

Maui Jim's Maui Invitational

Wednesday, November 24, 2021

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Houston Cougars

Kelvin Sampson

Marcus Sasser

Fabian White Jr.

Postgame Press Conference

Houston - 78, Oregon - 49

KELVIN SAMPSON: In this profession, athletics in general, you got to have a short memory. You got to move on. We've played three games here. Today was the first time we played two halves. We played one half against Butler. We played one half against Wisconsin. Today we played two halves. Without being really picky in the second half, but just our relentlessness on defense today and sharing the basketball, just moving it. Fabian got us off to a great start, not because he made shots, but because of how hard he played defensively and on the boards. He was just a man. He was just a man today.

Marcus's maturity, you know. I've coached Fabian for five years now and Marcus going on three and went through a lot of wars with these guys. Boy, winning championships or advancing far in the NCAA tournament, whatever. But I have a level of trust with them, but I don't have the same level of trust with the new guys. We got a lot of new guys that has not been with us before.

A lot of those things carry over from the year before. Like, our team, we are good because look who we signed, but that doesn't mean anything. You got to jell with the current team. I think the returning players have to learn how to play with the new players and vice versa.

What are our strengths what are our weaknesses and we're still searching for that. We don't have that yet. We're still in November. Still got December, January, February. I knew we were going to get nicked somewhere along the line. I just don't overreact to it.

Had a good meeting last night. Had a good meeting again today, this morning early, and our kids came in with the right mindset.

But I give credit to these two guys. They led the way.



When you have good player leadership out of your team it usually follows them.

Q. Obviously coach gave you both a message last night. What were the things that he told you both and what did it mean going into today?

MARCUS SASSER: Just play to our culture. Yesterday we didn't play to our culture, both halves, and today we tried to come out the first four minutes playing to our culture, being at a high level rebounding, moving the ball on offense and just as a team on defense.

FABIAN WHITE JR.: Just playing Cougar basketball and just having good karma because playing one half just brings bad karma as we saw against Wisconsin and lost that game. So we just play hard, play to the culture, and play to the team and we should have a good season the rest of the way.

Q. Along those lines, you guys haven't had bad losses in the regular season for like four years. Does that sort of preach to the testament of whether it's adjustments or to the message coach delivers, short memory, that kind of stuff, that you guys have not had back-to-back losses in a long time? Since 2017 you're 22-0 after losses.

FABIAN WHITE JR.: Coach does a great job getting us ready for the next game. Don't worry about the loss but just learn from what we did that games. Usually if we lose it's because we're not playing to the culture and not playing hard, so just got to learn from the Wisconsin game and just keep pushing forward.

MARCUS SASSER: We didn't want to be the team to lose two in a row so of course it gave us a little more motivation.

Q. (Question about the message before the game.)

KELVIN SAMPSON: I can't really say what I said in here.

But you work on playing basketball the right way. We have a style of play that's inclusive to us and when they get outside the line and play a different way it usually doesn't work out. But you can't try to play good. You try to play

ASAP sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

hard, things that you can control, the rebounding. And we're still not rebounding at the level that I want us to and there's a lot of things we can improve on.

But success is something that you have to control. I worry about kids when they start having success more so than when they have a little adversity because success, everybody's in the picture. Success has many papa's. Losing's an orphan. And when you're winning everybody wants to be a part of it and tell you how great they are. We live in a social media age and kids love to read about themselves. Unfortunately the immature ones believe it and it's my job to get them back down to earth and keep them humble. Humility is an important part of success. Remain humble.

Give credit to others, play for others. You have to learn in team sports to take yourself out of the picture. As my friend Gregg Popovich says all the time, as soon as you get over yourself you got a chance to be pretty good. That was our message last night.

Q. Lineup-wise you made one small change today.

KELVIN SAMPSON: That was more of a getting our culture on the floor. Tramon -- Taze's never played here. He's played five games as a Cougar basketball player. That's it. Five games. And his strength can't be how high he jumps. He can dunk on a 13-foot goal if he wants to, that don't mean nothing as far as I'm concerned. I said I don't think he was playing nearly as hard or as competitive as our culture calls for and I knew Jamal would. If you looked at our defensive analytics, we're a lot better defensively when Jamal's out there and he takes the pressure -- I think he allows Marcus to be a better defender too because having to be the point of attack and the guy that scores a lot, the responsibility he has on that, that's, you know, he takes a lot of pressure off of Marcus with that. So that wasn't a reward for Marcus or a penalty on Taze as much as it makes our -- this is what I felt like makes our team better right now. May not be like that a month from now, but for right now I thought that's what we needed after yesterday.

Q. How did you adjust to playing the refs against Oregon?

FABIAN WHITE JR.: We just played physical just off the jump no matter who we play. So we just adjust to the refs, we're not going to not play physical, but we dial it back a little bit. But just adjusting to the refs, if they're calling it tight then we got to dial it back some, we can't play as physical as we're used to.

MARCUS SASSER: That's every day. Practice, we don't

call fouls, it's part of our culture, playing hard and we're just used to it.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports....

