I think that's why we were able to figure it out towards the end of the season, end of season by winning three in a row. Look, I don't remember ever being a part of a season where we played 19 conference

games and 18 are single digits. I think of those, it's like 15 or 16 are a possession game with a minute to go. It's a great credit to our student-athletes. We have great student-athletes that competed, played hard all year long. And again, it's a credit to them. There's some days we didn't know who could play, and they didn't fade, they didn't complain, they were just like, Coach, whatever you need. Whatever you need. So it's a great credit to these guys we were able to move guys around a lot.

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