

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Oakland vs NC State

Saturday, March 23, 2024

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

PPG Paints Arena

Oakland Golden Grizzlies

Coach Greg Kampe

Trey Townsend

Jack Gohlke

Media Conference

NC State - 79, Oakland - 73

MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement from Oakland's head coach, Greg Kampe.

GREG KAMPE: Wow. A lot different than a couple of nights ago. It's hard because it's over, and it's going to end this way for every team but one in this tournament. The hard part for me is I've done this a long time, and I'm going to tell you, in this day and age of kids leaving and the lack of respect for authority and what about me, what can I make and all the people telling everybody that's how you should be, you know, the way we're going, to have a team like I had, 15 guys that just cared about each other, 15 guys that just cared about the outcome of the team and the pride they had to be part of a team, and the way they joked and hung around. Every game all through the year, somebody else was -- nobody cared who it was. They just were glad that we were together. When things went bad, we picked each other up and then we won games and we won games and close game after close game and it ends with a close loss.

But it was just a joy in this day and age to walk into the office every day and know I'm lucky to get to go in that gym and be with this group of kids, and that's probably what hurts the most right now and I know that that's over. And man, I'm going to miss that.

MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Jack, what was it like having those guys follow you everywhere you went? It seemed like every time you turned around either Morsell or somebody else was on



top of you.

JACK GOHLKE: I'm pretty used to that at this point. So obviously you want to get open shots, but that's pretty typical throughout the season. I've seen that. So it's something I've worked on.

Q. This question is for both of you. As the season is coming to an end, can you just speak on the locker room and the relationship and the brotherhood you guys have and how that feels as it's coming to an end?

TREY TOWNSEND: Yeah, the locker room and the culture that we have on this team is what got us this far. Mostly every single game we've played this year has been within single digits final score. So it's just a special group of guys. As Kampe said, every single day coming to go practice, it's just joy, and everyone's happy to be able to play basketball, one through 15, no matter if you're a redshirt, walk-on. It didn't matter. Everyone was happy to be there and just be around each other. So that's obviously probably the most sad thing about this whole thing coming to an end. Obviously losing sucks, but this group of guys it's the closest and knowing this whole group won't play basketball together again is going to sting for a while. But this whole journey I've been trying to tell everyone to appreciate every single moment, every single time we're together, because these are the best years of your life and I think everyone has tried to make the most of that and I'm sure everyone will have a great relationship after this season and the rest of our lives.

JACK GOHLKE: At the beginning of the season we all just kind of set out and banded together. We wanted to make this a special season for Trey, Chris and Blake. They built the program here with Coach Kampe. I think we did that to the best of our abilities. Obviously, like Trey said, we really wanted to win today. I wanted to go to Dallas really bad. All the guys wanted to go to Dallas really bad, but I told them in the locker room, the thing I wanted the most really was to see everyone at practice on Monday. That's the thing I'm going to miss the most is just seeing my guys every single day. But I know, like Trey said, we'll stay together.



Q. Trey, how do you describe kind of the whirlwind roller coaster of the last 72 hours from arriving in Pittsburgh to being on the podium right now?

TREY TOWNSEND: I mean, Kampe said before the season even started that this tournament is nothing like you could ever imagine, and once we got here that was true. It lived up to the hype and, like I said in the last question, I just really wanted everyone to appreciate every single moment of this whole experience because not everyone gets to play in this tournament and not everyone gets to win a game in this tournament. Obviously we lost today, but I still want to remember everything that I've gone through with these guys. I'm sure everyone will. That's been the biggest thing is just appreciating every moment. Like I said, these are the best years of your life and I think we've been making the most of our time here and I hope we left an everlasting mark on this program and this university.

Q. Jack, we've kind of got to know you a lot over the last couple of days, on national shows, things like that. Number one, what's something that you could tell us to help us get to know your teammate Trey a little bit more. We know his game, but maybe not him as much as a person. And then to kind of piggyback off what you were just saying, where do you hope the future of this program goes? Because Coach talked about the ring could say Conference Champ, it could say Sweet 16, it could say NCAA Tournament Appearance. It's not going to say Sweet 16, but where do you hope the future of the program goes?

JACK GOHLKE: Just for Trey, he's just been, from what I know learning about before I got here but then what I've experienced since I got here, just an absolute pillar of this program. You can't tell the history of Oakland basketball without Trey Townsend. And as much as he's a great basketball player he's an even better friend and man. And he's -- I think he's going to grow up to be a tremendous father and a tremendous husband. So I can't say enough good things about Trey.

For this program, I got faith that Coach Kampe is going to keep building, and this program is going to keep getting better. I think this is just the start for this era of the program. He's got some tremendous players coming back, and they're going to be even better next year, I think.

