

Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Saturday, March 13, 2021

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

Texas Longhorns

Matt Coleman

Postgame Press Conference

Texas - 91, Oklahoma State - 86

Q. Matt, I don't want to start you out with such a loaded question, but when you think back to Coach Smart recruiting you in the eighth grade and thinking about picking Texas and having it culminate today with a 30-point game to win a Big 12 Championship, how do you put into words -- and I know you still have basketball left to play, but how do you put into words what this means right now?

MATT COLEMAN: I can't even explain it. Nobody knows how much it means for myself and for Coach. Just since I was in eighth grade, he recruited me. Since I stepped foot on campus, we had our ups, we had our downs, but nothing compares. I wouldn't trade anything -- no teammate, no coach -- and I wouldn't trade Coach Smart for the world. I appreciate him sticking with me just since day one, and I'm glad that we have something to show for it.

Q. Matt, when did you realize that -- you guys and Coach Smart spent so much time talking together, about the team, about everything. When did you guys realize that you guys were capable of doing this? To not just win an invitational, but to have the regular season you had, to have the Big 12 Championship, and now going into the NCAA Tournament with a lot of momentum?

MATT COLEMAN: I said that when I set foot on campus, when we got the whole team here, I looked to my left and looked to my right and said, we got some guys. We've got the makeup to do some really special things this season. We didn't win the conference regular season, but this was just a step for us, one out of three that we hoped to achieve, and now we just hope to survive and advance in the NCAA Tournament, cut down some more nets.

Q. Matt, it sounds hard to believe, but you all have done something that Kevin Durant, T.J. Ford, none of



those guys could ever do. Do you just think that that sort of adds to the specialness of this group and what you all have accomplished? COVID and all that going into it.

MATT COLEMAN: I think we just, we've earned just a little bit of respect from just anybody. Not that we're looking to earn -- searching for respect, because we knew that, in each other, what we had and what we could do this year. Back to what Dustin said, I knew I had a special group throughout the year. I'm just happy. It means a lot to me, and I'm just happy for myself, for my teammates, and for Coach Smart.

Q. Matt, when you guys kind of hit that midseason funk, what's the difference between when you guys are playing like you're playing tonight, when you guys are right, and when you guys were maybe struggling just a little bit.

MATT COLEMAN: I'd say the biggest thing is just playing with -- I mean, we have everybody. We have everybody. We had that midseason funk, and it just took us some time to just get back and get to our rhythm that we had prior to that. Now we're just carrying over, trusting and believing in Coach, his blueprint, playing unselfish, playing with a pace, and just defending at a high level. That puts us in the best chance to win a game, any game.

Q. Matt, we all know about your relationship with Coach Smart. What did you guys have to say to each other when that clock clicked zero?

MATT COLEMAN: I just cried. It was like tears of joy. I said, Coach, this is what we've been saying since day one. It took four years to make it happen to take a step in the right direction. You did this. You built the culture here. I'm proud. I'm proud to be a part of it. The rest was just like tears and just feeling his love, man. It's deeper than any game of basketball.

Q. Matt, just a couple years ago, you all are in New York cutting down nets for the NIT and talking about what's the next step? We want to cut down nets in the Big 12 Tournament and the NCAA Tournament. You all



got to do that first part now. What was the journey like to get from there to here between COVID, the last season being cancelled, just everything you all have been through from that moment to now, cutting down nets.

MATT COLEMAN: I want to start with we're just playing the game of basketball. There's a lot of things going on in this world that's bigger than the game of basketball, people losing jobs and everything. Basketball just gave us, the 12, 13 guys in this locker room, the outlet to not think about what goes on a daily basis in their lives.

I think we just stayed true, we stayed connected. We allowed basketball to take our mind off certain things. We're just using it as a tool to be the best individuals to build character, and I think that just leads every day to us getting better and becoming better men.

Q. Matt, it seemed like there was a certain point in the game where Courtney was the guy on the ball for the most part on Cade, and then you kind of took over that role. What led into that? Was that you talking to Coach Smart? Was that Coach Smart saying he wanted you on him? How did that switch happen?

MATT COLEMAN: That was just me saying I got him, just as simple as that. I said, I got him. I'll take on this matchup. That's all that was.

Q. Matt, I want to extend a huge congratulations before I get to my question. I know one thing coaches talk about in sports is the little things, those fine details you go into in practice. Looking back on it now, I know Coach Smart said that in his denomination day, how important was that in this season in getting on top of the Big 12?

MATT COLEMAN: Small wins every day. Small wins in practice. Small wins on how you respond when Coach is coaching you. Small wins on how you deal with your teammates. Just every little thing. I always say a little -- after a little -- eventually, a little becomes a lot. That's all that was. All that work, all the meetings, all the film, everything, it leads up to winning a championship. That's what we did today. We were able to accomplish that. One of our goals.

Q. Matt, the first round picks have come and gone, Jackson Hayes, Jared Allen, Mo Bamba. But you look up, and the dogs that stuck around for three or four years are enjoying the most success -- you, Jase, Andrew, Courtney, Jericho. What does it say about the culture that Shaka Smart is creating now with guys that stick around for a while and then are not lottery

picks?

MATT COLEMAN: Man, it's just the power that Coach Smart has. I'm so happy. People shit on him. Excuse my language. He takes the heat for those bad years that Texas has had, and it's led to this. I'm just happy for him because I want this for him -- not only for myself, but I want this for him because he's been through a lot. He's been through it all here. I'm happy for him. That's all I can say. Just happy for him.

Q. Matt, pace and poise are two words that Shaka's used a lot for four years. Has it gotten to the point where it's not like teaching those things anymore, but does it feel on the court where those things are second nature and you guys just know that you have to play with pace and you have to play with poise?

MATT COLEMAN: Just a little bit of both. It's maturity on our end. Coach is going to coach. We're going to listen. He's going to give us the blueprint. It's on us to follow through with it.

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