

Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 14, 2024

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

Kansas State Wildcats

Coach Jerome Tang

Tylor Perry

Arthur Kaluma

Postgame Press Conference



against us in the net with the metrics, right? Because I was told a long time ago, just win the game. Right? Because we didn't win by 30 or 40 against Quad 4 teams, right, that's being held against us in the numbers and what the net shows. What's not taken into account is that we were missing two guys who could have started for us. We were trying to figure out who we were in November when those things happened.

Iowa State 76, Kansas State - 57

THE MODERATOR: Kansas State Head Coach Jerome Tang has joined us along with Tylor Perry and Arthur Kaluma. Coach?

JEROME TANG: Congratulations to Iowa State. They were the better team tonight. There is a reason why they are ranked 6th in the country. We didn't play particularly well, but it was because of them. They made things happen. We were very aggressive and they came ready to play. But I was very proud of our guys because we kept fighting and, you know, we were thankful for this opportunity and blessed to be able to do what we do and I love these dudes and I'm excited about next week and what God has in store for us.

Q. Coach Tang, do you believe that you guys have done enough to get a bid in the tournament?

JEROME TANG: Yeah, I thought last night when we won that game against Kansas, and I have several reasons why. We have five Quad 1 wins, all five against the top-30 in the net. We have six wins against the top-40 in the net. The opponents that we played against in the nonconference and the conference combined have the 9th best defense in the country and the 35th best offense in the country. So we didn't play a Powder Puff schedule. We have the number one strength of schedule of all of the bubble teams right now. We're 1-0 against the SEC, and that was a true road game at LSU. We're 2-0 against the Big East and we played Providence on a neutral court with Bryce Hopkins and beat 'em. We played six power conference teams in the nonconference and an American team. So we didn't duck anybody. We won seven overtime games and, for some reason, that's being held

Only three of our losses are to non NCAA Tournament teams. That's another reason why -- we have nine wins in the number one league in the country. I said all along nine wins in this league should get you in. So last night when we won, I felt really good about that. Now obviously I'm not the one making the decision, but we have the most Quad 1 wins and the best Quad 1 winning percentage of any bubble team except for Texas A&M. They have four Quad 4 losses. We have no Quad 4 losses, we have one Quad 3 loss, and that was to Miami. And when we played Miami on a neutral site they were ranked 15th in the country. They weren't the team that Miami is right now. And when we played USC on the neutral site, they were also top-20 in the country. We played the USC team that just beat Arizona the other day. That's the USC team that we played, not the one that had injury problems and lost a bunch of games during the year.

So when I look at it and I see our body of work, and I think about our Quad 1 wins, we have elite Quad 1 wins. Three teams are ranked in the top-10 in the country when we beat em. We beat Kansas full strength. We beat them with Kevin McCullar and Hunter Dickinson. We beat Baylor and we beat Iowa State. So we have elite Quad 1 wins. We have no bad losses. So I felt last night when we won that game and they gave us our 9th Big 12 win that we were in the Tournament. Thanks for asking that.

Q. Coach, you're fired up about this topic. You know, you've coached for a long time between Baylor and Kansas State. What is it about this group that makes it important for you to use this pedestal to do that?

JEROME TANG: When you go through all -- this young fellow could have went anywhere. He could have went anywhere. And they chose to come and be part of our



family and trust us as a staff. That we would pour everything we can into them and give them the chance to play in the best sporting event in the world, in my opinion.

It's incumbent on me that I lay out the narrative the right way because I believe that some people fall for the wrong type of numbers and things like that. If I don't go to bat for them then I'm not doing my job.

But I'm not just going to bat selling fairy dust. These are real live numbers right here and I'm just telling you in this league that we play in, you win nine games in this league, you should play in the NCAA Tournament.

Q. Coach, with all that being said, if y'all wind up in the first four out or the next four out is NIT still on the table for y'all?

JEROME TANG: We're going to talk about what's going on, but right now I got this crazy faith inside of me and I'm looking forward to Selection Sunday.

Q. Question for both players, you guys have typically fought back in games like that, even when you are down at halftime, did it yesterday. What was hard about not being able to do that today?

TYLOR PERRY: Give credit to Iowa State for playing harder than we did. They were the better team tonight.

