

2026 Phillips 66 Big 12 Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 12, 2026

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

Houston Cougars

Coach Kelvin Sampson

Kingston Flemings

Emanuel Sharp

Postgame Press Conference



Houston - 73, BYU - 66

THE MODERATOR: Coach Sampson is with us along with Kingston Flemings and Emanuel Sharp.

KELVIN SAMPSON: Congrats to BYU for a great tournament. I told our guys, three games in three days, they're going to play to win. We played in this same tournament last year, three games in three days. And I thought our best half offensively might have been the second half of our third game in three days.

So we knew that if you've got Dybantsa on your team, you're dangerous. Kevin does a great job of putting them in the right spots, does a good job of hunting match-ups.

But I thought our defense the second half we sat in those gaps, we said if he's going to score, he's going to have to make 3s. Chris got back one time and he shot one over him.

But he took 18 shots to score 26 points. I don't think we put him on the foul line the second half. I might be wrong. Somebody correct me if I am. But that was the big thing, is we were out of character in a lot of ways the first half. But these are the moments that the players want to play in.

But, again, congratulations to BYU. They've had a great year. Kevin's done an awesome job with that group, getting them to rally together after losing such an excellent player in Saunders.

But really proud of my guys. It wasn't our best game. We made some bonehead plays, stepping out of bounds, wide-open 3s. We said, why would we shoot this when we can step out of bounds. That made sense to me. We got

a break-away 2, two minutes to go. Why would you take that? Let's just see if -- we do have a shot clock, right? So that didn't make a lot of sense either.

But the name of the game is to win the game. And at the end of the day that's really all that matters. I'm proud of my team for finding a way to win the game, hanging in there, making the plays that we need today have made.

The two biggest plays were two freshmen. Chase, we called a set out of the timeout, got him open on the wing. He banged it. And then Kingston. So proud of those two freshmen.

Q. Emanuel and Kings, talk about what the coaching staff did to get y'all comfortable for this game. I watched you all pregame and y'all were pretty hyped and pretty excited. And then follow-up, Kingston, first Big 12 Tournament game, talk about your feelings and emotions?

EMANUEL SHARP: It wasn't anything out of the ordinary. We prepare for every game the same way. We get a great -- it starts with the scout. We get a great scout from the coaching staff, practicing -- the practices are high energy, competitive.

And then we get a good pregame workout with the coaches and they just get us all the way prepared, mentally, physically for our match-up and just what to expect, and to have the right mindset, the right attitude.

And it's up to us to execute that. I think we did an okay job tonight, but we'll be better going forward.

KINGSTON FLEMINGS: As a kid, always dreaming about playing in tournaments. Just coming in here, excited to play, we're playing a good team. I love playing with my players. I think just trying to come out here get wins, three wins in three days, that's what we're hoping we're going to do. Just coming out here, trying to do whatever I can to get the win.

Q. You obviously were paying a lot of attention to

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Dybantsa. He still got 26. What makes him so hard to shut down?

KELVIN SAMPSON: I coached six years in the NBA. So I sat on the front of that bench and watched everybody from Allen Iverson to Rip Hamilton, to LeBron, Derrick Rose, Kevin Durant, Dubinski, Jason Kidd, all of those guys.

You know, some of them just have the bucket gene. I don't think you can teach that. For us, we have to recruit it. For the NBA, they have to draft it.

But there's a lot of shooters that can't score. And there's a lot of guys that can really score but they can't shoot. If you watch the ball roll off his fingertips and his release at the free-throw line, you can tell he's an elite shooter.

First time I saw him, he was 15 years old. I didn't pay much attention to him because I knew I was never going to coach him, but I figured I'd be coaching against him one day, eventually. I just didn't know it would be in the same conference.

He's a little tougher than people want to give him credit for. He's a young kid, just like Kingston turned 19 not that long ago. I'm assuming Dybantsa is probably around 19, maybe 20. These guys are young. But he's been in the spotlight his whole career.

AAU basketball now is a lot like college basketball used to be. They play against each other.

I watched Kingston play against Chris Cenac, and I watched Darryn Peterson, AJ, all those guys played against each other. But Dybantsa has got the gene. He can really score, his length.

And he'll get better as he goes. A lot of his success early will be based on the kind of team that drafts him. He's going to be fun to watch. He's done a great job developing. And he went to a school that lets him basically shoot all the balls. That's a player's dream. If our guys knew they could shoot all the balls, they'd transfer there, too.

But just FYI, they're not going to let all my guys shoot all the balls. They'll let Dybantsa shoot all the balls.

Q. We've heard different comments on the playing surface, the lack of traction. What did you guys think about the court tonight?

EMANUEL SHARP: We're all on the same floor. So there's no advantage gained. No, I thought the floor was fine. I fall on a regular. You know, wasn't nothing different.

