

Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 14, 2024

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

Texas Tech Red Raiders

Coach Grant McCasland

Chance McMillian

Kerwin Walton

Postgame Press Conference

Texas Tech - 81, BYU - 67

THE MODERATOR: Okay, Texas Tech Head Coach Grant McCasland is here with Chance McMillian and Kerwin Walton. Coach, some general comments with the about the game?

GRANT McCASLAND: What a great atmosphere, it's awesome to be at the Big 12 Conference. We knew facing a really talented offensive team in BYU that they would put you in a lot of problems. Early in the game our connected defense continues to improve and I thought we made it hard enough on them, even though they did miss a few open ones, our rebounding was tremendous. They didn't have an offensive rebound at our place. When they missed they got offensive rebounds. We were on our heels watching that UCF game and they had UCF on their heels yesterday to start the game. Just made it an emphasis of how well we could defend, how active could we be and we were matching that on the offensive end. And then the second half I did a terrible job with our team. I didn't do a good job keeping us aggressive and I've got to do a better job to help them close games. We've got a great fight. We've got a great team and really thankful to be moving on.

Q. Kerwin, can you talk about the fast start of this team? You guys shot 52% in the first half to take that big lead that you never relinquished.

KERWIN WALTON: We came in locked in. They said a few things about us before the game so it turned us up a little bit. It's the Big 12 Tournament. We're excited to be here. We know we could make a good run in this tournament.

Q. Kerwin, what did you hear? Two, why do you think this team has gelled as one who has come from



another program that had a winning tradition?

KERWIN WALTON: Yeah, I mean, we heard certain things like they were ready for us and excited to see us, but I don't think they were ready -- they didn't know how ready we were for them. This is something we have been talking about all year because Mac and the rest of the team, he truly believes in us and as long as we believe in each other and play together we're going to make a lot of great things happen.

GRANT McCASLAND: Great answer, by the way. Could have gone both ways. (Laughter.)

Q. Chance, can you talk about coming off the bench? I think you had 17 today.

CHANCE McMILLIAN: Yeah, I feel like my role is just to come in and bring a presence, no matter if it's offense or defense. I don't try to come out and get shots up, I do whatever is needed for us to put us into a position to win. That's just my role. That's how I feel.

Q. Grant, taking this job a year ago moving into the Big 12, what did you think was the biggest challenge you had? Where do you feel like this team is as you're getting ready for the Tournament?

GRANT McCASLAND: Great question. One thing I love about Chance, before I answer that, is he played the most minutes of anybody on our team but he came off the bench. It's honestly not how you start it, it's how you finish it and this guy is always in there when the game is on the line.

The biggest goal we had coming into this year was how do you get the right people together. And I mean this in sincerity. Chance played in the NCAA Tournament last year, all of the transfers played in the NCAA Tournament last year. The grit they came in with was like we want to get back to the NCAA Tournament, that's one.

Two, how quickly can we play this game for each other and not for our individuals selves. It sounds simple, but it's not. Especially in a day where everybody is trying to get



something, how do you give? That's been our heart for each other, how do we give to each other, and the more you give, I think, the more you do get. I love being around these guys and that's their heart and the heart of this program, and that's why we've been successful up to this point.

Q. Coach, first, how is Darrion? Second, what did you guys emphasize in terms of rebounding today?

GRANT McCASLAND: Early in the game, Darrion went for that loose ball in the middle of the floor and I know he tweaked it pretty good, but it was encouraging to me that he came back out and played a significant amount of time.

You know this, you don't know until you get back and get some rehab on it, but I do feel like he will be available according to what I just saw. He's tough as all get out. What was the other question?

Q. (No microphone.)

GRANT McCASLAND: Yeah, I tell you what, we've made a real commitment to defense in the last couple weeks and I think we've ironed out a simple approach to how we want to defend people and there is a concise -- man, our staff has been tremendous. I'm telling you, our staff is dialed in and these guys -- if you would have watched shootaround and walk-through last night in the team hotel room and heard them you would have thought we were playing the last possession in a close game.

And they were talking and the energy and it's a walk-through in the hotel. I think there is just a lot of belief in what we're doing defensively which puts you in the right position so you are not in rotations and you are underneath them and you can go get the ball and we have practiced rebounding three or four times a segment in practice and these two guys have been in the middle of the majority of them and they've become great rebounders. So it's a tribute to them and how competitive they've been in practices to go get the basketball and be physical.

Q. Chance, picking up on the rebounding aspect, can you describe the -- even among guards, the mentality around the board work with a lot of second-chance points today?

CHANCE McMILLIAN: Speaking on rebounding, Coach told the guards if you can get a loose ball go ahead and get it if the bigs are boxing out. So I really take pride in that. Any ball that I see I can go get, I'm gonna go get it.

Q. Coach, we talked yesterday on how you hope this team can do three games in three days. You gotta win

the first one, you got it. Give us your thoughts now on playing tomorrow either Houston or TCU.

GRANT McCASLAND: First, you gotta start with our defense; we held them to 37%. I think it was to our advantage that we got the bye. That's the reason why you play well during the regular conference season. If we can continue to fight aggressively defensively and do what these guys did today, which led us in rebounding; Chance had 8, Kerwin had 7, we're doing that, we're winning. So thrilled with our defensive effort, and we keep guarding it will give us a chance.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you.

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