

Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 12, 2025

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

Colorado Buffaloes

Coach Tad Boyle

RJ Smith

Andrej Jakimovski

Postgame Press Conference



You need that. We need that in a tournament like this. We needed it today. We got it. These guys delivered.

Q. Coach, you guys go on a 17-point run in the second half. What was the momentum going into that and the strategy on holding West Virginia off their game?

TAD BOYLE: Well, you know, I think we started -- we were still in man-to-man and then we felt like they made a sub. They've got certain guys that can really shoot the guy and they got other guys that maybe struggle to shoot the ball.

So we knew zone was going to be part of our game plan tonight. Out-of-bounds, under, we played it and it was pretty effective. They scored a few times on it, but then when we went to the zone and went the soft pressure in the back court on makes to try to make them use clock and have less time to run their zone offense, I thought it was really effective tonight.

Again, these guys executed. Whether you call a play, whether you change an offense, whatever the case may be as a coach, sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't.

But these guys are the ones that make it work or don't make it work, and tonight they made it work on both defense, our soft press back to zone was effective in that ran; but also our ability to box out and finish possessions.

And then convert offensively. Again, we made shots. We kept scoring. When you keep scoring it puts a little bit more pressure on them, and that's what we did.

Q. Tad, you mentioned Felix. Javon Small obviously is a great scorer; got off to a hot start. But this game turned when you put Felix on Javon Small. I know other guys took turns on him, but how big and impactful was Felix's defense today?

TAD BOYLE: It was big, and Andrej was the main defender on him tonight. RJ had a crack at him as well and Felix. I think the combination of those three guys wearing him down, making him work. He expends a lot of energy on offense.

Colorado 67, West Virginia 60

THE MODERATOR: Joining us on the dais is Colorado Head Coach Tad Boyle. He is joined by RJ Smith along with Andrej Jakimovski. Coach?

TAD BOYLE: Yeah, heck of a win. We just felt like when we were scratching and clawing to get back in the game, whether it was the first half or the second half, especially in the second half, I felt like if we could get it tied or take the lead that they might tighten up a little bit.

West Virginia, this is a big game for them. It's a big game for us. It's tournament basketball. But you shoot 61% in the second half against one of the best defenses in the league, that's, again, a credit to these guys and our offensive and our movement.

I thought we had great, great performances in the second half by Elijah Malone, who was beast down low. And these guys did a good job getting it to him.

And Felix Kossaras I thought defensively, and made some big plays on offense as well.

I thought these guys were terrific tonight. RJ gave us unbelievable big minutes. Big shots. Hit a couple big threes for us. Made his free throws down the stretch.

So just a total team effort, and that's what we are.

We have a deep team, and I thought our depth showed tonight because we had a freshman coming off the bench; played 20 minutes; played his tail off, and he's not used to playing very much at all.



The other thing we did in the second half, we changed our offense to get him chasing one of our guys, whoever he was guarding. We were going to run him off screens on the baseline and make him expend energy on defense.

We did that in Boulder. We didn't do that offensively, but we did it defensively. He got -- but we're not playing at altitude here. It's not a mile high in Kansas City, so we don't have that advantage.

But we wanted to make him work on defense and he always works on offense because he's a good offensive player and he moves so well without the ball. But to me it was a three-headed monster for us defensively with Andrej, Felix, and certainly RJ as well.

Q. Coach, after you guys took the lead, toward the end of the game there, you guys were passing up -- you had a lot of good looks on shots that you could have gone for early in the shot clock but managed to work that clock down and finish that game out. Finishing had been a struggle for a long time, and now this is something you guys look like you're doing so naturally. What do you have say about your players and the quality of play delivering at the end of games to close 'em out?

TAD BOYLE: Again, credit goes to them because we haven't been in that position, to your point, a lot this year. We haven't been ahead late in games. We have been behind scratching, clawing, pressing, whatever to do to get back in the game.

