

Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 9, 2023

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

Oklahoma State Cowboys

Michael Boynton

Kalib Boone

John-Michael Wright

Postgame Press Conference

Texas 60, Oklahoma State 47

MICHAEL BOYNTON: Obviously we didn't play very well, and that goes without saying. Obviously we played poorly on a day where we really, you know, needed to play much better.

But give credit to Texas. They obviously were the aggressors from the beginning. I think they took great advantage of having the extra day of rest, and you know, they pressured us quite a bit and forced us into the turnovers that we had kind of gotten away from the last few games and compounded it by not making shots when we were actually open.

So tough day, but I'm incredibly proud of these kids. They fought their butt off through a lot of adversity this year, whether be injury or illness or guys having to be away from the team for different reasons. They continued to stick with each other and our staff, and I'm excited that we have more basketball ahead of us.

Q. Kalib, what have you made of your past few weeks?

KALIB BOONE: Honestly, I would just say that like the last few weeks, I haven't really been a consistent version of myself for my teammates. So I made a decision at halftime, and it was kind of too late, that I was just going to be more assertive. I was trying to demand the ball and trying to be aggressive on the glass and just do something for my teammates, and that's what my mindset was.

So I had a conversation with my dad before the game, and he was telling me, he said, "Go back to being that aggressive person, like a month ago." And that's what -- I was like, okay, I need to be there.



Q. Kalib, you talked about that aggressiveness and needing to get back to it, but in the conversations with your dad, what was the conversations like?

KALIB BOONE: Before every game, my dad will text me something that he knows is going to happen or feels like is probably going to happen. He's just like, be aggressive. You know they are going to try to double-team you or something like that, so go do that.

So I called him, because I haven't really talked to him the last two days. He's like, "You just can't be passive, relaxed Kalib. You've got to be aggressive and be assertive, go make a presence somehow." What he told me yesterday I did it on defense, but he was like, "Try to go do it on offense and defense today," so that's what I tried to do.

Q. John-Michael, what does Texas present defensively to you guys that kind of stymied you in the first matchup back in January and again today?

JOHN-MICHAEL WRIGHT: They are a real aggressive defensive team. They try to push you out to the halfcourt as much as possible, and they were able to do that us in the last two match-ups. They are pretty athletic as well. They are one of the teams that matchup with us athletically, and they were able to get up in us and force to make careless turnovers and that's what got us out of our offense in both matchups against us, so credit to their defense.

Q. Do you guys feel like you've done enough to get into the Big Dance?

JOHN-MICHAEL WRIGHT: I believe so, yeah. We are playing one of the best leagues in the country, and I believe with our resumé, we put a lot of good wins up against a lot of good teams. And we have proven to be one of the best teams defensively in the country.

We were No. 5 in the nation a countless number of times. We play hard. And for the committee, I believe, if we make it to the tournament, we'll make it exciting. We are a team that doesn't give up. And our foundation is defense, and



we'll be ready for anything if we get the bid to go to March Madness, and we'll try to make it as exciting as possible. As a team, I feel like we've done enough, and I hope the committee gives us grace.

Q. You laid out the case for why you guys should be there, but the fact is now it's out of your hands. What are those feelings going into the weekend and having to wait until Sunday not knowing?

JOHN-MICHAEL WRIGHT: It's tough because it's probably a three-day wait, and there's a lot of basketball left to play around the country. We just have to sit and watch other teams play and just see how it goes across each league in the country. But you know, like I said, I believe we have done enough, my team, my coaching staff, we believe we've done enough. We are just going to sit, wait and be patient for our name to be called on Sunday.

Q. You've played 20 games now against Big 12 teams, unanimously the toughest conference in the country. Are you looking forward, whether NIT or NCAA, to play somebody that's not a Big 12 team and because you've played this tough schedule, how prepared do you think you're prepared to go deep in the tournament?

JOHN-MICHAEL WRIGHT: I think we are prepared for anybody. Like you said, we've played in the best league in the country, and we've seen it all. And we've won a lot of games against high-level teams. You know, we are prepared for anybody we play in any league, in any tournament.

Yes, it helps playing in the Big 12 and playing 20 games in the Big 12. So I believe we are prepared for anybody that comes against us.

Q. Do you think you've done enough to hear your name called on Sunday?

MICHAEL BOYNTON: Yeah, I thought we did enough coming into the tournament to be perfectly honest. I mean, this league presents challenges that, I've been in several others, that no other league does. And I think it's historically good this year. It's not just a good league and not just a league that is better than the others, but it's far and away better than the other leagues. And with all due respect, because there's really good basketball around the country, but to get eight wins in this conference, three in a row, three sweeps, to play the schedule we played overall is a testament to the character of these guys. I think we certainly deserve inclusion into the event.

Q. Now that it's out of your hands, you've been in this

spot before and these guys haven't. How do you coach them away from basketball these next few days of this waiting game?

MICHAEL BOYNTON: You let them get away from it a little bit. There are some of them that are going to watch a lot of it and there are some of them that won't watch any of it to be honest and both are okay.

It's been a grind for two and a half months going through this league. And if I didn't love basketball so much, I may escape it myself for a couple days, but I won't. I'll watch every single game I possibly can just because I like to watch basketball, and I like hoops, and we have a vested interest in what happens in some of these other conference tournaments.

I'll encourage them to take a breath and relax, and there's more basketball left for this team one way or the other. I hope it's the best event in all of sports, and we look forward to getting together and finding out where we go next on Sunday.

Q. As someone who is coaching in this league, I'm sure you're sometimes kept up at night trying to think about how to beat all these difficult and quite deep teams in the league. Why do you think that we have such a historically good Big 12 this year?

MICHAEL BOYNTON: I think there's a variety of reasons. First of all, there's really good players. That's where it always starts. Keyontae Johnson's story is just one of several of guys who have become household names across the country. His story is one of the best stories in the country. Probably can't be told enough. And then obviously the program that Kansas has and has always had, there's just no bad teams in our conference.

I mean, so I think when you talk about the players, the Hall of Fame coaches, the National Championship pedigree throughout the league, and then you go into every environment in our conference, and you don't expect a stale environment.

You go on the road to Manhattan or Ames or Morgantown, and hopefully Stillwater is in that conversation for other people, you feel like it's a big-time deal. And I think all of those elements coalesce to make it truly a war with all due respect to our war fighters, but it's truly a battle every single game. And a lot of them come down to one possession. A lot of them are really kind of decided in the last four minutes. And I think that intensity, the consistency of the competitive energy you have to have to get through is what separates it from the rest of the conferences.



Q. Bill Self was hospitalized and had a procedure, and we don't have a lot of details about it. But can you speak to the stresses that all of this stuff puts on you guys as coaches and how important it is to take care of your own health when you're trying to do all this?

MICHAEL BOYNTON: As coaches, we talk to young people about taking care of their bodies and their health all the time, and we probably don't live that as well ourselves. I am probably one of the worst sleepers, and I'm not complaining at all. I don't -- you know, I don't wish for more sleep. But I do take a lot of pride in trying to stack up and be as good as the people I know we have to compete against and giving our guys the best chance.

So there's an element of pressure that comes with all these jobs; the element of exposure that you have on decision-making.

My old coach, Eddie Fogler, told me when I got into this business, make sure you have thick skin because you're a make or a miss in a couple of games from determining whether you're a coach or a bad coach. And oftentimes it's really determined by when the ball is in the air, what happens when it goes through the net and either hits or bounces off.

But the nature of it is we are really competitive people, and we all got into this to help young folks. So we obviously are thinking of Coach Self. He's an Oklahoma State guy. And obviously our thoughts are with him and his wife and family wife, and we certainly hope he makes a full recovery and gets back on the court to coaching those guys as soon as he can safely.

But there's no doubt that just some of the things that add to coaches not having great health outside of their physical, right, mental health, and then certainly sometimes even the physical. So we are thinking of him, but we also have a great league of coaches who support one another, and I think that helps.

Q. How excited are you to play somebody who is not in the Big 12? I'm sure you're looking forward to playing more games and looking forward to playing a non-Big 12 team?

MICHAEL BOYNTON: Yeah. I think everybody when they leave here is going to be excited that their next game is going to be against somebody who has not been on the schedule for the last two and a half months.

But I'm more excited about what I have an opportunity to do with these kids, which is practice more, continue to be encouraged by them to see them come together and fight

through all the adversity that they are able to.

And then obviously whoever we play next, I look forward to having an opportunity to prepare for them and knowing that it's not going to be Bill Self or Bob Huggins. They are not going to know every single play we run, at least I don't think they will, won't be -- won't be a negative at all.

Q. Tyreek nicked up tonight. Chris last night. Don't have Avery. Moussa is hit-and-miss. What is your health status or your readiness to be close to competitive no matter where you end up next week?

MICHAEL BOYNTON: Well, I definitely didn't want to lose today, so I want it make that clear, but that we may have a chance to get some guys to get some rest, to get some rehab and kind of get another diagnosis on Avery and see where he is and see if he's able to play wherever we are next week, there are some positives that could come out of this.

Get home, get off our feet and kind of get our minds off basketball for a couple days and then regroup.

I don't feel like any of it's major obviously other than Avery. We'll see with Chris when we get back and get an MRI on his knee, and obviously we'll take precautions to make sure he's as healthy as he can be before he plays again. I know I have a bunch of guys who still want to play.

Whoever we have left, it may be eight, it may be seven, but we'll try to give them the best chance we have to give them a successful finish to their season this year.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

