

Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

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Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

Oklahoma State Cowboys

Mike Boynton

Tyreek Smith

Bryce Thompson

Postgame Press Conference



you know, really. Because a lot of times when you go through the struggles we've gone through in today's world, they get told their coaches don't know what they're doing. So for them to continue to believe in us and believe in each other, it's a big deal. So, glad to see those guys just stick with the game plan from start to finish.

Q. Tyreek, at the beginning of the year, you said you wanted your conditioning to stand out. Today I think you had 14 rebounds, kind of all over the place. How do you think that's come to be this late in the season?

TYREEK SMITH: You know, it starts in practice. I just try to work on my conditioning any time I can, and I guess it's showing off. So that's good. I like that.

Q. Tyreek, they've been playing through Tanner for the past couple of weeks. What pride did you take in drawing that assignment down low today in kind of limiting him to what he was held to today?

TYREEK SMITH: I always take pride in defense. Even coach said he thinks I'm the best defender on the team. So I take pride in guarding anybody and everybody.

Q. Bryce, early in the game, or most of the game, really, neither offense was getting any kind of rhythm, but early in the game, you were able to take some shots and make some good passes for baskets. How much did you realize the frustration of most of the offense, and why were you able more than anybody else on the court to be successful?

BRYCE THOMPSON: I was kind of taking what they gave me. Coach did a good job drawing up plays where I was able to come down screens. And from there, I was just reading it. And they were switching early. So whenever I got one of the bigs on the island, I kind of backed it up and was able to get to my spots. From there, they started guarding me up more, and that's when you see the passes. Just making the right read and the right play, for sure.

Q. Bryce, you mentioned you take what they gave you. Is that difficult to continue to be patient when shots aren't falling elsewhere?

Oklahoma Sooners, 49 - Oklahoma State, 57.

THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and get started. We've got Coach Boynton here with Bryce Thompson and Tyreek Smith.

Coach, if you can get us started with some general comments about the game.

MIKE BOYNTON: Yeah. Really obviously hard fought game. Two teams fighting to keep their seasons alive and continue to play on, like you see around the country everywhere. I'm really just proud of our guys, the fight that it took to continue to defend at the level we were able to tonight, even when shots weren't falling.

That kind of goes back to who we were when we were really good early in the year, not really getting deflated when we didn't make shots, but continuing to believe our defense and rebounding could carry us, and it certainly did tonight.

Q. Mike, you mentioned the defense, what did you like on a night when you said the shots weren't falling, but what did you like about the defense that's been different the last few weeks?

MIKE BOYNTON: I just felt like the kids stuck with the game plan. Obviously we knew they had been playing better and playing with some younger guys out there. But for the most part, they were going to play through Tanner and Grant, and we wanted to try to limit their efficiency and effectiveness. And I thought they didn't really get a bunch of easy looks really until late in the game.

So I just appreciate those guys for sticking with our staff,

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BRYCE THOMPSON: You've just got to go with the flow of the game. You can't try to force it. That's when you make unnecessary errors. Just go with the flow, take what they gave you. Make the right play. From there, you can't control whether shots go in. But you want to make sure you're taking good shots and making the right play each time.

Q. Bryce, back here, way in the back. Is the feeling like you've done enough to get in now, or do you feel like tomorrow you're going to have the same do-or-die approach?

BRYCE THOMPSON: I'm going to be honest, I don't really pay attention to the bigger picture right now. We're just focused game by game. I think if we continue with that approach, all of that will take care of itself. So if we just go to sleep tonight, get some rest, focus on the game plan and come out ready to play against Texas, we'll see what happens from there.

Q. Tyreek, I think it's two straight games that the starting lineup changed with you and Cissé back in. How much do you think that's helped your defense with, of course, the rim protection, the rebounding, and of course, the grittiness of yourself and Cissé?

TYREEK SMITH: Well, I try to feed off my teammates. Not only myself I take pride in defense, but I think we all do. So I think me being in the lineup, it kind of boosts us, gives us a good boost because we can be very versatile in many ways. So I think that's what it was.

Q. Bryce, you know, this is a rivalry match-up. What does it feel like knowing you essentially ended your arrival season?

BRYCE THOMPSON: You've got to give credit to them. They're a good team. They've done a lot of good things this year, but we just came out ready to play. This is our third time playing them, and we beat them all three times. I think that's just credit to our team, our staff, and our coaches of preparing us the right way and not getting satisfied. Because it could have been easy for us to come out in this game and be kind of smooth just because we beat them twice already. But, you know, coach made sure that we were locked in, and we were ready, and we treated it like it was the next game.

Q. I give Tanner Groves a lot of credit because he kept trying, but you guys weren't letting him do anything. What is it about this match-up, all three games, really that you guys, you and Moussa, and even Caleb were able to neutralize him so effectively?

TYREEK SMITH: Well, I feel like you know we're trying to get to the tournament, so we just are stepping it up on defense because we always said we could be like a Top 5 defense in the country, and I think we showed that we're very capable of doing it. So I think that's what it was.

THE MODERATOR: One last question for the players? Not seeing one, we'll excuse the players to the locker room that's open to the media and continue with questions for Coach Boynton. Get a hand up, and we'll get a wireless mic to you.

Q. Mike, different parts of the year, you said it's important to win by one point. Is that kind of what today was coming down to?

