

# Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 9, 2023

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

## West Virginia Mountaineers

### Coach Bob Huggins

### Joe Toussaint

### Erik Stevenson

#### Postgame Press Conference

West Virginia 61, Kansas 78

MODERATOR: Joined by West Virginia Head Coach Bob Huggins are Erik Stevenson and Joe Toussaint.

Questions for student-athletes and then for coach at the end. Who wants to go first?

**Q. For both you guys, that 14 to nothing run they went on first half you guys were never able to catch back up after that when you did you so going wrong during that stretch and how costly was that for you guys?**

ERIK STEVENSON: They just came out and played harder than us, had energy. Obviously they were really good team. They can make shots. They are really good in the pick-and-roll game because they got a guy names KJ Adams who can put his chin on the rim.

And they got good passers. Dajuan Harris can really pass the ball. If you come out with no energy or lack of energy, they're going to make you pay for sure.

**Q. This for both you. This is the third loss to Kansas on the year. How does having not much success against one team affect your confidence going into NCAA Tournament?**

ERIK STEVENSON: Not at all.

JOE TOUSSAINT: I mean, it's the No. 1 team in the country, to be honest with you. Doesn't really affect confidence.

ERIK STEVENSON: We never lack confidence.



JOE TOUSSAINT: (Indiscernible). That's all it is.

**Q. Obviously Harris is a very good defender. What do you see from him now facing three times this year that makes him so elite on that side of the ball?**

ERIK STEVENSON: He makes up for his lack of size with good instincts and great hands defensively. If you beat him, you don't really beat him because he loves the back (indiscernible). He did that to me twice. I got foul called once. The first time ended up in a (indiscernible). He's I really good at that time.

He's got guys around him that are good defenders as well, so as a team they are good defensively, and Harris is just the (indiscernible) on the ball for sure.

**Q. Either of you guys, how are your legs, the energy? Just quick turnaround from last night. How is the team feeling?**

JOE TOUSSAINT: I guess you could say we're tired. We lacked energy. To be honest with you, I mean, they weren't doing anything too special. We just lacked energy.

**Q. Even in a loss, how does this experience here in Kansas city help prepare you guys as you go to the NCAA Tournament next week?**

ERIK STEVENSON: We're playing on a neutral site, which is gonna be just like the tournament. We had a good crowd today. I was robbed of being in the tournament so I can't say I have tournament experience, but you're playing a really good team like that, there's really good teams like that in the tournament every game that you play.

So just playing on neutral site I guess and against a really good team with neutral crowd if you want to call it that. You got create your own energy. It was hard to do that today with how the game went.

**Q. For either of you guys, rebounding was a big focus heading into yesterday's game. They outscored you 16 to 2 in second-chance points today. Was that fatigue or lack of energy, or what did you see in that**



area?

JOE TOUSSAINT: I would say it's lack of effort. Everybody watched the game. Our energy just wasn't there today.

MODERATOR: Closing questions for our student -- athletes?

**Q. For either of you guys, between now and Selection Sunday, and then hopefully the NCAA Tournament after that, what's the biggest thing I guess in the players' minds to work on over the next week or so?**

ERIK STEVENSON: Just rest your bodies, rest your minds. I'm proud of our team. We dug ourselves out of a huge hole in this league to start, and we're going to get our name called on Sunday. Just a matter of when, not where, who we play. So we gotta take everybody's -- got to reset our minds. It's a one-game season at this point.

MODERATOR: Erik and Joe, let you go back to the locker room. Thank you for coming, and good luck next week.

Keep coach here for his question time. Who has the first one? Here on the right.

**Q. Coach, they talked about that energy and effort. Do you think that was the ^ bigs ^ biggest difference here today?**

BOB HUGGINS: Without question. I was -- I was concerned about it when the game started. Just -- we didn't have that bounce. We had no bounce in our step at all.

**Q. I asked Erik about Dajuan Harris. I guess, what do you see from him defensively that makes him so elite in that area of the game?**

BOB HUGGINS: He's a good ball-tender. Probably -- I think we've got a lot of them in our league. King's a tremendous on-the-ball defender; he's just been hurt. And Harris is good.

