

Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 11, 2021

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

Kansas State Wildcats

Nijel Pack

Postgame Press Conference



Baylor, 74 - Kansas State, 68

Q. Nijel, put that game into words for me. How did that feel out on the court to you?

NIJEL PACK: It was just, I mean, it was an amazing game to be in, a great atmosphere. Even though we didn't have the full crowd attendance, just felt great to be able to give them a run for the money. Everybody probably looked over us.

Felt good to be able to give the people what they want. Felt good for us to have courage and show our improvement of what we made from the beginning of the year to now.

So felt really good for us, really good for our confidence.

Q. How far has your team come in the last month or so?

NIJEL PACK: I think we became a totally different team. If we could just start off as in this month as a whole new year, I feel like we would be ranked top 15 in the country, at least.

All the good teams that we've beaten, played with, I mean, nobody would think the rest of the year what happened. I mean, from this year looks like we're a whole new team. You can give us a preview of what's going to happen the next few years to come, and I feel like we're showing that already.

Q. How good was Davion in that first half?

NIJEL PACK: He was excellent. Not good, not great, excellent. Finishing, diving, screening, playing defense, I mean, everything we know that he has, all the talent we know he has, he was putting on full execution.

So proud of him. He stayed in there, he fought. Made his

free throws. Couldn't ask much more of him. He did his part. We just didn't get the job finished.

Q. Good game.

NIJEL PACK: Thank you.

Q. Nijel, great game for you. Tell me a little bit about it seemed like you were surprising them with your ability to make that three-point shot. Just talk a little bit about your game today and the openings that you had? Did Baylor underestimate you?

NIJEL PACK: I feel like they kind of knew coming in, too. I'm pretty sure teams scouted, just like we do. They know can't let them get some rhythm, get some shots going. I mean, once I seen a couple go in I started getting that rhythm and I was able to knock down some shots when I seen even just a little space.

Everybody makes defensive breakdowns, but once that rhythm starts going for me I feel like once I put it up there I have feel confidence in myself, and my teammates and coaches do as well.

Q. What was said in the locker room afterwards? You said how you wish the season could start now because the rhythm is there, you're all clicking and beating teams. What was said in the locker room afterwards? You guys did play well today and you kept this game within reach.

NIJEL PACK: Coach was just really proud of us, all the coaches. They seen how big of strides we made since the beginning of year. They brought up early losses that we made and we lost to and now we're competing with the best team in the country. Nobody would've expected that.

First two times we played them got our butts kicked. We got embarrassed. Now we're giving them a fight at the end. Guys there on their team were surprised, shocked, nervous. We put them in a different situation they're not really used to. It felt great.

Our coach told us it sucks for it to end, but now it's our time

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to get better individually, come back next year, and get ready to make a big run and keep this momentum going.

Q. Can you explain what happened on that last possession where you just kind of threw the ball up at the rim? Were you hoping to get a foul out of that?

NIJEL PACK: I mean, Mike threw it to me. I knew he was going to anticipate the steal so I jumped, kind of went into him, because I knew it was going to be a fight for the ball. I felt that unnecessary contact, excessive contact. I felt like they were going to blow the whistle trying to get a three to go with it.

Didn't get it. Kind of made myself look stupid. It sucks to have the season end the way it did like that, but I know the game is not defined on one play, but that one play made a huge difference to the turnout of the game and I kind of blame myself for that.

But a mistake that I made. I wish I could get it back but I can't, so...

Q. And if there is one big key this team needs to work on before next season, what do you think that is?

NIJEL PACK: I just feel like individually everybody has something they can improve on. I feel like everybody has special things they need to work on that will make us better individuals. I feel like what makes Baylor so talented is all their individuals put in that grind and that work where they can all go get a basket whenever necessary.

I feel like that's what we all could work on a little bit more, everybody being able to go get to the basket, whatever. I feel like we'd be an even better team than we are.

Q. You feel like you guys caught them by surprise at all today? Feel like the same level of respect that typically you would from an opponent out there on the court?

NIJEL PACK: I feel like nobody really expected anything out of us. Wasn't a shock to us. Probably a shock to everybody else. I mean, we gave them a fight. We knew that was going to come in, be a dogfight. They probably didn't think so because the last two games, what happened. I feel like we gave them a great run for their money, opened their eyes for them.

This is a great tournament, great conference to be in. Any given night a team could beat you. I feel like we had that night tonight; we just couldn't finish.

Q. What do you feel like the team that played the last

two days here in Kansas City would've finished our how the season would've gone if that team played the entire year for you guys?

NIJEL PACK: I feel like we would have been competing for a Big 12 Championship. We might be one of the youngest teams in the country, but I feel like the experience that we've gotten and how much we've grown as a team, as a brotherhood. I feel like if we had this all year we would have easily been ranked many, many times this year. Would've been playing for a Big 12 Championship, and then even in the conference today we would've been in the NCAA tournament next week and then who knows from then.

Q. Nijel, you mentioned how your team is so young but you're so confident in where you're at now and how far you've come. What did you think is the biggest like the big picture is? What I'm asking for you and the guys, what's the next step off this? You have off-season now, but what's next for you guys?

NIJEL PACK: I mean, we see what it takes now. We lived through our first year kind of not knowing. COVID kind of threw everything off. Feel like now we can have a regular year hopefully, be able to work with each other over the summer, be able to improve. Feel like that would be a good thing for us.

And then get that experience -- we got this experience this year, so then for next year we can go in knowing what to expect, the work that it takes, and knowing what it takes to win. I mean, that's what it all comes down to.

And then be able to shock some people next year. I feel like we got the talent. Definitely got the coaching, the support to win a Big 12 Championship. Just got to believe it, put the work in, and then it'll happen for us.

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