

Pac-12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 10, 2021

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Arizona State Sun Devils

Bobby Hurley

Postgame Press Conference



Arizona State - 64, Washington State - 59

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement and then move to questions.

BOBBY HURLEY: Well, it wasn't a high-scoring affair, obviously, not the prettiest game on offense. But these, both teams, really competed I think at a very high level, and defensively both teams I think in their own way were very effective.

And I thought we were in good shape second half. Got up six and then they quickly cut that deficit. So it was never easy. A hard-fought game. I thought we had great defensive contributions from Jaelen House, especially, with his ball pressure and his just trying to guard Bonton, who is a heck of a player. I thought Graham's block was unbelievable. So those were a few plays. Holland Woods' tie up. There was some really important plays made defensively by a number of our guys, which helped us get the victory today.

Q. How hard is it for you to keep Jaelen House off the floor at this point with just the energy that he's providing and the defense that he's giving you?

BOBBY HURLEY: Well, I mean, there aren't a lot of guys over there, so it's actually pretty easy to keep him on the floor. But that's just, that was my attempt at humor.

But he is very extremely valuable to what we're doing right now and he's probably developed faster than anyone has, really this year in the program. Jalen Graham certainly the second half of the year, as well, but he just, the stat sheet, the box score, whatever, does not reflect his value and how disruptive he is, how much energy he provides guarding. And then he had a tremendous assist to Kimani Lawrence in the second half, so he's doing it at both ends of the floor.

Q. What were your emotions like that last couple of

minutes? We all know how emotional you can get in games. What were you thinking the last few minutes there?

BOBBY HURLEY: Just trying to stay composed. I'm glad I had all my timeouts, which was, I think we needed everyone of them to make sure that our guys were on the same page for offensive possessions as well as that final defensive possession where we, Zo was able to score in the paint and what a fantastic game he had guarding Noah Williams for most of the game, who is a really good player, and then having the offensive game that he had.

But, yeah, it was, just tried to remain calm. We've been in a lot of close games and we have been there before, so just trying to make the right plays to win.

Q. I know that (No microphone.) Do you feel that's one specific aspect that's really improving quite a bit compared to December, January?

BOBBY HURLEY: Well, it's been our bread and butter all year, trying to be that way, pick up, our guards are unselfish with their energy at that end of the floor. I think our rotations are getting better on the back end of our defense, where if there is a breakdown and we lose containment of the ball or if they're screening and rolling to the basket, we're doing far better at providing help in the paint and closing out the shooters. So that was I think a real positive thing for our defense today.

Q. Remy obviously struggled shooting-wise again but had that rebound and then the steal in the final minute to help you finish. What did you think of his finish and what will conversations be like between you and him to try and get him back on track mentally?

BOBBY HURLEY: I think it's an example of how far we have come just that we can beat a team like this that's certainly on the rise, Washington State, Kyle's doing a great job, they have a number of -- they have great size and youth on the frontcourt and really good backcourt. So we beat a good basketball team and we did it without our best player having a normal game that he's capable of having.



But you said it, he did make significant plays with the rebound and that steal were very important.

Also, he's just all in to win. Remy, even with taking him out, he didn't want to come out at the 11-minute mark, he had just hit a three, but I wanted to get him a minute and then we really turned it up and other guys were playing great and he said no, coach, let them go.

So he sat an extra two or three minutes. I wasn't planning on keeping him there that long, but he's all in to win and not worried about his stat line right now.

Q. The shot that Alonzo made in the lane there to, I think it gave you guys the lead, just what kind of degree of difficulty do you think that was for that shot?

BOBBY HURLEY: Zo's had a lot of practice taking those type of shots. I mean, he's -- and he's a tough shot maker. That's why we have to live and I have to live sometimes with one that you're not pleased with, maybe just going too soon before we make the defense work enough.

But at that point the game was on the line, the shot clock was winding down, and it was a one-on-one situation. He had to beat his man and then put enough loft on his shot to score it over help defense. So that was a hell of a play and in a critical moment.

Q. You mentioned Jalen Graham with that timely block. It seemed like he had a lot of timely defensive plays coming up with steals and blocks. How would you, how do you think that flipped the momentum, because they usually came in those moments where you guys really needed a stop and it ended up happening that he was in the right place at the right time?

BOBBY HURLEY: Yeah, he's our anchor back there. He's the last line of defense and his block in particular was one of the best defensive plays all season. Just for him to have to run the floor and make up ground and go to that, as high as he went up to block that, it was unbelievably impressive, and he had other good examples. So he really did a nice job for us at that end of the floor.

Q. Obviously it was a tough road trip last week. What was the key in you guys being able to flip the script and come out with the intensity that you had today?

BOBBY HURLEY: I just think it's getting out of the altitude, getting back home, getting a couple of days to transition from the regular season to post-season, and I just, guys, I could tell they were giving me a good vibe of just wanting

to compete, wanting to try and win a championship here, and then we showed up. I mean, they really gave a hell of an effort at both ends of the court, exerting a lot of energy. So I'm proud of how we played today.

Q. Going back to that Alonzo Verge go-ahead floater, what was the exact play that was called in the huddle?

BOBBY HURLEY: Well, if I told you that, then I probably wouldn't be able to run that play anymore the rest of the tournament. So, but, yeah, we had a couple slip screens and we were looking for something else and what we had hoped to get didn't exactly materialize. But if you are looking at the game and who should have had the ball, if the game was on the line in this particular game certainly I think Zo deserved the right to decide it based on how he had played throughout the game offensively.

And you got to respect just how, because we drew up a play for him to get a three and he had a wide open three in the left corner and then he wasn't able to handle the pass from Remy. So a lot of guys would like kind of put their head down and not be ready to have another response and Zo showed a lot of maturity to be able to make that play again at in crunch time.

Q. What are some of the keys to getting turned around really quickly in a tournament environment, and also what do you think about the matchup against Oregon given that they don't have a lot of size similar to you?

BOBBY HURLEY: Yeah, it's, again, it's recovery now. We emptied the tank today. This, Washington State showed a lot of grit, a lot of guts how they played. They got some really good guards and they're big. So it was, we had to give everything we had to survive this game today and now just get back and recover. And we have had the opportunity to play Oregon, so we have seen them before, and we have to watch some film later today and then just hit the reset button and get ready for another early game tomorrow morning.

Q. To kind of piggyback off that, you've been in your playing career, coaching career, close games, and, yeah, it's a tougher road playing today, but what does this kind of victory overall do for a team in general in your eyes, like you said, going to play a top rated Oregon team, but what does it do for momentum and just overall psyche of a team when you get a gritty win like this?

BOBBY HURLEY: It's important. You feel like, hey, if I'm in these situations, we know how to get it done. And I think we were in a lot of dogfights like this throughout the year and some of them didn't go our way. We lost two games at

the buzzer this year and UCLA both times could have gone either way and none of them resulted in victories. But you hopefully learn lessons from those type of games and you learn how to win. At this time of year these are the kind of games you're going to see. There's rarely a team that's, if their season's on the line, is going to come out uninspired or flat and then you're going to have an easy victory. You're going to have to go toe to toe with someone the rest of the year, so hopefully we're battle tested enough for that.

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