

Allstate Maui Invitational

Wednesday, November 22, 2023

Honolulu, Hawaii, USA

SimpliFi Arena

Tennessee Volunteers

Rick Barnes

Postgame Press Conference

Kansas - 69, Tennessee - 60

RICK BARNES: Again, just disappointed with our inconsistency. We're just inconsistent. We need to know night to night what we're going to get. This tournament, I think, was great for us. There's no doubt in my mind. I know we're going to get much, much better as a basketball team. We're going to learn from it, both games.

I know we're better than we played today, and give Kansas credit. I thought they executed extremely well. I thought their key guys did exactly what you would expect them to do night-in and night-out. We've got to get that with our guys.

Q. I saw you in Madison,. Where is Zakai this week in terms of his ability to play more and more on the court?

RICK BARNES: I think, again, he hasn't had any problem in terms of swelling or anything like that after the games and that's coming in. I think he's fine today. So I think once we get back this week, he'll be able to go back to the doctors, and they will do what they do in terms of the measurements they need.

But I expect more and more now he's going to get closer to where -- in terms of the minutes. I mean, he's not that far off, actually. Last night he played more than he probably maybe should or could have, but tonight, I don't know, what is he, around 20 minutes, I think. But we got to get more solidified there at the point. But we still need a presence with our post guys. We need those guys to understand we need 'em, and I don't want to be a team where if we're making threes, it's all going great. We're not. We're not, because we've got too many different ways -- we missed too many layups tonight at the rim that we've got to make. It seemed like they made all theirs and we got to get back to where we can finish those some way, some how, and get to the free-throw line more.



Q. How much did Santiago go get back into his groove in this game?

RICK BARNES: I thought he was good. Again, he does so many things. Looking back at it again, McCullar's a tough matchup and Santi's a guy, what he does for us defensively every night, you know, he'll take on those challenges. One thing about him, he's all about winning. I don't think he cares if he scores. I mean, really and truly we tell him we need him to shoot the ball a little bit more, but he knows when he's got it and when he doesn't. If he doesn't have it, he's going to find a way to impact the game some other way. We need some other guys to learn that.

But the fact is I thought he and Josiah did what we would expect them to do. Josiah was the one guy coming in today that we were worried about from a fatigue standpoint because he played 30-some minutes two nights in a row.

But we're going to be okay. I believe it. We got a chance to be as good as anybody in the country, but we're going to have to get better like you would say this time of year.

Q. Dalton, you knew he was really good, but now we have seen him play against Wisconsin, play against this competition from Big Sky to top 10-type teams. What did you learn about him handling this kind of situation?

RICK BARNES: Well, I don't think I learned anything that I didn't think coming in that would happen, would be could he make in-game adjustments. As much as we talk about it, try to give him the blueprint of how they're going to guard him, what they're trying to do, and understanding how much harder he's going to have to work to get his space on the floor, he's going to have to do some things. I mean, he made some nice moves, got to the rim, missed some shots that some of shots -- I mean, we think when he gets in there, he's going to finish it. I think he's got to get back to getting his balance. I mean, he normally makes some of those.

The particular situations -- I'm thinking of three right now, I don't think their defense had anything to do with it. I thought he just missed the shot because he was off balance maybe thinking somebody's coming over to make

a play because we did play against some size. I think his -- just I would like to think that this tournament shows him how he's going to have to learn how to make those in-game adjustments in terms of how he's being played.

Q. This schedule I know not every game was under your control, Carolina obviously the challenge, but you got that game, you got NC State, you got Illinois, you've already played at Wisconsin. That was a return. This tournament, by the time you get to the SEC, how ready will this group be for that gauntlet?

RICK BARNES: Again, I think it's great. I've said all along, I like being in big games. If you want to win a big game, you got to get in a big game, and coming here was -- again, am I disappointed we didn't win this tournament? I am, because I think our team's good enough to win this tournament and win any night they go out on the court.

But I do know that it's -- you think about it, we played three teams, counting our exhibition game from the Big Ten, that all have a lot back. We've got some enough back, too. So, it was -- all those games were high-level games this time of year. I look at the Kansas team, I think they're going to get better and better as the year goes on, as they keep going. I think we have a chance to do that, too, I really do. I do think that playing this schedule, I think it's great. I think that's what -- I've been doing this a long time, and I enjoy these games because I want to see us play at the highest level, I want to see us execute at the highest level, I want to see our guys learn from this. We talked about it last night, we didn't have a lot of time -- and this, this game's different because we don't get to do our normal prep, but they're in the same situation. I just, again, we got to get consistent with key guys. If you look at the teams that are constantly right there and answered that question, it will be just that, can we go in every game, and getting ready for conference play, that we know, night-in and night-out, what we're going to get from each individual guy.

Q. You were talking on Sunday about how everyone's going to leave here better just by virtue of this field. You might have already answered this, but, I mean, the 1-2 team that I saw out there looked pretty good. You probably feel the same way. And then if you want to add to that just, I was asking the Kansas guys, this almost seems like it's a tougher challenge than a tournament in March, if you're talking about a Final Four or Sweet 16, because you get the off day in between. There's still the same high level of talent, is this tougher?

RICK BARNES: Well, it is, because nobody wants to play in the consolation game. Nobody does. As much as you talk to our team, and they, and Bill, they did a better job

obviously than I did, because they were more consistent than our guys coming out. But it is tough, because we all come here and, I mean, I know we did, I know, I believe every team does, obviously, that they want to win this thing. When you get beat, it's disappointing. Then you turn around -- and you got to give it to Kansas, they played later than us last night, came in today, had a lot of guys played a lot of minutes. I think they had four guys over 30 minutes again today, I think. Again, this time of year, you don't want to be your best, you want to be really good, and you want to win every time you go out, but what will be the key is that if we can look at each other, look at our team, and each guy can look at themselves individually and say, Okay, what do I have to do to settle into the role this team needs from us. That's what it will be.

Then over this next month really before you head into conference play it is about consistency. Can we know what we're going to get night-in and night-out. And making shots, I mean, we can shoot the ball, we didn't have a great tournament here where I thought we shot the ball the way we're capable of, but that's part of it, everybody goes through that, but we had some high-quality looks. I told our team, I don't want us to be a feast or famine team from the three-point line. We've got to have enough in us to know that we've got to get the ball inside, got to get fouled more -- we didn't get fouled enough while we were here -- and we got to keep developing our post players, because I do think we got some guys that can score there, and to get ready for conference play we're going to need that, because as the year goes on people are going to push out, try to take away the three-point line, which is fine, because the court's opened up, we got to get downhill like we did today a couple times, but we didn't finish it, we got to be a better finishing team inside the three-point line. All right. Thank you, guys.

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