

Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 14, 2024

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

Iowa State Cyclones

Coach T.J. Otzelberger

Robert Jones

Tre King

Postgame Press Conference



Iowa State 76, Kansas State - 57

THE MODERATOR: We've got Iowa State Head Coach T.J. Otzelberger here with us here and Robert Jones and Tre King. Coach?

T.J. OTZELBERGER: First I would like to say the respect we have for K-State and their program. On Saturday they were the aggressive team. They took it to us and I thought that really helped us today. Because of the respect we have for them, our guys knew in our preparation that we had to be at our very best.

So we were fortunate, the areas that we focused on with paint points, points off turnovers, second-chance points, fast break points, those are the things that we really try to hang our hat on. Our guys did a tremendous job keeping their focus on those areas and making sure we made enough plays to do okay today.

Q. Coach, couple for you. First of all, thoughts about Baylor, Cincinnati tomorrow night? Do you have a preference? What are you looking for?

T.J. OTZELBERGER: I would say both really good teams, very well-coached teams. Certainly Cincinnati has done a tremendous job with how they've played here. They've got a lot of momentum going in their favor. With Baylor, you know, tons of respect for Coach Drew. Obviously we had a hard-fought loss down at their place. And they're playing great. I mean, they really are. We know whoever we play, it's going to be a really good team who is very well-coached and they're going to be ready for the challenge. So we just gotta get our rest and be prepared for whoever we play to be at our best come tomorrow.

Q. How concerned are you with one of 14 from three point range?

T.J. OTZELBERGER: If we defend and rebound and share the basketball, you know, I don't think it's going to be a factor and it wasn't a factor tonight.

Q. Coach, you mentioned that rebounds were going to be an emphasis going into this match-up. What did you see from that effort and what kind of importance did second-chance points play?

T.J. OTZELBERGER: I think it was a huge factor. It's always going to be a factor for us. These two guys next to me did an unbelievable job screening, bringing physicality to our offensive and that opened them up for more scoring opportunities and put them behind the defense a lot and in great offensive rebounding position. And it's something we work on every day. We work on offensive rebounding every day, whether it's finishing at the rim or kicking it out for the shot. I give all the credit to Tre and to Rob because they imposed their will physically on the game in the paint, on the glass and all of their effort. Proud of these guys for doing it.

Q. You talked about the need for your bigs to screen yesterday. Both of your guards shot better than 50% from the field tonight. How much do you think their screening opened things up for Tamin Lipsey and Keshon Gilbert?

T.J. OTZELBERGER: I think it opened things up tremendously. Our balance offensively was great. We shared the ball, we played for one another. It allowed us to get to the foul line at a very high rate because we were able to keep the ball, spread them out and then pick our spots. So I give Rob and T.K. all the credit in the world because they made the offense go. Even though they're be frontcourt players, they made it all go. That's what they're going to continue to do. That's where our focus has been and you see what we can be when we do that. So really proud of both these guys.

Q. They got it down to 1, you went into a media timeout, what was the message because it seemed like



you came out of that timeout and ratched up the pressure and created a lot of turnovers.

ROBERT JONES: Just continue to do what we do, being okay with getting stops, being okay with being physical, being okay with coming back and getting more and more and then giving more to our teammates as well.

TRE KING: Basically, we are a defensive minded team first and foremost and we pride ourselves on getting stops. So when we saw the lead was cut down to 1, we made it up in our mind, you know, just to focus on getting those stops and being disruptive and getting back to what we did and our team did a great job of responding.

Q. Rob, what worked well for you today? You weren't just hitting well from the field, you also made nearly all of your free throw attempts.

ROBERT JONES: Yeah, I wasn't focused on what I was doing well, I was just focused on the little things. That means getting stops, being physical on the offensive and defensive end, doing what I could control and then the ball came back to find me.

Q. Coach, do you believe that K-State deserves a bid in the NCAA Tournament?

T.J. OTZELBERGER: Yeah, I don't spend a lot of time following all that stuff. I just try to focus on what's in front of us. I do think that K-State is a really good basketball team. They're very well coached. Certainly the season they had last year going to Elite 8, they're a good team and maybe playing better now than they were a few weeks back. I will leave those type of decisions to people that are far more qualified than myself.

Q. Coach, Kaluma was a major part of getting them back in the game. They seemed to be playing through him with the ball, to get them back in the game.

T.J. OTZELBERGER: They were going with the big on the ball screen and putting Arthur in points where he could attack and we tried to be aggressive at the point of the screen instead of switching it, be more aggressive with two to the ball, try to make him pass, and do a great job when he had it in space loading up on defense a little quicker, and felt like we were able to do that.

Q. Coach, what did you see from Omaha today coming in in a substitute role and giving you guys good minutes off the bench?

T.J. OTZELBERGER: Omaha did a great job. He works hard every single day. He gets the work in, and he's been

ready when we've called his number, certainly was the case here tonight. I've talked to him a lot about you don't have to get ready if you stay ready. He's done his part that way so happy for him, proud of him that opportunity came his way and he really stepped up and gave us great minutes today.

We will continue to count on him as we move forward and we have all the confidence in the world that he will continue to play well.

Q. Coach, how were you able to get so many turnovers against Kansas State, a team that switched that category for you guys on Saturday?

T.J. OTZELBERGER: We got back to what we do offensively, trying to be the aggressor, pressure the basketball. That's what we hang our hat on. I thought Saturday, whether we were tired, behind plays, lost some focus, I don't know what it was, and credit to them they did a great job Saturday. They were ready to play.

But I just think today we really understood reconnecting to our habits, our identity, who we are, what we do. We've been really good at turning people over all year long and that's something we take pride in and fortunately our guys were focused on pressuring the basketball and doing that today

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

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