

2026 Phillips 66 Big 12 Men's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 14, 2026

Kansas City, Missouri, USA

T-Mobile Center

Houston Cougars

Coach Kelvin Sampson

Emanuel Sharp

Milos Uzan

Postgame Press Conference



I think it was great for the Big 12. You've got the two best teams in the Big 12 fighting down the stretch. Either team could have won the game. Sometimes it comes down to a break. Sometimes it comes down to a whistle. Sometimes it comes down to a bounce.

When two teams are as evenly matched as those two teams were today, that's really what it came down to.

Q. How did the Big 12 Tournament mean to you knowing that you made it this far going into it?

KELVIN SAMPSON: I don't understand your question.

Q. How much did the Big 12 Tournament mean to you knowing that you got this far into the tournament?

KELVIN SAMPSON: I think we've been to the championship game every year. So we expected to.

Q. Yesterday Coach Bill Self talked about how he'd like to appreciate to play in the championship and how the extra day of rest is beneficial for March Madness. But obviously with you mentioning how you've made it to the championship game of the tournament each tournament, how can you use that not having the extra day of rest to use that as a catapult into March Madness, I guess?

KELVIN SAMPSON: Well, given the choice of winning your second game or losing, I would always take winning it. So you can lose and get rest and you can win and try to make your team better, so I'd take the latter.

Q. JoJo played 35 minutes tonight. He went for 20 and 10. Obviously not the result that you guys were looking for, but what does that mean nor the team when he's on the floor?

KELVIN SAMPSON: I thought he was the best player on the floor. The best player on the floor tonight was JoJo Tugler. There's not a lot of things that bother Joe. He doesn't get confused or lose confidence or constantly need somebody to build him up. He doesn't need any of that.

Arizona - 79, Houston - 74

THE MODERATOR: Coach Sampson has joined us along with Milos Uzan and Emanuel Sharp.

KELVIN SAMPSON: Really proud of our team's fight today. Struggled early. It went back and forth there for a while, first half. Then they got a run, they got a run going.

Foul trouble hurt us up front. We got stuck with playing two bigs. I think it's the first time all year we've done that. So we had to get a little organized there during the timeouts.

But I think we were down eight at halftime. I think they were plus 7 so we were down, what, 15? Is that our biggest deficit?

Then we got nine consecutive stops. We cut it to one. I thought a key play was when they hit the 22-foot bank shot. That was a big possession, for both teams. Shot clock was running down. We were playing great defense again. Then they bank a ball in from 20 feet.

Take a little bit of air out of your balloon a little bit -- until they do it again three possessions later from the free-throw line, another bank shot. But, you know, if you coach long enough, you've probably been the beneficiary of that, too. Though, I don't remember getting two in one game.

But Arizona's really good. They're really good. They've got a really good team. If Arizona had lost to Houston, I'd say the same thing. Arizona lost to a really good team. There's no shame in Arizona losing to Houston. And I'll say the same thing, the other way, you know, Arizona's really good.

He's a warrior.

We've had a lot of Warriors come through Houston, which is, by our record and track record and tournament record and all that stuff, is where it is.

But JoJo is as tough a kid and as tough a warrior as we've had. I was really proud of him today, number one, for his belief in himself and the impact he had on his team winning the game. Tough guys make your team look good. JoJo made us look tough today.

Q. We saw a lot of personal fouls tonight. How do you feel that impacted the game?

EMANUEL SHARP: They got 13 more free throws than us. That's 13 points. And we lost by five. So, I mean, we've got to do a better job with not being so handsy, especially me, I guess. Stay out of foul trouble so I can be on the floor longer.

Those are free points. In a close game like that, free throws matter.

MILOS UZAN: We've got to be more disciplined. I feel back to the BYU game we were super undisciplined. It's a couple of handsy fouls where we should have been walling up instead of reaching in.

But, yeah, definitely it impacts the game, especially when they're making 23 of them and we're making 10 of them.

Q. Coach, you've been good at about giving us Big 12 history lessons this week. You've been to the title game three straight years. Arizona has been to the title game now two straight years. In the context of the conference and your experience with it, what does that mean?

KELVIN SAMPSON: I think it's great for the conference. The Oklahoma team I coached won it three straight years. We won it in '01, '02 and '03. And it speaks to how good you are.

You've got to be really good to win in this league. You know, the fact that we were 26-5 and 14-4, just beat two ranked teams to get here and lost to a top 3 team in a one-point game down the stretch, it shows you how good we are.

But the Big 12's a great league. Coaches are all conditioned to say their league is the best. Well, not everybody's league is the best. But there's no question that this year, top to bottom, I think we have four teams in the top 10 -- Arizona, Houston, Iowa State -- is there four

or just three? At some point Kansas for sure was. I think at one point BYU was, maybe.

So I mean, when a really good team plays a really good team, the team that maybe gets the breaks, like tonight, or plays a little bit better, like tonight, they walk away with the W.

But proud of my team. We'll go back and get as much rest as we can and be ready to go after we find out where we're headed tomorrow, because I don't take that for granted. I know how hard it is to make the tournament.

Q. What does Selection Sunday look like for you guys?

KELVIN SAMPSON: What will we be doing? We'll be at our home arena, the Fertitta Center. I think our athletic department has a deal set up where people can share in the moment with us. And I'm glad they're doing that.

We owe a lot to our fan base. They've been awesome all year, for us. So they'll be able to witness live and in person the moment that the brackets go up and when they hear the University of Houston called.

I know there's a lot of universities and great programs out there that are sweating bullets, whether they're on the bubble, hoping they get in. I wish them all the best. Wish them all good luck, because I know how hard those kids played, how hard they worked to get to this point.

But the most important day in college basketball is Selection Sunday. And looking forward to seeing what our draw is and where we'll be playing our first game.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