It's an even playing field. I don't think it's crazy.

KINGSTON FLEMINGS: What Emanuel was saying, both teams have to play on the floor. So I mean it wasn't the floor's fault that one team won, one team lost. It was all about the players.

I think that, I mean, honestly I think the floor is pretty cool. The pregame was pretty cool. At halftime we watched the last game, it was pretty cool. I mean just trying to do what we can to get the win, not really trying to focus too much on the court.

Q. What can you just say about Kingston's clutch gene? Obviously the big 3 tonight and he's hit a lot of big shots this season.

KELVIN SAMPSON: Yeah, he's better at making that shot than he is free throws (laughter). But that's a freshman for you. There's nobody guarding him. At the free-throw line, he kind of slides one over to the left. At no point did that ball ever have a chance of going in, but that's a freshman for you. He's done that a lot.

When you get to the competition part of our practices, whether it's -- like we do this five-minute shooting drill where we have five spots, and each team has to make 10 shots in a minute. And you're not competing against the other team. You're competing against the clock. So you have to make 50 total as a team. When it gets down to the last minute, there's nobody more competitive in that than Kingston.

What was your mile run time, do you remember?

KINGSTON FLEMINGS: 5:08 I believe.

KELVIN SAMPSON: So I make all the guys run the mile. And he looked at me. I think it was the first week and said what's my mile time? I said 5:30. He said, I don't think I'd ever run a mile -- not around a track, but I'm sure he's run a mile before. But he ran it in 5:08.

That's the competition. And I don't think he was in the top four on the team. He didn't win. But he wasn't trying to win. He was trying to -- I told him 5:30. He ran 5:08. Who won? Bryce Jackson. What did he run?

KINGSTON FLEMINGS: 5:01.

KELVIN SAMPSON: By the way, it was 6:50 in the morning. It was dark.

But Kingston's got that competition gene. He loves competition. Somebody's going to win or lose and

(indiscernible) in his world.

For a freshman to come in and between two seniors that started on a national championship finalist team, for him to come in and be respectful -- he's a great teammate. He's a very polite young man. But there's a lot of dog in that kid. There's a lot of killer in him. He's tough.

Q. What can you say about Kingston's clutch moves?

EMANUEL SHARP: He's pretty good. Yeah, I mean he makes those shots. It doesn't surprise me. He's a great player. Like Coach said, great teammate. He works on his game, so he deserves to make those shots.

So he's been doing it all year. Surprised me the first couple of times, but now it's the norm. So now I'm happy to have him as a teammate.

Q. Kingston, you had a few plays this game where had you to get a little bit more physical, whether it had been a bump or initiating contact on the inside wing. Can you talk about the evolution of your physicality over the course of the season? And do you look to initiate contact now?

KINGSTON FLEMINGS: I think there's two things, I think on offense I've always been kind always pretty good at initiating contact. But I think on defense, that's what I have to get better at. Sometimes I'm just trying to stay in front of the person.

Like, if you see E, when he's guarding someone he's being physical and he's standing in front. Sometimes I'm just trying to stay there and that's why people get by me, people get to the rim.

But I think on offense, getting my pull-ups, I've always, like, I think I shoot my pull-up better once I hit contact first and then shoot. So if I can get that contact first and then I get to my shots I try to do a lot.

But on defense, I think, like, Rob Wright, I mean, we know he's going to get into his right hand, but I wasn't physical enough. He gets right by me. Or, like, on rebounds sometimes, I'll forget to box out. I go in, and just physicality, they'll push me under and then I'm getting tips. Like, I think Diomande got an offensive rebound and put-back, which was big for them, and that was me and my box-out. So I think just trying to be more physical on defense for sure.

Q. Coach, your thoughts on Chase's rebounding and defense tonight?

KELVIN SAMPSON: You know, Chase, last year was a good experience for him because he got to practice against J'Wan Roberts, Ja'Vier Francis and L.J. Cryer, and am I missing anybody? Malik Wilson.

At one point, he walked up to me -- and I don't remember what part of the year it was because I told him his best bet was to redshirt because, you know, freshmen come in and they all think they're better than they actually are.

And so I said, I'm not sure you're going to help this team win, but I think you can get minutes. But at some point, you're going to wish you had this year back.

And so I called his father and I said it would be my recommendation that Chase redshirt. And Chase has an awesome mom and dad. And his dad actually coaches with the Timberwolves, and his mother's an English teacher in high school. And they understood.

He was a little salty about it, but I told him just like most people when they don't like the news they hear, they'll get over it. But just come to work every day with the right attitude and give the right effort.

So now the best thing that ever happened to him was redshirting because now he's a freshman and he's got three more years after this.

So does Kingston, but I doubt he uses his.

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