

Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 13, 2024

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

Cincinnati Bearcats

Coach Wes Miller

Dan Skillings

John Newman

Postgame Press Conference



Cincinnati - 72, Kansas - 52

THE MODERATOR: We've got Head Coach Wes Miller with the Cincinnati Bearcats, he has with him Dan Skillings, Jr. and John Newmann. Coach?

WES MILLER: Well, certainly it's a great win for our program. Happy for our fans, happy for our guys, and we're pleased to be advancing. You know, I thought we played with good edge for the most part tonight. I thought we played with good togetherness. I thought we tried to execute our game plan. And it's difficult for everybody in a tournament where you play back-to-back days to prepare and we have only played -- a lot of times in conference play in my experience in college basketball you're playing a team for the third time. So it's the second time we're playing Kansas. It's been -- feels like forever ago, and obviously their personnel is different. So it was an interesting prep and I thought our guys handled it really well. They did some things that were a little different that we couldn't necessarily prepare for and I thought our guys handled the adjustments in game really well.

Obviously 16 offensive rebounds, we had the size advantage tonight and I knew we had to be a force on the glass. I would like a little more, we had 9 at halftime but that's good. We didn't do a good job of punishing them inside but I thought our guys did a good job of finding each other. I was messing with Danny. Takes 23 shots. I know after back-to-back games you worry about their legs, I'm worried about his elbow tomorrow. That's Alan Iverson numbers right there. He is from Philly so that makes sense. Two nights in a row Danny has the "pop" you see the maturity happening in front of us. He's starting to learn what it takes to win and do the little stuff. I thought he made big plays, obviously scoring it but making plays for

others as well. He has two assists but he created more action than that. I thought John got back to being John tonight and you look down, 12-10. He impacts the game. I thought him getting on the defensive board for us was a big deal tonight. I could feel that on some possessions where we got them to miss. And I'll tell you what, I could keep going down the line but I thought Jamille Reynolds gave us big-time minutes. I was really pleased with him and we did take advantage inside a couple times, but I thought he was really sound along with the other guys.

Really pleased with the win. We gotta get out of here quickly and get some rest and get ready to go three in three days tomorrow night.

Q. Coach, they cut it to three. What did you see from your guys' response from then on to wear Kansas town and pull away?

WES MILLER: They were switching everything. You know, everything. 1 through 5. I thought we did a good job early with it and certainly we talked about that might happen, but you don't want to spend when you only have a day, spend time on something that "might" happen. We talked about that as a staff last night. Did we want to take all their brain power on what they could or couldn't do and when they came out and switched it, we had talked about it as a staff and we talked about it with the guys but I thought our guys handled it pretty well.

Then to start the second half we got stagnant. Couple times we got some good looks early, they didn't go and then we got stagnant. I thought we got a little tight to be honest and stopped playing aggressively and then obviously we weren't as good as we needed to be defensively. I thought our guys out of that timeout previous to them cutting the 3 just kind of looked around and said we're going to go do it and they got aggressive again. And once we got aggressive and started playing like ourselves and getting out and running, I thought some good things started happening.

Q. Coach, other than the possibility of them switching, knowing some of their injuries and depth issues, was there anything else about your game plan that you



changed or did differently?

WES MILLER: Yeah, we were -- like everybody in this tournament, we're not special for it, but we were up late last night just trying to guess. And it was hard because you don't know exactly when they take two guys they've done so much for every game all year on both ends of the floor, you just don't quite know how they're going to adjust. That part is difficult.

So we had a game plan to really, you know -- we talked a lot and worked a lot with the guys -- worked a lot -- we walked a lot in shootaround talking about Harris and Adams. We knew those two would be in action because that's been consistent all year. For the most part, our guys did a pretty good job of that. I thought Harris got downhill and got a couple early, but I thought for the most part they did a good job and Adams is so terrific. Both of them are. And you know he can make 'em over the top but we wanted to make him make 'em over the top and fortunately he missed some, and we were fortunate there, but our guys did a great job with the game plan.