Q. Guys, you were in here the other night saying we're not pretenders. Do you think you proved that tonight? And because of that, does that make it just that much a little more difficult because it wasn't just like some feel-good story where you won a game and then the second game it got away from you? You were in it

until the last minutes.

TREY TOWNSEND: Like I said earlier, every single game of the season for us has been close and it shows how tough we are as a team how determined we are to win and how much confidence we have in every single player. I hope we proved that the last game we won wasn't a fluke. We're able to compete with anyone in the country and we just played a really good team. Like I've said, every single team is good. If you make it here, you're a talented group of guys. It just didn't go our way tonight, but my guys battled till the very end and no matter what happened out there, I just knew they were going to give max effort and have no regrets after the game is over.

JACK GOHLKE: Yeah. I don't think any of us regret the confidence that we had going into that first game and the confidence we had going into our second game. Obviously the result's not what we wanted it to be, but we put in all the preparation throughout the entire season with our coaching staff and our teammates to put ourselves in a position to win this game today, and we just didn't. There were some plays that we didn't make, but like Trey said, it wasn't an effort thing or a want-to thing. Basketball can give you a lot but it can take a lot at the same time. So that's really all it boils down to.

Q. Obviously in this moment, very tough. But there will be a day that you're not crying because it's over, but you're smiling because it happened, right? I don't know if you can mentally try to get there right now, but it kind of felt like Steph Curry when you had the ball at times, Jack, just sort of the way people had been talking about you, and Trey, 30 points on national TV. Is there any part of you that can reflect on what you guys really just did?

JACK GOHLKE: For me, I've been through so much basketball and a lot of college basketball seasons, and this was probably the most enjoyable one I've ever had, and I've had a bunch of amazing ones. But having gone through that many, I feel like I kind of -- throughout this whole season I've kind of been reflecting on it as it goes. And just trying to appreciate it as much as possible. And I think I did that, and I think our team did that as well.

So obviously, like you said, it is very disappointing that it's over, but I think we did a really good job of soaking up our time with each other and making the absolute most of it.

Q. Has it set in, it probably hasn't yet, but has it set in that you guys have created some of the best moments in the history of Oakland University? Like as a whole; not just Oakland Basketball, but Oakland University?

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TREY TOWNSEND: I mean, I'm just glad and proud of this team for what we've done, like you said, for this university. I think people now hopefully will know that we're not in California and we're from Michigan now.

You know, for me I always wanted to come here and hang banners and make these memories and put Oakland on the map. And to say that we did that, it's such a special thing and I'm just so happy for my guys. To do it with this group of guys it was that much more special. Like, with Blake and Chris who have been here since my freshmen year over this whole time, it means that much more. But I'm proud of what we've done for this university and put it on the map essentially.

JACK GOHLKE: Yeah, I've just learned so much in so little time from all the guys, and I couldn't be happier for Coach Kampe. And like I said before, Trey, Chris and Blake. Those four men are just tremendous, and the four years that they all had together to build this program just, I think, means so much to the university, from what I've seen in my year. And I really wish I would have been here earlier or had more time here because it's a tremendous experience.

MODERATOR: All right. Thank you. Questions for Coach Kampe.

Q. Coach, you mentioned Thursday night that there was a moment previously in your career that had it happened would have changed Oakland Basketball. This was obviously before the Kentucky game. Was there a moment like that tonight that you think was similar? Is there any one thing that can you look back on?

GREG KAMPE: Yeah. Yeah. You know, a referee's call in the game we were talking about before rolled around the rim and didn't go in. Tonight it's me. I mean we didn't -- I blame myself. We got the ball with 17 seconds to go and we didn't get a shot. There's only one person to blame for that. That's me, and I gotta sit here and live with that now, because we didn't get a shot.

I've been in that position, if I've coached 1300 games, which I think is probably top four or five ever, been in that position hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of times, and to have it happen in the most important game that Oakland has ever played, that's -- yeah. I'll carry this with me the rest of my life. It's just terrible that we didn't get a shot. So that's on me.

Q. Coach, I think the bulk of the country was really rooting for your team tonight. Do you have a message for those people who probably didn't even know where Oakland was before this who were just really cheering

you guys on?

GREG KAMPE: Well, I think -- I hope what they saw was what I talked about in my opening statement. I think we're good for college basketball. I think we really were. I think there's 360 some Division I coaches. That's all the jobs there are in the country, and I would say a lot of those guys are envious, not of Oakland or not of what we do and not of me, but of our team. And not the winning or losing, but having that as a team, because what I talked about in this day is really unusual. And so I think that we probably -- that was reflected. And I mean, I don't think you can play harder than we played. I really don't. There were more floor burns, more dives on the floor. I think we played pretty smart, too. And Dean Smith, who most people today, he's fading away out of people's memories, but Dean Smith, for all the coaches in the world that read his books and know who he is, he had a mantra of play hard, play smart and play as one. And I think we epitomized that. I really do. And I think that's probably why.

