

Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Tuesday, March 12, 2024

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

Oklahoma State Cowboys Coach Mike Boynton, Jr. Eric Dailey Javon Small

Postgame Press Conference

UCF - 77, Oklahoma State - 62

THE MODERATOR: We've got Head Coach Mike Boynton, Jr. here along with student-athletes Eric Dailey and Javon Small. Coach, comments about the game.

MIKE BOYNTON, JR.: First, give credit to Central Florida and Coach Dawkins. I thought they played consistently throughout the game. Particularly the second half, I thought, was where the game was ultimately decided. We got off to a really slow start on the offensive end and by the time we found our rhythm, it was way too late, got down too deep. Rebounding was an issue, as it has been for most of the season, but I'm proud of our kids, bunch of young guys who went out there and fought and competed.

Every day. We didn't always play well, but we always competed hard and tried to stick together and represent the school in the right way. Unfortunately our season comes to an end today but Central Florida gets to move on. Obviously, they will continue, but we will go home.

Q. Mike, what needs to change within the program going into next season?

MIKE BOYNTON, JR.: I mean, there are a lot of things that we need to address. I'm not sure I've given a ton of thought to that at this point, but there will be a time where I will have a chance to sit back and evaluate it all. Right now I'm really, really heartbroken for John-Michael and Mike Marsh and Jarious Hicklen and Carson Sager and Weston Church that they don't get to be a part of college basketball anymore. So that's where my focus is. Obviously 12-20 isn't good enough. I'm not shying away from that. There are things that we need to do as a collective group to get better, and we will adjust those



things as soon as we get back to campus and have some time to digest it.

Q. Coach, tonight took a while to get going from three. There were moments like that throughout the season, going into the year you talked about how you had confidence in the shooters you brought in and stuff. Was it a little frustrating that you guys could never hit three's consistently during the regular season? What do you think contributed to that?

MIKE BOYNTON, JR.: Shooting is a big part of confidence and sometimes, especially with younger guys, that also then affects how you stay engaged on the defensive end and that was a big Achilles for us throughout the year. So certainly frustrated because I know these guys are capable, all of them, of being able to shoot the ball better. We've seen them shoot it well in practice. Just didn't always translate to games. That happens sometimes, and unfortunately today was another one of those days and it's a day that we don't get tomorrow because of it.

Q. Eric, when you think about the season you've had from October, November to now, how do you think it went and how would you characterize it?

ERIC DAILEY, JR.: I think I got an opportunity to learn and grow as a player and as a person here. It didn't go the way we wanted it to as a team, but there is still hope for us. We're going to work on some things in the off-season. I just feel like I'm a freshman so I get some more time to learn and, you know, grow as a player. That's really it.

Q. Both players, Eric, obviously freshman year. This might be too soon, but what have you learned you need to work on going into the off-season. And same for Javon, your first year at the Power Five level. What are some things you are going to work on going into the off-season?

JAVON SMALL: Personally, things I need to get better on, just myself. Just trying to be more vocal, more of a vocal leader and more of a leader in general. That's what I got to improve on the most.



ERIC DAILEY, JR.: I think for me just consistently doing the things that impact winning. Just being a leader as well. Those are the things I need to work on coming back next year.

Q. How much of the season kind of was about the Big 12, the conference as a whole being as loaded as it is and, especially you Eric and Javon, it being your first year in the conference, being thrown into the Power Five level, the best level of the conference?

MIKE BOYNTON, JR.: The league is unforgiving and there is no time to feel sorry for yourself. There is a team that's probably ranked on the schedule ahead of you just as good as the one you just played and you're learning how to navigate that is difficult for young guys.

Fortunately for us, this does make you better. It makes you grow, forces you to get uncomfortable and embrace things that maybe you're not as good at. I think for all of us, coaches and players alike, this has made us better, even though it's been really, really challenging. That's why we will try to take what we can from the wins and also certainly take what we can from the things we didn't do well during the season and try to be better at it.

ERIC DAILEY, JR.: I just think, you know, you never know how hard it is until you're in it. I got to play the best competition in college basketball. This is one of the best conferences, and I was just very fortunate to even play a lot. Freshmen don't play in college right now, you know, it's how it is, how it's going. I just thank Coach for giving me the opportunity to be on the floor as a freshman early and just making the impact that I can and learning from other players I play against and learning from my teammates as well.

JAVON SMALL: Can you summarize the question real quick?

Q. (No microphone.)

JAVON SMALL: Well, I mean, Big 12 is definitely the best conference. As a competitive standpoint, every single game was a fight. Yeah, I mean, that's all I gotta say really. Every game was a fight.

Q. You talked about growing through challenges and adversity. What areas did you see this year where you saw some growth, some progress, and what can y'all take away sort of as a totality from this that can push this program in the positive direction?

MIKE BOYNTON, JR.: Yeah, I mean, sometimes it's hard to explain because at the end of the day, the results are

really where the focus is. But I think -- I don't know this for sure, I think we played the youngest team in our league in terms of people who weren't experienced in college basketball playing. That's a difficult thing to learn, but I saw Brandon Garrison get better from the beginning of the year to the end. I saw Eric Dailey get better from the beginning of the year to the end, same with Jamyron Keller. I saw us compete more as the season went along. We struggled out of the gate in conference play, played good our first game but didn't moving forward. So more particular seeing players grow up and at the same time collectively we gotta learn how to win and there is a process in and of itself in that.

But my focus is on the guys that don't get to put that uniform on again once they take it off this afternoon and I need to try to help them transition to whatever it next. Hopefully for them all it's playing still but you don't know that for sure.

Q. Mike, with today's college basketball landscape how quickly now do you shift to try to convince all these guys to come back? You have a young team. How important is it to get them to come back and build on the success that you were able to find in spurts this year?

MIKE BOYNTON, JR.: Certainly it's something on your mind, but it's in the back of your mind at this particular moment. To think about that would be to disregard the emotion that John-Michael Wright is having right now, so I want to think about what I do to help those guys, but certainly not long after figuring out what's next for the program and for each individual player within the program.

Q. Mike, even when you guys did have those big deficits, what did it mean to you to see Javon's continued fight through that game trying to will you guys back into the game?

MIKE BOYNTON, JR.: It's who I know he can be as a leader. I'm glad he spoke to wanting to improve in that area vocally, because I think he can be a great player, but part of that is embracing that responsibility and taking that ownership.

So to see him keep competing is what we expect. It's part of the standard of the program. You don't play the game by the scoreboard; you play the game to impact the scoreboard, and I thought he always did throughout the year, but hated that we didn't have more success for him and his teammates.

Q. Coach, what balance goes into shooting a number of three's to stay competitive and having the right guys



take them? How do you balance that?

MIKE BOYNTON, JR.: The balance is taking the right shots, the volume is less important than the quality. So we want to always try to be more efficient in the shot quality that we have. Gotta find a way to get more presence at the rim, both ends of the floor. I think that will be really good are to us as we move forward.

THE MODERATOR: Okay, Coach. Thank you.

MIKE BOYNTON, JR.: Thank you guys.

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