Q. 11:19 left you are up 3, miss a three, grabbed the rebound, lay it back in to extend the lead to 5 and then score 15 points over the final 10 minutes. Did that get you going late in the game where you took it upon yourself to take over?

DAN SKILLINGS, JR.: Well, trust my teammates and I get going for my teammates first. And rebounding and guarding is what we do as a team and what we're about, and getting that rebound gets me going and getting back on defense and getting deflections and my teammates finding me is how I get going.

Q. John, this wasn't an easy night for you with KJ Adams. You finished with 12 and 10. Talk about the match-up and the preparation heading into that with a guy like KJ Adams.

JOHN NEWMAN, III: I mean, it wasn't really my match-up, but he's a great player. In this league, he's big, strong, can finish. Like Coach said, our plan was to make him finish over the top and a lot of times he did that tonight. He made a lot of tough shots, but that's something you have to live with. As good of a player as he is you have to pick your poison and that was the area that we were with going to live with.

Had a great game. But, you know, I think we also played well. We had a lot of guys that had a well-rounded game so, you know, kind of like I say, you gotta go with the game plan and keep pushing

WES MILLER: KJ Adams played in the 5 so Jamille was on him most of the night. But I thought John was terrific per the usual.

Q. Coach, talk about how you guys were able to overcome that slow start to the second half and Kansas getting back in the game. There was a sequence. Josh Reed gets an offensive rebound, Jizzle James hits a high-post jumper. Could you feel the momentum come back on your side and you were able to pull away towards the end of the game?

WES MILLER: Yeah, like I said they went on a big run. We missed some good looks and then we tightened up and took some bad shots and made some bad plays. And I think when that happens in a tournament like this you just gotta see the ball go in. And actually, I thought we got back in it where these two crashed the boards so dang hard, both of them. Dan hits the ground and John ends up with an offensive rebound. I thought we got back to playing harder and then when the ball goes in and that helps a little bit, too. And that play where Jizzle hits the jump shot, it's an offensive rebound so you're playing hard to get to the ball and then it's good to see the ball go in.

Q. Coach, you've had 20 wins before, but 20 tonight with this team and this league, does it mean anything more?

WES MILLER: Yeah, I -- certainly, we didn't start the year and say, hey, guys, the goal is to get to 20 wins. I don't think -- we're not popping champagne tonight or anything like that, okay? But I do think that you recognize things that have value and getting 20 wins is something and we did say that was something in the locker room. First year in the Big 12, and there have been tough days. It's nice to look down and see 20 on the stat sheet right here for sure.

Q. Dan, you had a really, really good night. And in Lawrence when you lost to them earlier this season. You came out aggressive today. How much of what you did against Kansas this season kind of inspired you for your aggressive performance tonight?

DAN SKILLINGS, JR.: I really don't look back at the games behind me, really. I just come in every day and worry about the practice that we're playing or -- and when the day comes for the game I worry about the game for my team and worry about the game plan. I didn't think back on the last game against Kansas. I said it's a new day, I knew we gotta get a win today and that's all I was thinking today during the game.

Q. Coach, you talked about the challenges of playing Kansas tonight having not played them since

mid-January. Do you feel that way going into tomorrow night against Baylor not having played them since January 13th?

WES MILLER: I hadn't had a chance to think about it yet, because I came right from the guys in the locker room to you guys. Just like they have the same challenge. I'm not trying to say there is any type of disadvantage there but, yeah, I mean, it's -- when you played a team once and it was a long time ago and you're in a game every couple days, that's just a different dynamic.

But we will get to work and start watching Baylor as soon as we get back and start getting the guys -- probably get the guys a little bit of a brief review, and get them to bed to get rest and we'll get back to work on it in the morning.

Q. Coach, you guys held them to 15% from the three-point line and only three makes on the game. Was that a point of emphasis going into it?

WES MILLER: We value guarding the three every night, and we always -- we always have. We don't always do as good of a job, but I thought we did a really nice job tonight, especially trying to get to Timberlake and Furphy, and you look down, 3 for 20? I'm proud of the effort there tonight for sure.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

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