

Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 10, 2021

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

Kansas State Wildcats

Nijel Pack

Postgame Press Conference



Kansas State - 71, TCU - 50

Q. Hey, Nijel, just first thoughts, your first Big 12 Tournament, your first experience in an environment like that, even though it maybe not is the normal environment for that building. What was the experience like for you?

NIJEL PACK: I mean, it's always a great experience. It's a fun thing. It's a nice background, nice setup. I love the way how they did things even though COVID has affected a lot of ways how things are played.

This is like another big tournament for me. Growing up in Indiana, we had big, big tournaments, especially during playoff time. So this is kind of like another game for us. We've got to worry about just a game and not what the stage is, and I feel like that's what we did a good job of today.

Q. And then for you, to just have things clicking like that, it just seemed like everything was working for you. The shots were falling. What does that do for you confidence-wise heading into a game tomorrow against Baylor?

NIJEL PACK: I mean, it sets me up really well to come out tomorrow to be able to give us another great night. I feel like that's what's going to be necessary, no matter what -- if it's points, assists, rebounds -- I feel like I'm going to need a great night for us to have good success against Baylor, but also defensively, I feel like me and my team are going to need to have a great night for us to be successful.

Q. On that, defensively tonight, it seemed like you guys were just on another level, slowing everything down. Was that just the product of now having seen TCU twice already coming into tonight and having some familiarity? Or was there something added to that that helped you guys be successful more on the defensive side?

NIJEL PACK: I just think we have a different mindset as a team coming into our games now. I feel like we're not trying to outscore somebody in the game. I feel like we're trying to lock guys up, and I feel like guys on our team are taking things personally now. Guys feel like they deserve the recognition they're not getting, and they feel like, hey, this guy has it. So let me go lock him up and show him, I can lock this guy up so he doesn't deserve it.

I feel like that's what our guys are doing. We take it personally, and that's just what happened.

Q. You talk about recognition. Was being left off the Big 12 All-Freshmen team something that motivated you a little bit extra today?

NIJEL PACK: I try not to look at things like that, somebody else's opinion. I believe whatever I can do, I can do. I mean, whatever another person said doesn't define the person that I am. I feel like, if we win, it doesn't matter. That's what I look forward to. I look to do whatever I can to win, and if I get the recognition to go with it, so it will be.

Q. Nijel, congrats on the win. Last time when you played Baylor, it's obviously a blowout in their favor. Do you think you guys have improved enough to give them a game tomorrow?

NIJEL PACK: I mean, I always feel like we've improved. I feel like we've improved this last five-game stretch. I feel like defensively we became a better team. I feel like it's going to be very interesting tomorrow to see how much we developed and how much we've gotten better against a really, really good team, especially a top five team in the country. I feel like it's a good test for us. I feel like we can do it. Not a lot of people feel like we can do it, but at least the guys that are with us believe we can, and I feel like we can go out and get it done.

Q. You're the guy who made the two shots at the end of the first half. Did you feel like in hindsight that kind of turned the game for you guys?

NIJEL PACK: Yeah, I feel like that was a great momentum switch for us going into halftime. They made a good run, and we were able to close it out with two threes at the end



with momentum going in our favor going into the locker room. We came out swinging again, and Mike McGuirl gave us a big boost coming out of halftime, and I feel like, since then, we never turned our backs and looked back, and we were just gone from then.

Q. Nijel, playing in that environment of Indiana high school basketball tournament, does that kind of give you a feel of big time postseason in the college level even?

NIJEL PACK: I feel like so. Even though the crowds are not the same right now, I feel like these crowds can get even more intense. I feel like that's a good stepping stone for me playing to sold-out crowds in high school and AAU games that were packed. I feel like it just set me up to be ready for these games like today even though COVID has shut down the attendance of fans, but I feel like it was a good thing for me.

Q. Have you played in arenas of this size before?

NIJEL PACK: I played in a few, some college arenas, and I even played at Bankers Life, where the Pacers play, before.

Q. Do you like that shooting background, that shooting environment? Does that help you kind of transition into that shooting style pretty well?

NIJEL PACK: I feel like it has. I mean, these are different floors, different backgrounds. In the usual setting, there's kind of a wall behind the basket that kind of makes the shooting a little bit easier. But with fans in the stands and just free space in there, it kind of makes you have to be more accurate with your shooting, but I feel like I've adjusted to that well playing in different arenas before this.

Q. It seemed like you guys were playing pretty relaxed from the get-go tonight. What was your take on that?

NIJEL PACK: We just had to be calm and collected as a team. We couldn't get rushed. We couldn't get sped up. I felt like that was a good thing for us. If we execute well and play defense and shut down, I feel like we're very competitive and we can compete with anybody in the country.

Q. Just a little bit more towards Baylor, is that a similar approach for tomorrow, like you guys have got nothing to lose?

NIJEL PACK: Yeah, we're the underdogs here. Nobody expects anything out of us. If we lose, it's supposed to happen. When we win, it's going to be a miracle for

everybody, but we're going to be expecting it to happen. We're going to get prepared like we have been. Our coaches have done a great job preparing us, getting us ready, getting us focused, and we've just got to go out and play.

Q. And how much growth have you guys as a team shown in the last three weeks, month?

NIJEL PACK: I mean, I think we've shown huge improvement, being able to compete with the top teams in the country, going from getting blown out, people expecting us to lose every game, to now -- what is this, four games in a row? Or four games that we won, and we won the first game in the Big 12. I mean, we weren't even expected to win this.

Our coach told us last night ESPN is expecting a 73 percent loss today. We end up winning by I don't even know how much. It feels good, but we've still got a lot of work to be done.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports