

# Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Saturday, March 13, 2021

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

## Oklahoma State Cowboys

### Mike Boynton, Jr.

Postgame Press Conference



Texas 91, Oklahoma State 86

**Q. Coach, obviously you didn't get the result you wanted to tonight, but the team had a fantastic accounting for itself during the Big 12 tournament and even at the end of the regular season. What are you most proud of your team from this run?**

MIKE BOYNTON, JR.: I'd probably have to reflect on it big picture wise at another time, but I'd say this: I can't imagine another team in the country that's had a tougher stretch, so to speak, than we have for the last three weeks.

I think we showed ourselves well, that we're in a really strong position to -- we've got our program moving in the right direction. We've taken another step this year, and our team needs to be proud of that. It's also very exciting to me, first time as a head coach, that we're going to be a part of the big dance and we're going to have a chance to continue the season, and so I'm really excited to see what we can do after we get a little bit of rest for a couple days and give ourselves a chance to go out there and compete.

**Q. Obviously there's bigger things that are yet to come; what's your message to the team in the locker room? You come right off a loss but there's still so much out there. What was your message to the guys?**

MIKE BOYNTON, JR.: Honestly, like always, disappointed that we lost, right. We didn't come this far just to come this far, so to speak. Like we came here to win the championship. That didn't happen.

The hurt is real. The disappointment is real. We lost to a really good team. I have a lot of respect for Coach Smart and what he's done there with that program and that team, and they just played better than us.

The beauty of it, though, is that we still do have some basketball out in front of us, and so we can't let this stop us from feeling like we did accomplish a lot of really good

things and that there's still more that we can still yet accomplish here moving forward.

**Q. How tough is playing three games in three days?**

MIKE BOYNTON, JR.: I haven't done it in a really long time. I don't remember it being easy, though. It is what it is. You know, this is what this tournament is.

We didn't play well enough. Texas outplayed us. They kind of imposed their will on the glass, and the truth is their two seniors, the guys that have been around the longest, stepped up and made huge plays for them when they really needed them, especially when we got it cut down there late; Coleman hit a big three; Sims had that huge offensive rebound put backs for them. And that's what seniors do. That's what you see a lot this time of year.

Again, credit to Texas. Did legs have a factor? I'm sure to a certain degree, but we had our chances and we just didn't take advantage of them enough.

**Q. Kalib said that he noticed a difference in energy in the first half. Did you notice it, too?**

MIKE BOYNTON, JR.: Yeah, yeah, it was. We didn't play as fast.

Now, Texas had a lot to do with that. They kind of tried to press us and put us on our heels and was pretty effective, but we practiced that. I thought they would try to press us and challenge us to keep up that pace or to make us slow down, and they accomplished the latter.

They made us slow down, and we obviously weren't as effective in the first half. Got a little more rhythm in the second half, but our defense wasn't nearly as sharp as it needed to be.

**Q. You mentioned Sims; there have been times that you've struggled with big guys. You didn't hold him in check tonight. What was the difference tonight with him?**

MIKE BOYNTON, JR.: I think he was just a bound and



determined senior. This was probably the last chance he's got to do this, and you see -- I've seen it. I've seen Mitchell Solomon. People watched him as a senior and were like, Where the hell did this come from? It was a sense of this is the last chance I get to do this. I'm going to lay it all on the line, and to his credit he did it in a way that helped his team win a Big 12 championship.

**Q. Before you came here you guys had some momentum going, 6 of 7, the big win in Morgantown. You could have preferred a situation where you just went back home, rested, practiced, stayed in familiar surroundings and just said, you know what, let's just roll into the -- let's take our shot at the NCAA, maybe think about Kansas City and the benefits of coming here, especially as exhausting as it was going to be, and it was for you guys. Are you glad you went through it, having done it?**

MIKE BOYNTON, JR.: Absolutely. We played for a championship tonight. I mean, those things last forever, and there's so few times that you really get a chance to win it. I thought we had a team that could win it. We were right there. We didn't make enough plays.

But the competitor in me will always want to have the opportunity to go compete. We played seven games in 14 days here recently, and I think like nine straight games against top-20 teams. I don't know if anybody has ever done that before. And to do it with a young team and really kind of have a pretty good show: Win eight of them, seven of them.

I still like where we're headed. Obviously don't like the result of tonight, but still feel good that we'll have a lot of successful nights moving forward on our team.

**Q. From a basketball perspective are you better from your three games here?**

MIKE BOYNTON, JR.: I think so. I believe in high-level competition. It's kind of like I talk about with the coaches I coach against. Those guys make me better. Our team playing against this type of competition makes us better. We've gotten better.

It's happened pretty much every year that I've coached toward the end of the season, and I hope that this year helps us carry some momentum into -- I told the guys, most of them will never experience something this fun and entertaining and cool as the NCAA Tournament.

I was part of it once as a player, several times as a coach, and unless you win like an NBA World Championship, I can't imagine anything better. This is the coolest thing

ever. We're going to be excited to go play, but we do think we got better from being up here in Kansas City.

**Q. You mentioned them pressing earlier. Cade in particular was eating a lot of double teams in the backcourt. Do you think some of that was Shaka being smart and kind of knowing you guys were a little more fatigued than they would be coming into this game?**

MIKE BOYNTON, JR.: Shaka being smart, huh?

**Q. I didn't mean to. I really didn't.**

MIKE BOYNTON, JR.: Yeah, he's a good coach, right? The dude has been to a Final Four, and probably same thing I would have done. I would have challenged our stamina a little bit because it's not really what they did often, or haven't done. They hadn't pressed us much in either of the first two games, but they took advantage of the opportunity that was in front of them. It was nobody's fault. But it worked out for them.

**Q. With a young team you kind of don't know where the mindset could be. How nice was it to see them not quit the game? Probably should've been over with like five minutes left and they just kept going, kept going. How nice was that to see from your guys?**

MIKE BOYNTON, JR.: It's not an option. It's not an option. We don't get to quit. Nope. Can't happen.

Coach Sutton's program, Mr. Iba's program, no, not an option. I'm not surprised because we don't ever talk about that. The expectation is if you're going to put on a uniform that says Oklahoma State Basketball, you're going to play as hard as you can. And if you have a chance to go out there and play, you're going to play to win, and there's not even another discussion to be had.

**Q. We talked a couple weeks ago about this could be a weird Selection Sunday with maybe the metrics not meaning as much this year. You guys have been hovering around that 2 line. Where do you think you guys will be? Where do you think you should be? What do you think about the seeding tomorrow?**

MIKE BOYNTON, JR.: I honestly have no idea. I feel good that we put ourselves in pretty good position to have a good seed that will presumably give us a chance to be favorites maybe. We've won a lot of games. I don't know if we've been a favorite in like 15 games.

We'll be like the first 2 seed to be an underdog if it happens, and we'll be fine with it. We'll just get ourselves as prepared as possible and go play hard and try to



advance.

**Q. The players talked about the hunger that they have for the rest of the postseason after this loss. What's the value of them being able to experience the grind it takes to get to this point and trying to duplicate that for the postseason for a longer run?**

MIKE BOYNTON, JR.: It's valuable, having gone through this, and the thing that I will remind them of probably every day until we play is the next time we have this feeling, losing a game, it's over. Like this team won't be together anymore. We need to make sure that we have an understanding of that.

Crazy things happen in March. I've seen teams come down from 10 with less than a minute to go. I've seen Hail Mary shots. I've seen upsets. A 16 beat a 1 finally a couple years ago, right, so a lot of things can happen.

We've got to enjoy this opportunity go on with the understanding that if you don't have it one day, it's over and you don't get it back.

**Q. In the regular season you have ample amount of time to look at the film from the previous game and so on, but three games in three days you don't really get that. When you prepare for the NCAA Tournament do you unpack these three games evenly or do you look more at this final game in the film?**

MIKE BOYNTON, JR.: I'll be honest: I'm so thankful, I hope they don't -- that we won't play a Big 12 team in our next game. As much as I appreciate how much those guys have made me better, I haven't slept in like six weeks because to prepare to win these games, it takes so much out of you.

No disrespect to any other league, but it's going to be nice that hopefully we'll play somebody fresh and I'll enjoy learning something new about a team and trying to figure out how to beat them as opposed to knowing that, man, it's going to be another long, hard night of competition at least from a preparation standpoint as I go into the games.

I probably won't watch much if any of these games. If we don't play any of these teams I may not watch them until after the season is over.

**Q. When you play these teams, nobody knows your program more than the teams in your conference. Is there value in playing teams that may not be as familiar with you, they may not know your guys the way the other programs do?**

MIKE BOYNTON, JR.: Yeah, I like my 7-0 non-conference record. I really do. But we didn't go -- we competed in the Big 12 and we lost a few of them. Like I said, no, I've been made a better coach for having coached in this league for now four years.

We've had some good battles non-conference wise, as well, and I certainly think we'll have a non-conference game to at least start this next round of games, and look forward to the challenge of something different.

**Q. Results matter. You'd have rather won this game. But the fact that you didn't play that well, it didn't seem to me -- your defense wasn't sharp, and yet you're still in the game against a really good team and you're playing three straight nights. Do you feel better about your NCAA Tournament hopes tonight than you did even last night just because of the way maybe you guys fought more than the way you played?**

MIKE BOYNTON, JR.: I don't know if I could say that right now. The loss is pretty raw and fresh. I'll tell you what I am optimistic about is the resolve of this team, finding ways to keep themselves in games when we haven't necessarily done things great. The one thing I'm encouraged about is this is the second straight game where we didn't have a super high number of turnovers and that's resulting in us being a little bit more efficient offensively.

But I am excited about what we can do after getting a few days of rest, to be perfectly honest, getting our guys kind of off their feet and kind of prepare for something new, something different. I can't reiterate this enough: This is the most exciting thing that many of these guys will ever go through as players, and I'm excited that our program is back in a place where it's relevant and that there will be a little bit of talk about Oklahoma State basketball for the next few weeks.

**Q. Cade got in early foul trouble. You didn't take him out much. Was he affected with the three fouls and the way he played? Was he much more careful than usual after he got that third foul, and did that affect your defense in any way?**

MIKE BOYNTON, JR.: You know, I don't think it affected him. I think it affected our team, particularly because Avery didn't have his best stuff tonight, either. And Bryce wasn't quite ready to come back and help us tonight. Just it wore down our depth from that standpoint.

But I thought he was assertive. He did Cade things late. He kind of made some big-time shots and kept us alive there. But I didn't think he played with any kind of

hesitation or anything like that. Again, I need to talk to him. He doesn't need to try to take a charge there like in that situation. You've just got to get a pass on that play and understand that giving up those two points isn't that significant in the grand scheme of him not being able to stay on the court.

**Q. With the foul trouble, how difficult was it to lose Moncrieffe and Avery there at the end?**

MIKE BOYNTON, JR.: It was huge. I mean, rebounding just starting was big. That's one of the areas that Matthew helps us a lot. Then having Avery being able to drive and draw fouls was something we thought we'd be able to do. They started calling it a little tighter later.

But again, I don't want to take anything away from Texas. They played a really good game. They have a great team. I have an unbelievable amount of respect for Shaka. He's done a hell of a job there, and I wish them well as they move forward in the NCAA Tournament, as well.

**Q. Is there anything important to you that we didn't talk about that you want to make sure we do discuss while the group is here?**

MIKE BOYNTON, JR.: Yeah, I mean, I'll just say this, that I'm hopeful some of them will show up in Indianapolis, but we have unbelievable fans, and I can't thank them enough.

I was in the locker room probably about 45 minutes prior to the game and I was hearing the orange power chant. It was reverberating all the way into the locker room, and I really felt like I was about to walk out in a full crowd of -- that's how it felt. It's a credit to our fans for their patience in allowing us to rebuild and reestablish the energy around this program and to be again nationally relevant.

I'm so excited first for COVID to be over health-wise, but also so that they can get back to enjoying Oklahoma State basketball the way they know it, and I can't wait to see more of them in Indianapolis and then as we move forward in Stillwater.

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