

Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 15, 2024

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

Texas Tech Red Raiders

Coach Grant McCasland

Joe Toussaint

Chance McMillian

Postgame Press Conference



this team, because it's one of the elite rebounding teams. We know that's been a source of a lot of our losses and games that we didn't play great is because of rebounding.

And they didn't miss a ton of shots in the second half. They ended up with 10. We actually outrebounded them in the game, which I think says a lot about these guys' competitiveness.

And that's one area that we'll take as the positive going forward. And if we can do that in the NCAA Tournament, we'll have a chance to advance.

Q. This is the second time you've played Houston this year. I know everyone talks about the monster trap and their metrics are great. But from a sideline perspective, what makes them so tough? What do they do in the game that helps them go on the runs and keep teams from scoring for five minutes or so?

GRANT MCCASLAND: Well, I talked to a lot of people going into this game. I was like, how do we get them on their heels enough to where you get open shots? And everybody said whenever you get a good look at the rim, you've got to shoot, because their ability to close space and their closeouts are as good as I've seen.

You just don't get very many rhythm shots against them, and when you do -- I thought one possession, in particular, sticks out in my mind.

We did a decent job finally of getting the ball moved. Got one more to Kerwin, and I thought he had a good look. The next thing you know, the space was closed and he goes out, made him shoot a little quicker than he wanted to.

When they're locked in and the way they rotate, it's even as good as the trap is. The way they put two on the ball with their length, it's their rotations and their ability to run people off the line that I think makes them -- then you get in the paint and you think you've got an angle and they've got length to contest it, and it's just always somebody in between you and the basket with length and athleticism, makes it extremely difficult.

Houston - 82, Texas Tech - 59

GRANT MCCASLAND: We had to play our best to give ourselves a chance to win. Obviously hoped to have Darrion Williams. He wasn't able to. He tried in warmups. And he did everything he could around the clock to play and just couldn't go.

So we were a little shorthanded. But, man, at the half we closed the gap, thanks to Chance. I thought our competitiveness, our defense, our scrap was where it needed to be. But in the second half, their guards just took over.

We struggled to defend the 3-point line. And really their ability to break us down and put us in ball screens and move the basketball got us on our heels. And we tried to probably get too much back too quickly, turned the basketball over, and that's what great teams do to you.

So hats off to Houston. They've got a great team.

But this team is excited about playing in the NCAA Tournament. And we've got a lot to play for, and we want to get back and get healthy and be ready to compete, and this team will. We've got some great days ahead.

Q. Grant, shorthanded, just the way you guys have been for the last couple of weeks now. Is there anything you kind of take or learn about your team from tonight being able to make that comeback and just kind of (indiscernible) down the stretch, I guess? Did you take anything away from how the team responded to the early adversity?

GRANT MCCASLAND: Two areas that we wanted to be great in. One of them was how do you rebound against



Q. Chance and Joe, talk about that 16-point deficit. You battled back. Tied at 37 early in the second half. Just being undermanned and battling a team that many think could win the NCAA tourney, just talk about that big comeback.

JOE TOUSSAINT: I just feel like we just defended -- Coach gave us a good game plan for defense. We actually executed it. That's why we came back. We were tough for that little stretch there. In the beginning of the second half, we gave up like two rhythm 3s then they took off from there. Just little defensive mistakes that can't happen.

CHANCE MCMILLIAN: Yeah, I would agree with Joe. We just fed off our defense because we feel like our offense can just come to us. So that's how we started off that little run. And then as Joe said, two 3s that set off the half. It was hard to come back.

Q. Coach, two totally different games here in this tournament. What did you learn from, I guess, having such a successful game yesterday and then today's game?

GRANT MCCASLAND: Well, all things considered, those three guards are elite, and Jamal Sheard took the game over, I thought, by just distributing. He was having a hard time scoring. I thought our guys put ourselves in great position.

And then he ends up with 10 assists. It's what great point guards do. When they aren't scoring great, they include other people. And L.J. and Emanuel making 3s at that rate with that kind of space, and they have a lob threat, too, at the rim.

So you're always in these situations where you better make a move backwards, and for our team, to finish games -- we haven't been able to finish either game. We've gotten close for 25 minutes, for 20 minutes, and that's where the physicality and the ability to fight and compete with depth is so important against them, and if there's anything I'll tell you is we've got the right guys, we just needed to add a couple more that are healthy so we can finish this game.

And I like our game plan. I like our competitiveness. I didn't do a good enough job, when we went with that smaller lineup of giving us a way to score with the rate they were scoring at. If I can do a better job with that, I know I could help our team in that situation. But ultimately that's a fantastic team that gave us trouble all night long.

Q. Joe and Chance, next couple of days everybody's going to be talking about Texas Tech -- who are these

guys? Looking at you guys on paper, they're not around you. You guys are around yourselves all day, every day. Who are the Red Raiders? And what do people need to know about this team heading into next week?

JOE TOUSSAINT: I don't know.

CHANCE MCMILLIAN: The Red Raiders, we're tough competitors and we will not give up under any circumstance. We're going to always fight. We're going to give it our best. And that's who we are.

JOE TOUSSAINT: For me, we're just a team that believe in each other. We're a bunch of brothers who band greatly together. I feel like we all believe and compete at a high rate.

And so I feel like, at the end of the day, we're always going to go down with a fight. We're not just going to stay down. I feel like that's the way Texas Tech is.

Q. Do you expect to have Darrion back for next week?

GRANT MCCASLAND: Yeah, and he tried to give it a go. If you guys saw him in the locker room, he was in full tears at the 15-minute mark of the warm-up session because he was just devastated that he wasn't able to play. And he kept saying he wanted to try, and he'd go back out.

We've had this happen to him not too long ago and he was able to come back and be healthy. And so I would anticipate by the NCAA Tournament he'll be ready.

Q. You don't have to sit here and beg the committee to get in the NCAA Tournament. This team is in. Sunday the USA is open to the public to become a part of the whole who, what, when, where it's going to happen. Can you talk about this team and how proud you are to get in the tournament your first year?

GRANT MCCASLAND: Definitely. We never tried to look forward. This is the truth with our team. We've really tried to be in the moment and try to figure out how we can be the best we can be. And now we get to turn the page at this point in the season, had the opportunity to finish, and these guys were extremely diligent to be about how do we improve, and that's allowed us to get our name called on Sunday.

So thanks for the tip. We are going to have it opened at the United Supermarkets Arena, have people for the Selection Show. It's going to be a celebration. We're excited to find out where we play and we'll be doing what we've been doing, being diligent about finding out who we



play, give ourselves a best chance to win one game, that's all that matters. And these guys will be ready and prepared but would love to have people out on the U.S.A. on Sunday for the Selection Show. Come be part of the celebration. These guys are worth it.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.