**Q. Coach, did you notice any difference today in what Kansas did, I guess, under BOB HUGGINS versus what they normally do with Bill or is it pretty much the same standard stuff by Kansas?**

BOB HUGGINS: I don't think they did anything different. Bill's one of the great coaches really of all time. When you stop and think about it, he's a hall of fame guy for a reason, and he's won countless games at Kansas there. He's -- they've been at the top of the ladder year after year after

year after year.

So, you know, and he's got Joe on the bench. Joe was his a head coach himself. Norm was a head coach.

there's probably a few more down there I can't think of right now.

But he's got a great staff. He's got a great staff. He does a great job. I think they're good guys. They're good guys to be around. I know I've got a great relationship with the whole staff.

**Q. Coach, last year you made some comments after the game that you played against the Jayhawks about the national championship and how well the Big 12 went to perform in the tournament.**

How do you see the conference this year with how difficult it is being able to translate that into tournament success?

BOB HUGGINS: Well, I think that's -- that's a hard question to answer when we're not sure how many are getting in. I think when you look at the coaches in our league, they're great coaches.

You know, there's not -- there's not a bad coach in the league. They're all terrific coaches. And they've got good players.

So I think anybody in our league could get -- could make a run. And a lot of it depends on match-ups.

**Q. Two questions here for you, Coach. I'll ask them one at a time, the first one being, I guess, kind of on that note, how much did the last two days prepare you all for (indiscernible) going to be in an NCAA Tournament around here coming up starting next week?**

BOB HUGGINS: I would hope that next week -- I guess next week or whenever it is that we get in the NCAA Tournament, that we forget about this.

This was -- this wasn't the team that I had all year. I mean, we came out with absolutely no enthusiasm, no pep in our step. It was -- it was a bad game. It was a bad game from where I was, just trying to watch it.

We just didn't play. I'm not -- I don't know -- I don't know the whys, but --

**Q. So then I guess is that enthusiasm, that effort, the biggest thing that needs to improve between now and whenever you all play next, or is there something else?**

BOB HUGGINS: I don't know. I don't know.

Practice-wise we did very little strenuous things. We kind of walked through the people we were gonna play; we walked through what they ran offensively. We kind of went through what they -- were we thought they would do, anyways, defensively.

And I just -- I didn't want -- coming off of the run that we had to end the conference season they were tired, and so I purposely didn't do hardly anything at all with them strenuous.

We walked through things. We looked at film. We did those kind of things, but -- and actually, I guess yesterday we were pretty good. Today we were horrible. Just had no -- we had no enthusiasm, no fire to us whatsoever.

MODERATOR: Two more questions for coach.

**Q. Jumping back to Coach Self, I imagine you guys were pretty busy. Have you had a chance to speak with him or do you have any plans to?**

BOB HUGGINS: No, no. He's in the hospital. No, I haven't. I'm going to plan on calling him. I kind of need to find out from his guys when it's a good time. I don't want to make a call or do whatever that's not in his best interest.

I want to do what's in his best interest. And I'm sure, you know, at some point in time we'll talk. He and I talk. You know, I've been through those things and it's not any fun, you know, and especially I think it's -- I think it would be really hard for Bill this time of year because of him trying to make another run for a national championship, and him being in the state that he's in now, I would think that would be very difficult.

He's a great competitor, tremendous competitor.

MODERATOR: Last question.

**Q. You just started answering you had your own health issue at one point. How do you, I guess, prioritize your own mortality versus, I want to get back to my guys? Somebody have to tell you to slow down or how did you do it?**

BOB HUGGINS: I'm not a very good listener. They told me come up here and be honest. I'm being honest. I'm not a very good listener. There are times when you really don't have any choice, and I went through that. I had no choice.

I was in the hospital with a whole bunch of tubes and somebody coming in every seemed like every 15 minutes and sticking me with something.

I want Bill to get well, you know, I want to say as soon as he can, but really I think what I need to say or mean to say is that I want him to come out of there the way he's always been. If that makes sense. Uh-huh.

MODERATOR: Thank you so much.

BOB HUGGINS: Yes, sir.

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