

# Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 14, 2024

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

## BYU Cougars

## Coach Mark Pope

## Jaxson Robinson

## Spencer Johnson

### Postgame Press Conference



Texas Tech - 81, BYU - 67

THE MODERATOR: Okay BYU Head Coach Mark Pope is here along with Jaxson Robinson and Spencer Johnson. Coach, if you could start us off.

MARK POPE: Yeah, ton of credit to Texas Tech. They played great tonight. I thought they were really focused. I thought they were completely dialed in. I thought that they -- it's been incredible to watch them make an adjustment with the way they play and how they play, losing such a dominant force inside like they have. They have reinvented themselves in a really spectacular way and I thought they were terrific tonight.

We were disappointed with how things went. Certainly disappointed with the outcome. Sometimes you're out on the court and it feels like it's so hard to make progress and there were a number of statistical reasons for that, but it was a really frustrating night for us -- morning.

**Q. Jaxson, you guys got off to such a great start yesterday and today just the opposite. What contributed to the slower start today?**

JAXSON ROBINSON: I mean, that's just how the game works. We don't get to choose when we make shots and when we don't, but what matters is if we're going to come out there and fight. I felt like by the time we decided to put up that fight it was too late.

**Q. Mark, when this team doesn't make shots, is there a tendency to kind of let other parts of the game lose focus, like defense or rebounding? If that's the case, how did you manage to get them to try to get away from that?**

MARK POPE: Yeah, you know, sometimes you're climbing uphill a little bit. And like I said, I credit Texas Tech a lot. Their speed and the explosiveness that they cut with over and over and over again, and their ability to get downhill and finish, or they hit us from the three point line early, so a ton of credit goes to them, but for sure sometimes in the game you're fighting an uphill battle and things start to disintegrate a little bit. And our team has been really resilient. That's the standard we have. It's what we expect and it's how we perform most often. It was a struggle all night long for us. It was a struggle all night long. The guys hung in there. There were a few moments where it felt like we barely got over the edge and we were the aggressor, but for the vast majority of the night we were on our heels offensively and defensively tonight.

**Q. Spencer, what did you think of your energy from the tip? It seemed like Texas Tech just had a little bit more "want to" or energy I guess you could call it.**

SPENCER JOHNSON: Yeah, that's something we talked about just barely as a team. They came out really aggressive, we came out a little bit flat. That was maybe the frustrating part, was we just didn't set the tone early in the game like we should have and, like Coach said, just trying to playing catch-up the whole time.

**Q. Mark, I got a couple of Kansas City centered questions for you. Did Andy Reid pay a visit to you guys today?**

MARK POPE: No, I haven't seen Coach.

**Q. I wondered about your first Big 12 Tournament experience, just the overall experience of Kansas City for you?**

MARK POPE: It's an incredible venue. We're so grateful to be here. We're so grateful to be a part of this league. Even on nights like this, right? We're still just full of gratitude for the opportunity to be here and excited to learn and be pushed and challenged and grow and this league certainly does that and it certainly gave us the opportunity today.



So we're -- we're really excited to be a part of this in the coming years.

**Q. Spencer, you led the team in rebounding tonight. You've done that a couple times this year, but what made rebounding against this Texas Tech team so difficult? What can you learn from that because this is probably not going to be your last game this season?**

SPENCER JOHNSON: Yeah, you know, their guards did a really good job of coming down and rebounding down and one thing we can learn from that is we actually have to get a hit, right? I think a lot of us got caught ball watching. We would watch the shot go up and we wouldn't hit our guy and they would come in and hit us first and that really burned us, man. That's something we can learn. We got to set the tone by hitting our guy and keepin' them off the glass. Yeah.

**Q. Jaxson, this team has put itself in a position to play in the NCAA Tournament. You've got a couple of days before Selection Sunday and Coach said this is a player-led team. What are you guys going to be focusing on over the next couple days to get ready for the tournament?**

JAXSON ROBINSON: This loss, it obviously hurts but, like you said, we have the tournament coming up so we have to move on. We will digest the film, stuff like that, look over it. But essentially we've gotta move on to the next game and focus on what's ahead. We got bigger goals, so that's what matters.

**Q. Mark, when you made the 15-0 run, you didn't have Jaxson coming out of that timeout on the floor. Is that just your rotations or why was he not out there?**

MARK POPE: Just trying to save fouls. We had a defensive possession so we thought maybe we could milk one possession on the defensive end and keep him alive in the game.

**Q. And then with Aly not playing in the second half, was that related at all to his fasting or was it an injury?**

MARK POPE: He had an ankle that flared up so he wasn't available the second half.

**Q. Coach, in the next few days, how much do you get caught up in projects before Selection Sunday?**

MARK POPE: I think we will probably spend some time doing that, but mostly we want to prepare to play great. This team has been exceptional all year long in terms of

competing, and it's been exceptional in terms of responding to set-backs.

We got the biggest, best part of this whole season staring us in the face, and I think we can't wait to get to it, and I think we're grateful for the extra couple days to prepare. So that's a beautiful thing. All the projections, forcing us in a spot where we don't feel a lot of stress; we just want to play as good as we can and continue to improve.

**Q. Spencer, Walton on Texas Tech said something about they were turned up because you guys were excited to see them or looking forward to playing them. Did you notice that energy from them on the court? Do you remember what you guys might have said?**

SPENCER JOHNSON: I'm sure he was excited because it's a tournament game. It was their first game of the tournament. They beat us last time we played 'em, so I'm sure he was excited for that and we were excited as well. Unfortunately they just came out with more energy than we did.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, gentlemen.

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