

Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 10, 2021

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

Oklahoma Sooners

Lon Kruger

Postgame Press Conference



Oklahoma - 79, Iowa State - 73

LON KRUGER: Really, really happy for the guys. Did a heck of a job to come out and build that lead in the second half. Then, obviously, you know, didn't do some things there to maintain the lead that we needed to sharpen up. But good win, good win. When you drop a few in a row and go right down to the wire, you've got to get the feeling of winning again. Happy for the guys. They did a good job to get it in the right column.

Q. Lon, like you said, it got a little bit hairy there at the end, but how big was that stretch by Austin Reaves to hit, I think it was three consecutive shots on possessions, right after Iowa State scores, to start narrowing that margin?

LON KRUGER: Yeah, it was huge. I recall the back-to-back possessions were -- you know, he made a two-pointer then made the three-pointer and some others as well. Yeah, just huge plays at a time where we needed it to kind of stem their run. He's done that for us on many occasions, and certainly he was great at that time tonight.

Q. Then also I wanted to ask you about Elijah Harkless, just the all around game that he put together. What was it, 12 points, 9 boards, 6 assists, 5 steals. It seemed like he got you all going on defense during that run there early in the half.

LON KRUGER: He really did. Defensively, we created a lot of offense during that stretch when we took it to, what, 18 or 19. A lot of that was from the defense in terms of getting it out and getting it in transition and finishing on the offensive end.

Yeah, E.J. was great, active, aggressive all night.

Q. Lon, I just wanted to ask you about your offensive execution tonight. First half, everyone who played scored, and it just seemed like you guys were pretty

crisp offensively. Just your thoughts.

LON KRUGER: Yeah, it was. Any time you shoot over 50 percent, you feel good about that. Not bad from three-point as well. Obviously, some turnovers we'd like to eliminate, but, yeah, overall moved the ball better, made better plays for each other, a lot of drive and kicks, had some good looks that didn't go down, but made a lot of good plays for each other.

Q. We heard on the broadcast tonight about Alondes Williams returning to the team today after attending his grandmother's funeral. How tough a week has it been for Alondes, and how proud are you of how he was able to contribute tonight and play?

LON KRUGER: Prayers for Alondes and his family. Any time a young man has to go through that, it's tough. Credit to him that he wanted to get back and wanted to play. He said that's what his grandmother would want, so, yeah, it was good to get him in there. He'll bounce back there a little bit and be even more comfortable tomorrow.

Q. One last question. With the quick turnaround, I wanted to ask you about playing Kansas. This is a different Kansas team without McCormack, but what do you expect out of the Jayhawks tomorrow?

LON KRUGER: They've been playing great. Obviously, McCormack is a huge key for them, and Enaruna is a good player as well. Yeah, they'll play great. We've got to raise our level. We've got to play better and understand how tough that's going to be.

Q. Lon, another fast start by Harmon. What has that meant for the team throughout this season, the way that he's been getting off to quick starts?

LON KRUGER: Yeah, that's huge. That's huge. Any time he can get some shots down early, it kind of pumps your confidence and picks up everyone else's confidence. He kind of played from the lead, pretty much all the way, and as a result, getting off to a good start. De'Vion, that mid-range jumper has been really good for him and knocked down a three as well. So he's doing a good job.



Q. I just want to ask about Kur. It seemed like he gave you really impactful minutes on the defensive end and had a really impactful block. Just speak on his night tonight.

LON KRUGER: Kur has done great. That's back-to-back games where he's had a big impact, around the rim especially. Yeah, he's doing a good job, doing what he's best at doing. That's great for everyone. Everyone gets a little bit of security from him at the rim, and he does a good job of not only blocking some shots but changing some others.

Q. Lon, back to tomorrow's matchup with Kansas. Eric asked about them missing McCormack. Do you anticipate that his absence turns that game into your perimeter play and your guards against KU's?

LON KRUGER: Yeah, hard to say. Lightfoot certainly does a good job. He's always been effective against us. He's a really good player for them. I don't know exactly what lineup will be out there. We'll adjust as we need to, but I would imagine they'd have a lot of guards out there, even more than normal. Most people play a lot of guards anyhow.

Q. Do you anticipate Kur playing some kind of role -- is it harder for him to play a role without them bringing McCormack to the matchup?

LON KRUGER: If there's not a big guy out there, obviously, it makes it a little more difficult to find a matchup, but he'll be in there. We'll get him and Brady in there. Victor's ready. If they go small, Victor's activity and energy is good as well.

Q. Lon, I was going to ask about some of the bench combinations we saw there in the first half. There was one where you ran with Jalen and Alondes and Kur all together. Is that something you guys were able to find at practice over the last few days after doing some self-scouting, since things have been so hectic in that final two weeks?

LON KRUGER: Not necessarily is it a specific plan as much as Alondes coming off a game against Texas. Again, he's had a lot of stuff going on in his life since then, but he was really, really effective in that game, and I think he'll bounce back tomorrow and give us good plays.

I thought Jalen gave us really good energy and good physical play when he was in there, and E.J., of course, was good all night. So, yeah, it will be some different combinations, but pretty comfortable with any of them.

Q. Lon, you didn't always make the shots, but the first 32 minutes of the game, your passing seemed top shelf. Is that a sign of maybe, if you were in a slump, that you're snapping out of it when people are able to make the kind of passes that they were making tonight?

LON KRUGER: Yeah, had really good ball movement during that time, a lot of paint touches, kicking out for threes, and like you say, a lot of good plays that wasn't finished with a make but still is the right play and it's the right shot, and we need more of that for sure. Yeah, that's our best ball movement we've had for a while.

Q. Hey, Lon, congrats on the win. Everybody loves a role player, but when a guy's role is to score like Austin and De'Vion in this game, how big is that when you can get your scorers to score at the right time of the game, one early and one late?

LON KRUGER: It's really big. You'd love to -- and those guys have done that for us consistently on the year. Austin and De'Vion have done a good job of stepping up. You know, we need them to score in every ball game, and they've been pretty consistent in that way, but especially at critical times tonight, I thought those two guys did an excellent job.

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