

# Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 11, 2021

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

## West Virginia Mountaineers

### Bob Huggins

Postgame Press Conference



Oklahoma State, 72 - West Virginia 69

**Q. Bob, you seemingly had to manage that game a lot different than you have most any of this year. Just talk about Derek apparently being sick and everything you guys had to go through just to stay in that one.**

BOB HUGGINS: Well, I think first and foremost, Derek showed a lot of courage. He was having a hard time walking much less running up and down the floor. He had the one flurry that kind of got us back in the game, but, Seny is not ready. We knew he wasn't ready. Don't want any what could have beens, but when you lose a 6'11" guys who was your most skilled big, that hurts, hurts your depth. We were playing J.B. at the four and J.B. is not a 4; he's a wing guy.

So we got out rebounded again. We can hold our own if we play Gabe and Derek at the same time, but if we play Derek and Gabe at the same time then you get in foul trouble and then you don't have anybody to put in, which is pretty much what happened to us at the end of the game anyway.

**Q. You guys were up 8 early in the second half and then the game flipped and Oklahoma State turns it around and leads by 10. Would you just talk about the response that your team had to that complete change of momentum from leading by 8 to going down by 10 so quickly?**

BOB HUGGINS: Well, we fooled with the ball too much, that started that whole thing. Then we ended up taking a bad shot kind of at the end of the clock. Wasn't at the end of the clock, but it was probably under 10. It was a bad shot for a lot of reasons. I think the biggest reason is where it rebounded out to, which led to transition for them.

Then we make a lazy bounce pass, which they still go in for a lay-up. We gave too many easy chances, easy opportunities during that stretch, and then we had to fight

like crazy to try to get back in the game.

**Q. Bob, go over the final sequence, what you wanted? You're down three. Did you want a three right way? Taz's gets blocked and Sean's is a half second late. What happened in that final sequence?**

BOB HUGGINS: Well, I thought that we had -- we ran the same set I think three straight times, and we had their defense really shifting to Taz's side. I was trying to get Deuce to hear me to take it to Taz and then swing it back to Sean.

He thought Taz was open, Taz thought he was open. I think they got a piece of the ball, but we get it back and throw it out. Sean is wide open you think, and then that guy comes flying from nowhere and Sean had to pump fake him by him so he could get a shot off.

It just ended up being a second or less too late. I mean, we got what we wanted. We weren't supposed to throw it to Taz. You know, it's easy to sit over there and look at it and say that than have somebody grabbing a hold of your shorts, you know.

So...

**Q. Coach, obviously the season is not over, so what do you do to get ready for the national tournament?**

BOB HUGGINS: We're going to have to learn how to block out I think at some point in time, take that a little more serious than what we do. But seemingly when we block out, it doesn't do us any good. But we got to block out. We give up too many offensive rebounds, easy baskets by not securing the ball.

And we got to continue to get better with our defense. I thought the defense was better today than what it has been. We gave up some shots, but some of the ones we gave up we had Derek in there because we didn't really have a choice. He just didn't -- he just didn't have enough wind I guess to get from corner to corner, which is what his responsibility would've been.

Either that or you put him up there and he has to guard guards, so either one of those is going to wear him out.

**Q. Coach, going off your defense, especially in the first half, the half court traps and the high ball pressure there, you guys have done that throughout the season a little bit here and there. Was that designed to just get the ball out of Cunningham's hands or to create energy, and what did you think there of that, what you saw?**

BOB HUGGINS: I thought our traps were good. I thought we did what we want to do with our traps. We just didn't make rotations. We got -- you know, we're just -- it's a process and we're playing a lot of young guys. If not young, new guys. We just don't make rotations the way we made rotations before.

You know, I thought that was our -- that would be our chance to win, was to do that. Then we didn't make rotations, and so we kind of backed it off a little bit. Then our offense let us down and our offense gave them a bunch of points in a row there.

So we had to get back in the game, so then you got to go trap again. But when you're doing that, you know, they got numbers at offensive glass. That gives them numbers. That's what you game plan for, is to get numbers.

**Q. And then if I could ask a follow-up, Oklahoma State's defense in the second half, I just kind of thought maybe the shots you were getting you had to work a little bit more to get them more so than maybe in the first half. Can you talk about the maybe energy or what they did defensively in the second half?**

BOB HUGGINS: I don't think they did anything. I think we threw them the ball. We threw them the ball, gave them second and third shots. They're a good team. They got good players. If you let them get three cracks at it inside the foul line, they're probably going to make one of them.

Then we did a bad job of transition there that short period of time, but that's when we lost the lead and when they went up by whatever it was, 10. It had nothing to do with their defense. It had a lot to do with us just -- we kind of -- I don't know what the right word is, we just kind of relaxed, I think.

**Q. With 20 seconds left, was there any thought about scoring a two and pressuring them on the inbound and making them make free throws to close the game? What are the disadvantages and thoughts on that?**

BOB HUGGINS: Give them the ball back. Give them the

ball back so you're going to have to foul. They were going to take Likekele out and put the free throw shooters in. I would just assume made a three. When you have our team and you got a guy like Taz and Sean, and J.B. can make threes, Emmitt can make threes, I don't know why you would give them the ball back.

If you miss, you miss. The game is probably over. So then you foul and they make two, it's a five point game. That's not very good coaching.

**Q. Just wanted to ask your thoughts about what Mike Boynton has done from being a first-time head coach now four years later?**

BOB HUGGINS: Doing a great job. He's doing an absolutely great job. Mike has always been good. I mean, Mike is kind of part of the family. We worked for Frank, worked for Brad. He's been great to all of us.

So, I think Mike has done a terrific job.

**Q. You mentioned throughout the season you ask a lot of guys follow bracketology stuff closely. Do you have any thoughts on potential seeding ahead of next week?**

BOB HUGGINS: Probably follow the three line I would guess. If they followed so closely they must not have followed game we lost at home, last home game. Must not have been following it that week.

**Q. Coach, obviously a game like this it's easy to look at that last possession. I'm wondering a few possessions before after Taz hit the last three, 1:15 left or something like that. You guys had the lead at that point, and then they come back down and I think they maybe kind of overloaded the court to one side and get a drive on the other side. Is that maybe even a bigger play than what happened on the --**

BOB HUGGINS: The blocked charge deal where they got the three point play?

**Q. No, on Anderson's drive.**

BOB HUGGINS: Yeah, they called a block.

**Q. No, he just made it, I think.**

BOB HUGGINS: Oh, he just made it?

**Q. Yeah.**

BOB HUGGINS: I thought the one that really hurt us is the

one that he made and they called a block. He's a good player. I mean, they got good players, good players that are versatile. They can turn a corner and really drive it at you.

Guys, we can sit here and talk about this and that. How about the effort that our guys gave? I mean, Derek wasn't Derek, fellas. When we had them in there was a lot of times we played 4 against 5 because he just couldn't breathe. Then Gabe gets in foul trouble, so now the biggest guy on the floor for us is Emmitt.

I thought our guys gave a great effort. We had the one period of time where we just kind of let down a little bit and threw the ball to them, didn't get back in transition, didn't rebound the ball. But other than that, I don't know what else you could ask of them. We didn't get to the foul line.

I know, we shot, what, three free throws or something in the second half. Didn't get to the free throw line, which that gives you a little bit of a rest. We didn't get there.

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