

Big 12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 13, 2025

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

Texas Tech Red Raiders

Coach Grant McCasland

Darrion Williams

J.T. Toppin

Postgame Press Conference



Texas Tech 76, Baylor 74

THE MODERATOR: Joining us on the dais is Texas Tech Head Coach Grant McCasland, he is joined by Darrion Williams and JT Toppin. Coach?

GRANT MCCASLAND: Yeah, tournament time, honestly, you don't get pretty points for winning, you just win and find a way to move on.

Give Baylor a lot of credit, because I thought their physicality and their zone caused us problems in the second half and we got a little stagnant.

But, man, I loved the competitiveness of our team and I loved the fight of our team, and that's kinda what's carried us throughout this season, and even when we weren't great offensively. I told them we had enough points at the end of the game when there was about four minutes left.

Definitely finding ways to win with our defense is what makes us when we are at our best. We didn't play great the second half, but I thought Baylor had a lot to do with that.

Q. Coach, what was different between the first and the second half?

GRANT MCCASLAND: Well, you know, we didn't have Chance in the second half and he's been such a key part of our team from a rotation standpoint.

I did think that they started matching up with us a little bit and we did get fatigued. I did think we lost a little bit of pop to get to the next action, and when they were playing man and zone in the first half we knew what we were trying to get.

When they went straight zone and they changed a few of the formations up when we changed, I thought their physicality and our inability to keep putting pressure on the paint hurt us.

We started settling for jumpers from 15 feet, which is part of it, but if you want to get to the foul line or you want to put pressure on them, that's kinda the shot that they want.

But their grit -- Baylor's got a chance to really win in the tournament. Just watching them in preparation for this game they had a huge injury early and that's what I was telling Coach. I feel like his guard play and the way that they're playing right now and Norchad in the paint, they're really hard to play against.

I thought our defense for the most part was what it needed to be other than guarding Norchad in the paint.

I thought their zone caused us problems with our fatigue.

Q. Darrion and JT, can you talk about coming out fresh, you guys hit 12 three pointers in the first half?

DARRION WILLIAMS: I think we were ready to go from the jump. Everybody has been in treatment with Big Mike, so shout out to him since our last game on Saturday.

Coach got us ready for this game. We didn't know who we were going to play, but we stayed ready for the moment.

JT TOPPIN: Yeah, going off what 5 said, we prepared well, practicing, not taking no days off, just because we got two byes. Still in the gym staying together, so that's really helped for this game.

Q. Coach, watching that Baylor zone from up top in the hockey press box, can you explain how chaotic that can be? I know you worked with Scott so you know it well. What makes that zone so difficult to diagnose?

GRANT MCCASLAND: Well, one, to get Tech with Coach, they've done a good job of recognizing different formations



and how to match-up. They change how they play the zone depending on where you are. And we actually got the ball around the basket several times and what we missed I thought were some pretty good looks but it was through bodies.

That's what I thought they did such a good job of. In the first half we were shooting pretty good looks, and in the second half I thought they did a better job of getting matched to where we were. Then when the ball went into the post, we were having to shoot it over the top of 'em.

And when we shot 3s they were connected to us. And we got a few of them that we needed to create advantages. I thought the biggest thing against the zone was our ability to offensive rebound. Getting 17 offensive rebounds and down the stretch we weren't getting those. We were getting one shot, we were missing and Norchad was getting it.

And in the first half when we did miss we were getting them, and so to their credit, too, I thought they rebounded better in the second half.

Q. Grant, you guys didn't see VJ in that game in Lubbock. What were your impressions of him and are you worried at all when he has the ball coming downhill for the last shot?

GRANT MCCASLAND: No doubt we were trying to pack the paint and make sure he didn't get to the rim. That was the point of emphasis with everything we talked about.

And, you know, to sprint back and to load and make him shoot a jumper, and obviously you risk him making it and the game being over, but I think you've got to pick your battles with him, and that was a battle that we picked, is keeping him out of the paint.

But he's tremendous. He really is. He's downhill. I thought he got some offensive rebounds, too, to help them, and he didn't make any threes tonight, which is when I think he is most difficult to defend.

Q. Your thoughts on Kansas or Arizona tomorrow night?

GRANT MCCASLAND: One thing going into that game, these guys know, we need Federiko to play but with all the guards for Baylor it was difficult. That will be a huge help for us tomorrow is getting more opportunities because both those teams play bigger and play more size and that will help with rotations that we had difficulty with tonight.

Q. Coach, any sense of where you stand here with

Chance in the next couple of days and moving forward?

GRANT MCCASLAND: No. I've coached Chance enough to know when I feel like he's confident, and when I feel like he can play, because he's always going to say he's going to play. He was like, "I'll go out there and play," but we know the difference in regards to where we are going and what we are going to do, and felt like it was best for him to see if he could get feeling better tonight, either way, no matter what happened.

THE MODERATOR: Okay, thank you.

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