And then, obviously, when you got a guy that's going to be an insurance salesman scoring 60 points in two games and killing it, I mean when he -- I don't know if I've ever seen -- I know in my life I've never put a sub in the game and saw the place go nuts with three minutes into a game with what does this place seat, 18,000 or whatever it seats, I don't know. But that was the loudest roar of the night when he went in three minutes into the game and then he caught it and made it. And it was electric. And I mean, the legend of Jack Gohlke is going to go on and Oakland is going to be associated with that. And then you saw Trey Townsend. I mean Trey Townsend is a pro. He's a pro. And he proved it tonight. And everybody says, well, isn't he a little undersized? And he went out and made threes tonight. He does what he has to do.

He could have shot a lot of threes all year, but nobody could guard him there at our level. I think he got fouled a lot tonight. I think he got fouled a lot tonight. How many free throws did he shoot? 8. If that was in our league and that happened, he would have shot 20 tonight, because that's the only way to stop him is to knock him to the ground. So it is what it is. But I hope that's what they saw.

Q. Coach, Trey obviously had a great game tonight. Can you just sort of talk about his performance? And also, coming out into the second half, was that kind of a coaching adjustment to try to play through him more or was he just reading the defense and taking what they gave him?

GREG KAMPE: No. You gotta give credit -- if you want to look at this from a coach's mind or analytical -- not analytical but a coaching look at it, I felt they knew -- we

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run a lot of sets. That play card I have has 77 sets on it and I probably had 45 primed for tonight. That's hard in a one-day prep. So Kevin was very smart. He knows we don't have a true point guard. So what they did early in the game is they picked us up full court and made us earn the court and then the time, they shortened our time, and they also kept us from getting the ball to the top of the key and running our sets.

So the shot clock's winding down and we're jacking threes. We made some. Three-point game at halftime. So the adjustment we made is that we wanted to catch the ball off a rebound or if they scored and fly it up the floor and get it past the hashmark, the 27-foot line. We wanted to advance the ball -- maybe we could touch the paint but if not get it by that and then run our sets. And you saw much more fluidity out of us in the second half, and we were able to get the ball to Trey. I mean, there were two key plays in the game, and the game was called the same both ways. I'm not saying that it was wrong. I'm just saying it was a key play. And that is we had the two-point lead on the ball and we ran a little baseline play that we've run for years and he got the ball and the guy pushed him out of bounds and they didn't call it. And he threw the ball to Lampman in the corner and Lampman shot an air ball. If we scored on that possession, it would have been the first time in the whole game we'd have a two-possession lead. I think that would have changed the outcome of the game.

And then the second, which is probably the biggest play of the game, was, again, we got a two-point lead. We get a kid take the shot from the corner and the ball never even got ten feet two in the air. I think it was ten foot in the air and there's a minute something to go. And if that ball hits the rim and goes where it should have gone, we get the rebound, we're in really good position. Instead, it hits right in the front of the rim and comes right down to the big guy and he lays it in. We were fronting the big guy. And the only rebound he was going to get is if it hit the rim and came straight down. And that's what happened. Those are the bounces of the game.

So we still had our chance. We still had the ball. We got the stop. They had the ball with 50 seconds to go. We got the stop. We live on our defense and we did what we had to do, and then we didn't get a shot off. I still don't -- I gotta see it. I still don't know, because we saw it on the scoreboard and it sure looked like it was our ball. I know 18,000 people thought it was our ball. But they said they saw some other view of it and the kid hit it and my guy's fingertip or something was still on it. So two seconds we didn't get the last shot and, again, I'm going to live with that. It's going to be hard. Trust me, it's going to be hard.

Q. Coach, first of all, thanks for telling your story so

well and your school's story so well this week. I was wondering your intentions on that last play. The ball went out of bounds and you couldn't take a shot. What was your plan on that last possession?

GREG KAMPE: Ball was getting to Townsend facing the basket the left elbow, and he was supposed to rip and drive. And he was either going to be the hero or he was going to go to the free throw line or they weren't going to call it. One of those three things was going to happen. He was going to rip and score. The kid guarding him had four fouls, but I'm sure the kid -- they weren't going to let him get a good look. They'd rather have him try and make a free throw.

We took too long to get in. They came and denied the entry pass, and our guard with the ball dribble entered instead, and by then -- it's my fault because we had 17 seconds and we didn't want to go until 10 or 12. If we would have gone at 17, we could have handled that. And that was the mistake. That's the mistake that our coach made, and it's a big one.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

GREG KAMPE: Thank you. We really appreciate everything. It's hard to get here, guys, from a Mid Major. It's hard to get here. So it's a tough one. But thank you.

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