

2026 Phillips 66 Big 12 Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 12, 2026

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

Iowa State Cyclones

Coach T.J. Otzelberger

Joshua Jefferson

Tamin Lipsey

Postgame Press Conference

Iowa State - 75, Texas Tech - 53

T.J. OTZELBERGER: First of all, we knew coming out against Texas Tech, we have a lot of respect for their program. I have tremendous respect for Coach McCasland and what he's built and continued to build. He's first class. They're a great team.

They came to our home court, and they were the more aggressive team not too long ago. And it was going to be important for our guys today to be at our absolute best, to come out defensively and set the tone on the glass and set the tone.

I felt like after the first five minutes of the game, we did a great job of that for the final 35.

So really proud of our guys, and specifically these two guys next to me, who have been our leaders all year long. They lead by example. They lead by their actions. They're men of great character, and they set the tone for our program.

So a good team win. Fortunate. And turn the page to the next one.

Q. Coach, what is Nate's Heise's put-back dunk describe Nate as a player and what does it do for your team?

T.J. OTZELBERGER: That's a big energy play. I think anytime you know for us, we call them hammers and daggers. And to be able to get a hammer on the offensive glass, especially a dunk, those plays are worth far more than two points.

So Nate is very capable of making big energy, toughness



plays consistently for us. And as soon as he went into the game, he made that play. And so that gives our team tremendous confidence and energy. And we'll continue to lean into his ability to do that.

Q. I asked you the other day how close you thought you felt you guys have gotten to your ceiling at various points during the season. Was today a new benchmark for that?

T.J. OTZELBERGER: I think we're at a point in the year where our guys are continuing to improve. And I think there's the things you can do in practice and on the court to improve. There's the things you can do in terms of what you take from film. There's the things you can improve upon mentally in your focus and where you place emphasis during the course of the game. And certainly you can see with our guys that they're continuing to take a step forward and another step forward.

We played well today. Was it our best? I think our best is still in front of us. And I'm excited to just get back to work with our guys and continue to improve because we can see the growth that we're continuing to make at the right time of the year.

Q. T.J., looked like you had a big smile on your face picking Killyan up off the floor when he dove in to you. What does he continue to do to make a difference? And what about that play made you so happy?

T.J. OTZELBERGER: Killyan has an unbelievable competitive spirit. He's got an energy and enthusiasm, and he makes so many winning plays.

At that point in the game, a lot of guys would look at the scoreboard and the time and probably wouldn't put their body on the line. But Killyan only knows one way. And he plays with great character, great spirit. He competes every possession. And that's just a sign and a testament of who he is. So thankful he's on our side.

Q. Coach, so much is made of experience and leadership and continuity in college basketball today.



What's the value of having two guys sitting up next to you that have been through this with you and are now playing their best basketball of the season?

T.J. OTZELBERGER: I think the continuity is incredibly important. And we're fortunate with these guys. Not only have they continued to take their games individually to another level, they've elevated their teammates by the example they set, the plays they make, the toughness that they have. They've elevated everybody else.

So to me, in particular, it's cool because when you have a relationship with guys like we've had relationships with Joshua and Tamin, knowing Tamin -- not too long after we came in, he was committed to us. So building that relationship more than a year prior to him ever stepping on campus.

And for Joshua, knowing him since somewhere probably the summer of his sophomore year going into his junior year.

It's not only the continuity of the program, it's the trust and the relationship that we've been fortunate to build over a number of years.

Man, these guys deserve so much credit. These two guys here are absolute warriors. They've put their trust into us and they've continued to elevate everybody. And just really proud of both of them.

Q. Tamin had four 3-pointers today, three yesterday. You talked about his confidence and your guys' confidence in his 3-point shot coming around. What's the value of it coming around now as you guys are in postseason play?

T.J. OTZELBERGER: Yeah, Tamin and I have had some direct conversations about him hunting more shots. I'm not as much outcome-based. It's a belief I have in him and knowing what he can do. Don't be surprised to see the same thing as we move forward because he's going to continue to stay on the hunt.

Q. Your only loss at home this season was to Tech. Firstly, what does it mean maybe to get this one back? Also was there a difference in what you guys saw today versus when you guys played in Ames?

TAMIN LIPSEY: Definitely, since they were the only team to come into Hilton and beat us, added a little extra motivation to the game. And we were happy that we got a chance to get back at them.

And right away, rebounding was the most important thing

and creating turnovers. And to begin the game, they came out and sort of went on a run. We weren't knocking down shots, but we continued to get stops and win the rebounding battle, which was a huge key for us. And then be able to play freely on our offensive side.

