

Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Saturday, March 13, 2021

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

Oklahoma State Cowboys

Kalib Boone

Isaac Likekele

Postgame Press Conference



Texas 91, Oklahoma State 86

THE MODERATOR: Obviously not the result you wanted today, but what did this team accomplish in the Big 12 tournament to set itself up for something bigger in the NCAAAs?

KALIB BOONE: Just go back to our preseason and go back to where people projected us at. We was projected to be seventh and we made it to the championship.

It sucks that we didn't win it, but we beat top tier teams for basically three weeks. If anybody doesn't take that into consideration, I honestly don't know what to tell them, because that's a basketball team that can fight, and for three weeks that's all we did was fight.

Q. Ice, what's the state of the team right now? What do you feel about this team going into the postseason now?

ISAAC LIKEKELE: Oh, we're more hungry than ever. We're hungry. Going into that locker room, it was not sad faces, it was more like mad faces. We was hungry. Just to hear from our locker room, the celebration out there, hearing the music, hearing them have fun, it was a feeling that stung for sure, and we hung through that.

Definitely no confidence has been lost, you know what I'm saying? We still believe that we have no sympathy, no confidence has been lost at all. We've just got to get some recovery done the next couple days, heal up, and now we know what it takes to win a chip.

Q. Ice, how difficult is it playing three games in three days?

ISAAC LIKEKELE: Man, honestly, to me none of that matters, honestly. The way -- from summer boot camp all

the way until what we've done preseason, just different things, all the trials and tribulations, all the hard workouts, different things we've been through has prepared us for situations like these, know what I'm saying, to play three games in three days.

If they asked us again to play tomorrow for second place, you've got to be ready, know what I'm saying? We've got nothing but soldiers on this team, so I don't want to put that out there as an excuse. We've got to come out and have more energy in the first half of a championship game in order to win. It's a championship.

Q. I know you don't want to make an excuse, but did Texas maybe have more energy? Did you notice more energy from them coming off of a day off?

KALIB BOONE: I think at the beginning of the game you could just tell we looked kind of tired and we kind of played like it for a second, and then we had mishaps on the court that we could control, like rebounding was one, our ball screen coverages could have been a lot better.

With all that being said, it was just our energy, and that had nothing to do with us playing yesterday. That's something we can control every day.

Q. Kalib, Jericho, you guys kind of held him in check the first few times you played him. What did he do well against you guys today?

KALIB BOONE: He took the fight to us honestly. I'm not going to sit here and downplay him as a player. He's on Big 12 scholarship for a reason, but he set the tone. He had 14 rebounds, 21 points. That tells you the story.

We didn't keep him off the glass. And like I said, we didn't keep him off the glass, and basically offensive rebounds, just rebounds in general like that, it gives them momentum, and he felt like he could get to his spots and everything. That's what happened.

Q. Ice, it sounded like you were kind of talking to Kalib, kind of encouraging him when you sat down. What was your message to the team?

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ISAAC LIKEKELE: I mean, these are my dogs, man. They're my brothers. I'm not really the type of guy -- at times I can yell and stuff, but 98 percent of the time I'm just going to sit down and explain to you real quick in the heat of the moment, you know.

I feel as if that's how guys comprehend things better. But at the same time, I was just telling them, Hey, bro, you've got to get these things done, communicate this, that, and they know it's a conversation with me. It's never a one-way thing where I just tell you something and you can't say nothing back to me. If I'm wrong, tell me I'm wrong. Or if there's a certain thing that you're confused about, we can communicate about it. It's never a one-way thing. I always like feedback. I have conversations with everybody.

So just for me to just even be in a position to tell him be open and acknowledge it, that's beautiful as a team. We just wasn't able to go out there when we needed to today.

Q. You guys went through a lot to be here. You haven't been home for a while. You're getting tested early in the morning every day, which is a drag, and then you had to play three great teams in 72 hours. That's an exhausting situation. The question is was it worth it, and if so, why?

ISAAC LIKEKELE: Everything is worth it, to be honest. You know, the way I look at life, I'm honestly just blessed to even be here. Every time I step out on the court I could care less if I play terrible. I could care less if I have the best game of my career.

There's a lot of things going on that it's not for sure I could be out there, honestly. It was exciting to just be out there, and it was definitely worth it. We got to learn lessons while also gain confidence while we was here, so it's nothing but another lesson learned, and going to push forward and use it as motivation, man. The more motivation, the better we just keep getting.

Q. Ice, when you're playing three games in three days, you don't necessarily get to unpack the previous game like you would in a normal season. Now that you're getting ready to prepare for the NCAA Tournament, do you unpack these three games equally or do you put more emphasis on the game that you just played in terms of the positives and negatives that you take from it?

