

Camping World Maui Invitational

Wednesday, December 2, 2020
Asheville, North Carolina, USA

Texas Longhorns
Coach Shaka Smart
Matt Coleman III
Postgame Press Conference

Texas - 69, North Carolina - 67

THE INTERPRETER: We'll start with an opening statement from coach.

SHAKA SMART: First of all, I want to congratulate North Carolina on how well they played in the second half. They really took it to us and had us on your heels the majority of the half.

Matt Coleman made a huge shot at the end of the game, which was a difference. But give our guys credit for just hanging in there. We clearly were a little fatigued. We weren't necessarily clicking on all cylinders. We had some guys that didn't have their best day, but if you want to be a good team, you got to find ways to win on days like that, and our guys hung in there and did that.

Q. That final possession with Matt, so much of what he did in the second half, you guys were kind of struggling offensively, and a lot of that was what North Carolina was doing on defense, but was there any doubt that the ball was going to be in his hands and it was going to be up to him to go out and make a play for you guys? And what was your reaction seeing that ball kind of bounce off the rim and drop in?

SHAKA SMART: Well, good question. I mean, we wanted to make sure we got the last shot and we wanted to at least have the ball in Matt's hands to make the decision, if not the shot. So we just kind of ran a flat pick-and-roll action. They did a nice job defending it and it ended up being a one-on-one situation. Matt made a great play.

My reaction was just trying to figure out, like, how much time was left, and obviously, what was next because our guys were out there rolling all over the floor, but it wasn't all



the way done.

So again, just happy for our guys. We told our guys when we came in here in the Arena and we saw the banners and we said, There's no Texas on these banners. Texas isn't up there and you guys have a chance to win a championship and it will, 2020 will be on that banner for the rest of time as long as the Maui Invitational's played.

Q. I saw after when everyone was celebrating, you were just kind of kneeling by the baseline looking at everyone. As you're sort of watching that scene unfold, what was going through your head? Was it more of just celebration or what were you thinking in that moment?

SHAKA SMART: Just trying to be in the moment and take in the moment. Really watch our guys and, you go through a lot of challenges as a college basketball player or a college basketball team. This is a high, high level of basketball and there's a lot of twists and turns, ups and downs, so just seeing our guys happy, just taking that in, and true joy and true presence from them. So I was just, I just wanted to get a good look at that.

Q. Obviously a lot was not going right down the stretch, but is this what you expect out of a veteran team, despite all that's going on everybody pulling together and make the key plays?

SHAKA SMART: Yeah, I mean, and we won by one play, so I think obviously so much is made of winning and losing. There's two games that we won in this tournament that certainly came down to the end.

So we have a ton of improvement to make, but I give our guys a ton of credit in that when you do have a veteran team, you can utilize the experience of having been in some of these games before and finding ways to win them. Our guys did that today.

Q. In terms of your bench guys, yesterday it was Brock, today it was Royce and Kai gave you a lift. Even though it's early and you've talking about finding rotation, do you feel like even at this point guys are really starting to figure out what their roles are and



embracing those rolls?

SHAKA SMART: Yeah, we're getting there. We have a lot to learn from the 120 minutes of video from the last three days. And the exciting thing is there's not a guy on our team that can't play better.

And basketball's an interesting game because it's a team sport, but guys take a ton of pride in how they play individually as well, and it's not really realistic to not expect that. So, hey, some guys came off the bench and helped us. We look at Kai as a starter. He's a starter for us. We feel like we have six starters. He's played that well. He's been terrific. He missed that lob. He was so mad at himself at the end, but he's been terrific and the sky's the limit for Kai.

Q. Certainly you recruited and saw a lot of these guys that Carolina has as freshmen. I was wondering, with Caleb Love specifically, what were you guys able to do successfully to keep him from going on a scoring run like he had yesterday?

SHAKA SMART: Just tried to make it difficult for him. He's a really good player with a very, very bright future. We did recruit him. I mean, he was a guy that we really, really liked. There's quite a few guys on their roster that we swung and missed at.

But they have a good group of young guys and the exciting thing for their team is they're going to keep getting better and better and better. I don't know that we did anything specific on Caleb other than we felt like he was the most important guard to contain, and so we started Matt on him, and I think all of our perimeter guys did a nice job on him.

Q. What was going through your mind when you put up that last shot?

MATT COLEMAN III: Well, before I just went to the timeout with, like, a little smirk on my face because I was thinking in my head, like, I was just made for times like this and I just, I wanted to win. I wanted to win. And then the last play we drew up a spread, pick-and-roll, and I'm a middle tunnel pick-and-roll and we go to eight second and when I came off the screen, I noticed there was like six seconds left and I just wanted to take the last shot, so I didn't give them a chance to get a rebound and try to, an opportunity a to score and the rest was, the rest fell in my favor.

Q. What does this tell you about your team right now to win three games in three days against this kind of competition? And especially just the way this year's gone without a NCAA tournament last year, without

everything else that happened, what does this kind of tell you about where you guys are right now?

MATT COLEMAN III: I just, I see it just starting to come together, taking things with more of an ownership, paying attention to more details, and guys are just more confident and they're more mature to begin with.

I don't think we win three of these games without Brock Cunningham and all the things that he does for us. He'll end the game with six points, 14 rebounds, four fouls, seven deflections, and we need that to win. And it's just coming together.

And then I think we just haven't, we haven't had guys play their best basketball yet, like, Andrew Jones and Greg Brown and Jericho Sims, so we just got to keep, every damn practice keep trusting our skills and we will keep getting better and not take a dip and just continue to grow and learn from this.

Q. Do you feel like coming out of this that everyone does know their role, without question?

MATT COLEMAN III: No doubt. And some guys know that they have more to give. There's more to give. Greg's still figuring things out, some freshmen are catching on faster than others, but I know for a fact that when he, when everything slows down for him, he will be one hell of a player this year, his freshman year. But guys understand their role and guys know what they need to do and what they need to do to help this team win.

Q. I did want to ask you when you let go of the shot it hit the rim, the back board and then dropped through. Did you think it was good when you let it go?

MATT COLEMAN III: Yes, I did. It was on line. I knew I didn't leave it short, it just had to play with the rim a little bit, create some suspense for the fans, that's all. (Laughing.)

Q. Everything that y'all have been through over the past three years, losing streaks, the win streak last year, the NIT run, all that stuff, has that just prepared y'all for this season? Because in a game like that years past you guys might not have pulled it out, but everything wasn't working, but y'all somehow kind of came together. I mean, as these last three years have just built up to this moment for you?

MATT COLEMAN III: We just got tired of talking about it and we're playing for something bigger than the name on the back of our jersey, we're playing for Texas, we're playing for Coach Smart. Like, myself, I really want it for coach, man, he takes a lot of heat that we get, he takes it



with his chin, he takes it on the chin, but I know myself and I know a lot of our guys, we want to play for coach, Coach Smart, because he'll sacrifice anything for us so we want to do the same.

Q. How are you different this year?

MATT COLEMAN III: As they just say more mature, the game's just even slower. I'm just holding guys accountable, my condition on both ends of the floor, just have, continue to grow and I'm going to just learn from this, build from this and just keep going.

Q. How are you feeling? I know you took that awkward fall in the first half, looked like you were kind of -- obviously you finished the game, clearly -- but what was it like kind of leg muscle thing or what was that?

MATT COLEMAN III: Yes, I hit it, it's the same spot I hit the first game against UTRGV and then I hit it again and I got, I dove for a loose ball, I hit it again, so it was just like a whole stiff dead leg that I was just waiting for it to warm up again in the second half.

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