

# Maui Jim's Maui Invitational

Tuesday, November 23, 2021

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

## Houston Cougars

## Kelvin Sampson

## Kyler Edwards

### Postgame Press Conference



Wisconsin - 65, Houston - 63

**KELVIN SAMPSON:** They were 20 points better than us the first half. We were 18 points better than them in the second half. Yeah, it's a little bit of a new team, so I'm not quite, I'm a little bit surprised at how we played the first half, not competitiveness, not a lot of emotion on defense. Wisconsin was running their stuff, getting what they wanted. They were making tough shots.

But when you're not uncomfortable, when you're allowed to be comfortable, you get in a groove. Our second half they didn't make any threes because we guarded them. The game's not difficult. They made seven threes the first half, none the second half.

First half they shot 57 percent. We haven't seen that a lot. Second half they shot 33 percent. First half we shot 25 percent. Second half we shot almost 60 percent. So the tale of two halves.

Hopefully the lesson that our kids learn tonight is how important it is to get off to a good start against a good team. Wisconsin has a good team, well-coached, disciplined, budding star in the Davis kid. Their big kids are functional. They are good at what they do. I don't think any of them are great players, but they're all really good at running Wisconsin's system.

Second half we played more like who we are. But when you're playing three games in three days, you can't come out with a half a tank of gas, not when they're keeping score. So we're going 40/20. I'm sure somebody said, Well, Coach Sampson probably gave them a good tongue lashing. I called a couple of guys out. I thought Marcus was trying to do a little too much, which led to four turnovers.

We got into more of our stuff the second half and then he had no turnovers. So just a tale of two halves. Really pleased with the way we bounced back and played the

second half, but disappointed in our intensity and emotional investment, if you will, the first half.

**Q. (Question about team identity.) Were you a little surprised in that first half when you said not competitive how --**

**KELVIN SAMPSON:** I think that's what I was saying.

**Q. But, you know, just to have a team react like that early on and then the point of emphasis --**

**KELVIN SAMPSON:** Yeah, I wish I knew, it wouldn't have happened. It's a fair question, I'm asking the question myself. I don't know. We have a number beside our name, they don't. Teams that don't have a number are head hunting and they came out and got after us. And they're good. I'm not interested in other people's opinion of whether Wisconsin's good or not, I make my own decision. They're good. Everybody's got young players. They all play in their lane. There's big kids, Crowl and Wahl, is that his name? Wahl. He made big, big shots. Every time we were getting on top of 'em, he made a couple big shots.

Then I think they made eight straight free throws, I think we missed five out of six, something like that. I mean, you lose a two-point game, you tend to focus on one play, but close games, what we've been really good at over the years is making free throws and not turning the ball over. We had some untimely turnovers down the stretch and then we just -- running good stuff, playing hard. I thought our effort level the second half is who we are. I look back against Rice, Virginia, yesterday in the first half, but you got to make your free throws, man. Special teams. Sometimes it comes down to the field goal kicker. That unguarded 15-footer in a close game has become bigger.

But you just have to learn from it. We attacked the boards hard, rebounded hard, didn't get a lot of them. They made their free throws. The guy said we slapped him in the face on that play. I just looked at him. That's two free throws. We go down, we miss two free throws.

So, but you know what, let's give some credit to Wisconsin's kids. Coaches lose a game and they start with that, Woe is me and all that stuff. We'll be fine. We got 30

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games left. I was impressed with Wisconsin. Especially that first half. I was really impressed with us the second half.

**Q. Can you talk about the intensity in the second half. Was there anything that they did that maybe you studied overnight, game film, that threw you guys off that you didn't expect?**

KYLER EDWARDS: I think us as players we got prepared. We are prepared by the best coaching staff and it's on us as players, as men, just to come out and play hard every possession and give your best effort.

So the first half was on us, I mean the whole game was on us pretty much, we just got to learn from this and build on it next game.

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