ISAAC LIKEKELE: Honestly, I can't tell you. I've never been to the tournament, so I really can't tell you. Coach B, there's two different sides to him. Sometimes it's let's review this real quick and let's go forward, and sometimes

it's everybody is 0-0, so let's focus on looking forward.

I don't know the process. This is the furthest I've been in my collegiate career, so I can't tell you right now.

Q. Kalib, that second half you guys battled and showed grit. What was the messaging at halftime coming out for the second half?

KALIB BOONE: Basically they were the aggressors the whole first half, and we've got to be aggressive. Honestly that first half they looked like they wanted to win. We looked like we just wanted to hang in there for a second.

And then the second half we showed fight, we showed grit. We showed them that this isn't going to be easy, and it wasn't. We cut the lead down to four, sometimes three, but we just had mishaps, and we couldn't have those.

Q. Ice, as far as the team goes, apart from Ferron and Bryce, you've been waiting the longest to hear your name called on Selection Sunday. What does it mean for you to be able to play in the tournament? You've been with guys like Lindy and Cam who never got that experience. What does it mean you finally got this experience?

ISAAC LIKEKELE: It most definitely means a lot. Like I said, I just feel blessed to be in this position, so I'm looking forward to trying to take full advantage of it and just seeing what we can do in that tournament.

Q. Do you have any memories growing up of the tournament?

ISAAC LIKEKELE: No, I wasn't really a college -- I didn't really watch basketball like that growing up. I didn't start watching basketball probably until like my 10th grade, 11th grade, something like that.

Q. Isaac, forget the three days, three nights. I'm not talking about fatigue. How about the mental stress of being down and having to come back? You guys made up a bunch of points the first half of the second half and got it down to two, but then Texas spurted away and you had to come back again. You got close a few times, but how much energy is consumed just trying to rally time after time?

ISAAC LIKEKELE: Yeah, honestly, there's no positions that we haven't been in. Y'all have seen us down 10, 12 multiple times and seen us come back and win. We was used to that situation. We've been up 10, we've been down 10.

So whenever we got there and cut it within four or two, we knew what it took to get over that hump. But we just couldn't build the stop and the bucket to get over that hump. They'd come down, we'll foul them, they'll get two free throws or something, or we'll give up an offensive rebound so they get another shot. Just different things that they was doing to keep themselves up, which credit to them, but we knew what it took to get over that hump; we just didn't do it.

Q. Kind of piggy-backing off of the question on the NCAA Tournament, you guys had all those sanctions come down and a lot of people thought you wouldn't be at this point. Does that add extra meaning to the NCAA Selection Sunday tomorrow?

ISAAC LIKEKELE: Most definitely. You know, it does add a lot, but just for the family sake within the locker room and the staff, you know -- the fans also mean a lot to us, no doubt, but the bond that we have in this locker room, it's just amazing.

For all of us to come here not knowing that we was able to be in the tournament, that tells you what kind of bond that we've built, that we were going to come here, tournament or not. So to go, it means a lot, so we're going to take full advantage of that.

Q. Kalib, what do you think about that?

KALIB BOONE: He said it best. That's a bond. Most people when they hear they don't have the opportunity to play or to advance to not play in the NCAA Tournament, that's what you come to college for to play, to play sports for. You don't just come to be like, Yeah, I'll play basketball.

You want to come to that school and try to win. I mean, so when we heard that it was down (indiscernible) but a lot of people thought that, okay, this is just going to be a mess-around season. We're going to play, lose whatever kind of games, and just call it a season.

But we was like, No, we want to prove people wrong, and I feel like that's what we did. Whether it's winning the championship or not, we proved people wrong. We proved that this team can fight and they care about this. That's what we did, we showed we cared this whole season.

And going to the NCAA Tournament is going to be a fun experience, and I can't wait to experience that.

Q. Kalib, what was beneficial about this week for the program, being here and playing like you guys did?

KALIB BOONE: I mean, like I said, man, we showed we can play with whoever. We're dogs. We fight. No matter what league, anything. We was down, what yesterday, to the No. 2 defense or No. 1 offense in the country, Baylor, and we fought and we clawed and we won that game.

It was just the fact that we're a team of dogs that we don't expect nothing to come easy. This tournament showed me a lot. Last year we had to play the early game just to make it to the quarterfinals and then our season got canceled, so I didn't experience that.

It was amazing, honestly. It just makes me more motivated for the NCAA Tournament and the off-season because I want to get back to this point next year.

Q. Kalib, how difficult was that home stretch playing without Moncrieffe and Avery fouling out?

KALIB BOONE: It was tough, but that's why you have reinforcements. That's why you have guys -- that's why we practice. That's why we practice. That's why we (indiscernible) on one another, because then when times like that happen, this person knows what to do, that person knows what to do, and everybody did their thing. They played their hearts out and they gave us everything they could.

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