

Maui Jim's Maui Invitational

Monday, November 22, 2021

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Houston Cougars

Kelvin Sampson

Fabian White Jr.

Jamal Shead

Postgame Press Conference

Houston - 70, Butler - 52

KELVIN SAMPSON: I thought our first half we were real sharp defensively, getting shots that we work on in practice. They did knock down some early threes. The way Butler defends ball screens, it felt like if we had good spacing that we were going to get a lot of open threes for our 4 man because they hedge those screens so hard. We did, we spent a lot of time working on that. But your defense was good.

Second half, it's not always easy to stand in front of your team with a 20-point lead, whatever it was, 21-point lead and implore them not to let up. Well, they're human being. They are going to let up. They always do. You're going to take a 20-point lead and make it 40.

So I thought the second half was choppy from our standpoint. Obviously we played so well to get the 21-point lead and then just got sloppy. The ball quit moving, guys were looking for their shots a little bit more than they should have.

But I don't lose sight that this is our fourth game. We're still trying to work Tramon Mark back in. He had his first action today. So it's a good win. Move on to the next game.

Q. Is it fair to say that since you come back, that today's game was the best you've felt either on the floor or a whole game?

FABIAN WHITE JR.: I've been feeling more and more good. I just, I had to find a rhythm, and my teammates and my coaches are always on me saying, You're okay. You're going to find it. So if it wasn't for them I probably wouldn't have played like I did today.

Q. Fabian, they stretched the floor really well in this game. It's something that you have been able to



extend your game in previous years. Can you talk about your development as a shooter?

FABIAN WHITE JR.: Since I got to UH they have been helping me expand my range. Coach Kelvin challenged us in practice and after practice, so it was just a matter of time before I was able to start hitting them and my teammates always find me open, finding me in the open spots and it's just been, the way I've been I probably wouldn't have had those shots.

Q. What was your defense doing that was preventing Butler from not even getting a two-point shot. Was there an emphasis before the game to make them shoot more threes?

KELVIN SAMPSON: Well, they run a lot of second side pick-and-roll action. So they will start the ball in the first side and when it gets swung they run a lot of step-up screens and that's something that's been the strength of this team. I think we have four brand new players that we're trying to work in that are new, didn't play here last year.

We started working on defense actually back in June just because how new we are. But that's the strength of us. We've traditionally been good at defending pick-and-rolls.

Second half we got a little bit sloppy in that the closeouts, they were driving us, and they got to the free-throw line, how many times? 18 times.

But the point of attack is usually a pick-and-roll or an iso. If you load to the ball, you take away vision. If you get to the line of scrimmage, and we call, we have this slang terminology close the window, shut the door. That's how we describe our pick-and-roll action and then just load.

We're a good defensive team but the challenge is doing it for 40 minutes. I felt we let go of the rope a little bit in the second half.

Q. Both players, one great thing about this is a win but what do you try as players, as coach said, to stay focused for the next 24 hours?



JAMAL SHEAD: Really, just lock in and stay focused. We won today but we don't really gloat on it and stay on it, just try to move on and get to the next stage, the next round, and we just got to focus on Wisconsin.

FABIAN WHITE JR.: Same thing. The game over now, so we got to focus on Wisconsin and focus on trying to contain them and try to beat them. So if our mind's still on the last game we're going to probably lose the next game.

Q. You alluded to the quick turnaround. Can you talk about what the rest of the day looks like? You don't play until 11 most likely so what do you do between now and then?

KELVIN SAMPSON: 4 o'clock to 11? Actually, we were just in a tournament in Hawaii, two years ago. I think we played Portland, Georgia Tech, and we beat Washington to win the championship. So we had this exact same thing.

No, that's not right. I think we played Christmas Day. Christmas eve might have been off. Is that right? We played two days, off a day, and then played a day. So three games in four days. This is three games in three days.

We live on South Congress Street and where we eat is three blocks over, or actually four blocks over. You guys been over to those, to the hotel, Mandalay Bay? It is literally three quarters of a mile from where our breakfast or meeting room is to our hotel where our rooms are. So we have to factor that in.

But all the teams are doing that. Before I go any further on that, just Dave Odom and the Maui Jim, Maui staff, going from one location to the next is not easy. That's difficult. So I appreciate the job that that staff has done to make the players and coaches feel welcome and it has been great, because I know how hard they work at that.

But when we go back we'll go have a meal. The assistant coach and our video guy have already gone back to the hotel, getting our edits and clips ready. Normally we'll flush this game before we get to the next one. We won't do anything with this game. Won't even look at it. So nothing to look at anyway. We just move on. We'll start getting ready for Wisconsin. Play them at 2 o'clock tomorrow. So after we meet, we'll meet after we eat, we'll meet as a staff, watch film, come up with a game plan and then go play.

Q. Tramon played 17 minutes. In terms of what you wanted to get him in, how did you feel for a guy coming back like that?

KELVIN SAMPSON: Yeah, there's no such thing as

playing bad for him. I mean, we know he's a good player, but he's been out for, I think October 24th or 25th. So he's only practiced like two or three days so far.

So he'll get better as he goes and so will our team. Sometimes less is more. Against the first three games we only played four guards so tonight just adding him kind of threw everybody's time off. They're used to just coming in for each other but now we added another guard.

So we just got to get used to playing with him, get some rhythm, let him get his rhythm and let us get our rhythm with him. So it's just their turn to get minutes. I didn't realize that he played 17 minutes.

But Tramon's a really good player. It's going to take him awhile to get his rhythm back. He hasn't played really since, our last three games last year I think were Rutgers, Syracuse, Oregon State and Baylor. That's really the last time he played is those games and then until today. So it will take him awhile.

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