ARTHUR KALUMA: They played harder. They just played harder than us.

Q. Tylor, what would it mean to you to get to play one more game in the NCAA Tournament?

TYLOR PERRY: It would mean everything. That's why I came to Kansas State, to be with a group of coaches and group of guys like this. It would mean the world, more than anything. I've said that from the jump. There is nothing individually that I wanted this year but to share that experience with this group. So I think we've done enough to get in and now we will wait on Selection Sunday.

Q. With that being said, Coach Tang, we heard you say that y'all didn't play hard enough against Kansas and you don't play hard enough again tonight. After that performance, besides the metrics and everything, why should they pick y'all to get into the tournament?

JEROME TANG: Well, you know, we played a game last night against a really good team and then we had to play a team that didn't play a game and I don't know if you paid attention to the first two games of the session, but every team that played the night before lost by 20 plus. Right?

So when I look at TCU, I don't think they're not an NCAA Tournament team. Played the number one team in the country. When I look at BYU, I don't think they're not a NCAA Tournament team. They played the team that finished 4th in our league. And we just played the 6th ranked team in the country, and it was close at halftime. The other two games weren't close at halftime. So when I say they played harder than us, we're not going to use we were tired as an excuse. We're going to say they played harder than with us. We deserve it because of what we did as a body of work, not to be judged on one game. And to be judged on this game after what we did last night, I think we get a check for that one.

Q. Jerome, obviously you can't go out and talk to the Selection Committee between now and Sunday, outside of talking here, but what do you do to fill the time? Is it going to be nervous the next couple days? Are you going to practice?

JEROME TANG: Is it going to be nerve-wracking? Yes, it is. But I told you, I got this crazy faith, man. When we come up short, and we come up short a lot in a lot of areas of life, I got this big God that fills the gap for me. And I talk to these guys all the time about His grace and His mercy. I got this feeling on the inside, this joy inside of me, that I can't explain it, right, and you can't understand it unless you live it, right? But God has done some amazing things in my life for me and all I want to do is see Him -- my prayer is that He delivers it for these guys because they deserve a chance to play in the NCAA Tournament. Am I going to be nervous? Yes. Are we going to practice? We're going to talk about it with the staff. What we're going to do is we're going to be together, we're going to live life, love each other and we're going to be fired up for the next thing that's in store for us.

Q. Coach, when you compare the numbers on the bubble teams, which Bracketology were you using for those teams?

JEROME TANG: We went through the net and every team in every Bracketology that's out there, we pulled them up and there's like 40 of them. And some are really good and some are not, and some get hurt a lot and some don't. So everybody who is considered on the bubble that would fall two above or two behind, we compared those numbers.

Q. Coach, you talked a little earlier about getting to know this team with the curve balls that you were thrown early in the year. What did you enjoy the most about getting to know this group, especially maybe the two guys sitting up there with you today and what you have learned about them over the course of the season?

JEROME TANG: Yeah, thank you for asking that question. I challenged Arthur Kaluma. He asked me, like, a week in a row he kept saying, Coach, what do you need from me? Coach, what do you need from me? Coach, what do you need me to do? I said, Arthur, I would like you to have your teammates fall in love with you. That's what I would like. If you get your teammates to fall in love with you, we'll be as good as we need to be.

He wasn't always easy to like. Right? He wasn't always easy to like, but you know what? I saw a guy who made some changes in how he interacted with people and how he went out of his way and just his maturity and how he took coaching from his teammates and from his coaches. His teammates love him.

Now, he's done what I asked him to do. And TP, he might be the second biggest flopper in our league, right? The number one flopper plays for Iowa State, and he's really good, Tamin Lipsey. Right? And I have been on his behind about not being a flopper. Be tough, be that guy. Don't have the pouty faces learn how to love your teammates and lead them, and next right play and move on to the next thing.

I've watched that growth, and you see this growth in these young men, not just as basketball players but as men. That's the thing I'm most proud of. I told them in the locker room they may not learn any basketball from us, but they learned about faith and they learned about being men and men who are going to be great husband's and great father's and I'm so proud of 'em.

I look forward to the next forty years together, but I'm just telling you I'm excited about next week, because I believe we're going to be in the NCAA Tournament.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much.

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