A. Yeah. I think part of it is who we are as a program, you know, and where we're trying to -- where we're trying to go. It's just being consistently good and getting better from the start of the year to the end of the year. And you have to continue to preach the same message over and over and over again for it to sink in to kids and to recruits and to families. If every week you're changing that message, you don't really have any core to stand on. So I think, you know, just sticking with that has helped us be able to focus on the next task.

You know, I've got a lot of respect for the program that we played today and their coach. They obviously have played a lot better over the last couple of weeks, as I said earlier. But our guys were bound and determined tonight to get the job done and continue in this tournament and then kind of seeing where we can go from here.

But in this league, a one-point win takes you a long way, so I'm glad we got one more under our belt.

Q. Mike, it was less than three weeks ago you had the rough defensive stretch against TCU, Kansas, and then West Virginia. How gratifying is it to return to where you guys were and hold OU to 49?

A. Yeah, I mean, you know, it's a hard conference to navigate for two and a half months, it really is, you know. I don't know this to be a fact, but I would find it hard to believe that there's any other power five conference where every team lost at least three games in a row at some point during conference play.

And I think that shows two things, the strength of the league and the grind of this league. I mean, because the best team in our league also went through a three-game losing streak at some point and still won the league by two games.



I mean, so, just you're going to have those moments during the season, and what you've got to do is be able to hold your kids' attention enough that they don't get so distracted by the outside noise that they can still believe in what you're doing. I give all the credit to our staff, but also to having good kids.

If you don't have good kids in your program, you can't do what we've done. You can't lose five games in a row, still believe you have a chance to do some special things and find a way to just keep fighting.

So it's a testament to, you know, what we've tried to establish over the last, you know, now almost six full seasons. And what we hope to continue to build so that we can continue to have consistent success.

You know, there's always going to be nights where games or consecutive games where we don't meet the mark. It's not for lack of effort. The kids were trying hard. We were also playing against really good teams, and sometimes you have to give credit to your opponent.

Q. Yeah, Mike, same question I asked Tyreek. What does the new starting lineup, what does that do for your defense?

A. Well, I think it does several things, obviously. It makes us much more physical certainly on the front line. You know, the lineup we had been starting before that was Woody and Caleb, basically at the four-five. They're two thinner guys with not as much physicality. So it makes us much more physical.

But it also helps us offensively kind of know what that lineup we're going to play through our guards, primarily. So Caleb kind of struggled here honestly in the last couple of weeks. Rather than to continue to try to force that square peg in a round hole, let's just try to figure out another way to get him back on board. And obviously he played a little bit better today, gave us some energy. But I think the physicality, and knowing we've got better screeners, really demoralizing, I would imagine, that possession with Tyreek with two offensive rebounds flying all over the place late in the game where maybe they had a little bit of life. I think that was really like the last punch for them. I think their physicality, length, and just their competitiveness on the glass really gave us a great edge to start the game.

Q. 19 hours until tipoff with Texas, what challenges do they present and what do you have to do to make it a favorable match-up for you?

A. I've got to stop talking to you guys and get some rest. No, they're really good. We obviously played them twice during the year. It was a defensive struggle in Stillwater. It was our first game without Moussa, I believe. And then we played them in Austin, and we didn't have Moussa there either.

Obviously, I'm banking on having him tomorrow, and hopefully he makes a little bit of a difference for us. But they're really dynamic. They've got a lot of talented offensive players, but they take pride on the defensive end and make it sure they make it difficult on you to score. So first thing we've got to do is get our kids rested, get some food into their bodies, and put a quick game plan together.

That's the unique thing about this league. It's not like some leagues where maybe you only play a team once and we haven't played them since January. We haven't played them since January, but we have played them twice and we've watched them a lot. So we have a pretty good feel of who they are and what they do well, we've got our hands full. They're really good. They finished second in the league for a reason.

Q. The first two games you used Avery and Caleb Asberry more so. On Grant today, it was John Michael Wright, and was that size dependent, and what did you think of the job that John Michael did?

A. I thought he did a really good job. I thought our help defense was as good as it's been in a long time. When I say help, I don't mean rotation, I mean already being in position if a guy got beat. We had a couple shot clock violations. When I see that, that means our guys are really connected. There's really not a place to go. Teams don't do shot clock violations on purpose. They're trying to get a shot. So 30 seconds is a long time to not find a place to go with the ball. So I just thought that collectively the five guys on the court, most of the game, were pretty dialed in on their assignment. And we, obviously, did a really good job on Grant. John Michael and Asberry and Bryce Thompson, and Chris Harris when he was in there.

Q. Three double digit wins over OU, and us that don't really know the game as well as you do think we know why. Why do you think this is such a good match-up for OSU, this season against the Sooners?

A. I don't know if I've thought about -- I don't know if I've thought about it that way, to be honest. What I've thought about every time is how do we play well. I mean, they've got really good players, and I have so much respect for Coach Moser because I've seen what he's been able to do once he has a program established.

I just think that sometimes our length around the rim has bothered them, made it difficult for them to be able to get easy shots. And we tried to make them play over that length and not around it, if you will.

So being in possession, to answer the question, makes them have to go over us and not giving them angles. And it's hard to go over Cissé and Boone when he's really good, and even Tyreek's made a couple really good blocks today as well.

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