And with about 3 minutes to go, 3:09 I think was on the clock that's when we finally started. Because I think if you start using clock too quickly, you know, you can lose your momentum offensively and we don't want to do that.

So we kept being aggressive offensively, just getting great shots. But with 3:09 to go we said, now the clock is our friend. We wanted to get deep in the clock and make plays.

I think the play of the game was we got deep in the clock and I think it was Trevor that found RJ at the top of the key and he was wide open and nailed the three, and that's what you have to have. That really kind of was the first nail in the coffin.

I would like to handle the press a little bit better at the end than we did, but I think that's a result of not being in that position a lot.

Q. RJ, you've been up and down shooting the ball this season, obviously three threes tonight. What was

going through your mind and specifically on that last shot?

RJ SMITH: Just provide anything to help my team win, and tonight my shots were falling, so my teammates kept encouraging me to shoot even though I had an up and down season shooting and they were going in.

Q. Andrej, what was the communication like on the defensive end? Seemed like you guys were doing a really good job of switching and passing over these calls. Is there anything specific you guys changed up?

ANDREJ JAKIMOVSKI: Not really. We just switch our defense a lot. Second half we throw some zone press back to zone and, you know, we played great.

I think we got potential to be really good defensive team and if we, you know, continue to play like this, try to communicate with the players, you know, we can get stops and against one of the probably best player in the league, I think we did a pretty good job.

He made some top shots but we made it hard on him and that was the key to win the game.

Q. Tad, just a comment on first three-game winning streak I think in three months. Early returns, not sure, you might be making history today as the first 16 to win a conference tournament game.

TAD BOYLE: Well I think we're the only 16 because the first year we're 16 teams.

Q. I mean ever in the history.

TAD BOYLE: Ever in the history.

Q. In Division I.

TAD BOYLE: You know more about that than I do, Dennis. All I know is we're ready to take on Houston and we will worry about that tonight. Really, really proud of this group, because we have had a rough year in terms of coming up short in some of these games.

These guys have stuck together, I've said it a lot of times. I'll say it again. I'm really, really proud of this group.

Q. RJ, kind of along the lines what Tad was saying, this tournament is kinda this team's March Madness for you guys. How much coming here did you guys buy into let's make it a new season?

RJ SMITH: We bought in for sure. We have five seniors



on this team, Andrej included, and every game might be our last since we had a rough season. So going out playing knowing this might be our last opportunity, playing for one another, that's the motivation right there.

Q. Tad, was that different the way you substituted? Do you substitute deeper knowing you have those guys, and it's your second game possible third game tomorrow or is it the way you've run it a lot this year?

TAD BOYLE: Part of it, Bruce, to be honest with you is who is playing well tonight. For example, Felix, he normally doesn't play 20 minutes. He doesn't play 20 minutes a game. He averages eight or nine. I don't know what he averages, but he doesn't get that.

But we stuck with him tonight because he was playing so good. We have one of those teams where if a guy is playing good, we gotta ride 'em. Now he might not be playing good tonight and it's not like I'm benching him, we're just going with somebody else.

We do have a lot of capable players on our team and tonight's -- I always look at the plus/minus column on the stat sheet. We had four guys that came off the bench that were plus versus plus/minus. So you got to ride those guys.

We had a few starters who had minuses by their name. It just wasn't their night. That's okay. Tomorrow is a new day. That's what I love about tournament basketball. That's what I want these guys to understand. Just because you don't play well today doesn't mean you're not going to play well tomorrow, and just because you don't play well today, doesn't mean you won't play well tomorrow.

What we have to do with this staff and this team is play the guys that are playing well that night and sometimes you play guys based on what they've done in the past. Certainly that's the case.

We know what Andrej has done for us all year this year and it's a unique team. Usually by this time of the year you're like West Virginia, you have your seven, eight-man rotation and you know who is going to play but we're not there.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you very much.

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