JOSHUA JEFFERSON: I think what Tamin said with the rebounding. The rebounding battle is the most important thing on the court. I think when we do that to the highest level, we're going to come out victorious.

Q. You both are among five seniors on this team, and obviously playing in your last conference tournament here. So how much has that been a motivational factor for both of you just to play for each other and play for those other guys in this tournament?

JOSHUA JEFFERSON: I think it's huge. You always want to win a conference tournament. I think it's a lot of fun. When I was coming in watching how much enjoyment that the team had before winning this tournament meant, so I was just I want to do the thing same thing for myself and this team.

TAMIN LIPSEY: Just knowing the excitement of this tournament, and obviously our fans call it Hilton South, and you can see how well our fans travel. And it helps us a lot in these games.

And it's just a good experience overall. I was fortunate enough to be on the team my sophomore year and we won the whole thing. It was a lot of fun. That's just what I tell my teammates. It's, like, that's the goal of coming down here is to win, but I've got to take it one game at a time.

Q. The amount of Texas Tech shots, like, late in the shot clock up in Ames and the 3s, the contested 3s they had, what were the keys today to limiting those and turning the table on them?

T.J. OTZELBERGER: We did a better job today guarding the basketball. So those opportunities, if you're not in rotation and you're not spread out, you have a better chance to contest and make those tougher shots, or make them break the plane and play inside the 3-point line. I think we did both of those today.

When you're the more aggressive team, also guarding the basketball, you tend to be the team quicker to rotation. In Ames, they did a better job moving the ball than we did rotating. I felt like today our guys did a great job in rotation.

Then the last one is, it's finishing plays on the glass, because they came into Hilton, and they had offensive rebounds early that led to second-chance points. And



they're a team that really thrives when they're getting those points, kickout 3s, specifically, in second-chance.

Our guys did a great job keeping their focus for the final 35 minutes, for sure, and it was important that we need to do that.

Q. The Batemon 3-pointer just ahead of the intermission, how big of that was an energy play for you guys?

TAMIN LIPSEY: It was huge. You always want to have a little bit of momentum going into halftime. And for him to knock down that shot, just for him to get a little bit of confidence, but for the whole group to go into halftime up three and feeling good and having the crowd all hyped and all that, definitely makes an impact going into the second half.

JOSHUA JEFFERSON: Batemon's an incredible shooter. Whenever he gets a good look, we want him to shoot it with confidence. He puts a ton of time into his game. He was built for the moment.

Q. It's not often we see the seventh-ranked team in the country playing on a Wednesday here. Now you've got two games under your belt. You've got potentially two more. How do you juggle that potential juggernaut of a stretch here knowing you've got the NCAA Tournament next week as well?

T.J. OTZELBERGER: Yeah, you know, our guys do a great job when they have opportunities with recovery and to do the things they need to put their bodies in position to feel at their absolute best.

Felt like early this year, the experience we had playing three games in three days in Las Vegas really prepares you. We were able to go into each game, and I feel like maybe take a step forward with each game and not have any drop-off. So that was important.

Then, look, it's March. And I think for these guys and for everybody in our locker room, I mean, you do all the hard work every single day from whatever age you are when you start playing this game, and you dream about having the opportunity to be playing such meaningful games in March, and how special that truly is.

So I want our guys to be in the moment. I want our guys to absorb all of it, soak it all in. And then they've done the hard work, so that work will show up for you in the moment if you continue to keep your mental focus. And these guys have a great focus.

Q. Obviously still waiting for the next quarterfinal game to end, but just wanted to get your early thoughts on a possible match-up with either Arizona or Central Florida or anything you remember from your match-ups with them in the regular season?

T.J. OTZELBERGER: I'd say we played Central Florida first, and we're fortunate at home to come out with the win. I've got a lot of respect for Coach Dawkins and what they've done with their team and their program. To start with a nearly new roster from a year ago and to put his team in position to be in the NCAA Tournament is remarkable.

He's done a great job fitting together a really good team. If they're to be the team that wins, we know what a formidable challenge they'll be.

With Arizona, not too long ago that we went down to Tucson. And you know that was a game that, truthfully, we weren't within striking distance for certainly the majority of the second half. We know what a great team they are. I mean, they've had one of the best regular seasons of any team in the country.

So both teams are going to be a challenge, and we know that. And for us, what we're going to focus on is being the best version of ourselves tomorrow.

And I can't say enough how excited I am for our fan base to show up for us tomorrow. I know what it feels like in these first two games -- we're in the early time slot -- but tomorrow night, to have our fans have the opportunity to drive over tonight, drive over in the morning, and have a great turnout there will give our guys tremendous energy.

So excited for either team, whatever the opportunity is, we'll be ready.

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