

Pac-12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Saturday, March 12, 2022

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Arizona Wildcats

Coach Tommy Lloyd

Postgame Press Conference



Arizona - 84, UCLA - 76

THE MODERATOR: Coach, an opening statement.

COACH LLOYD: Tired, three games in three days is a tough deal. And just so proud of this group. I mean, honestly, I haven't even taken a minute. I was just with my staff, and having to -- taking a breath. To figure out how we did it -- UCLA is a very good team. For us to come in here, we beat them straight up, that's saying enough.

And to pull it off with Keer out and Justin getting in foul trouble. It was just literally like find a way, hang in there. And it shows the grit, the integrity, the character of these guys.

Obviously I'll probably get emotional a few times but -- I feel it coming on -- but I love those guys. And for them to believe in me and our staff, it's been a special year. And I'll always remember these guys and I'll be thankful.

Q. When you guys were down ten points I believe it was 53-43, in that huddle from that point on you guys went on that 20-6 run, what took place in that huddle to spark that?

COACH LLOYD: Just hang in there. You just have to hang in there. That was a tough situation. I mean, we were down five at half. They hit a double pump 3 to go from two to five. And then come out at the start of the second half, and that elbow situation happens with C-Lo (phonetic), and I know the rules are written the way they are, but that's tough; you have an out-of-bounds play, that inadvertent elbow, ends up being two free throws and the ball for them. It was tough.

We just had to hang in there, just have to hang in there. And I thought we did a good job of that all day, especially in the first half. With the foul issues we had, to just hang in there and keep it close so you can hopefully make a run in the second half. It was a great job all day of hanging in

there and making a run at the right time.

Q. You've been around in the middle of a lot of absurdly good teams. And I'm sure each is different from every other based on capabilities and tone and everything. What distinguishes this one?

COACH LLOYD: That's a great question. I probably have to take some more time and really think about it. But for me being my first time around as a head coach and leaving a very comfortable life to take an awesome job at Arizona and with a group of young guys -- we're a young team. And just have them learn.

And my only objective this year hasn't been recruiting. My only objective has been to pour into these guys everything I've got. That's how I've attacked it on a daily basis.

And to watch them grow, I mean, like, Ben, are you kidding me? I can't even think how far he's come from our first workouts in the spring.

And C-Lo, and Dalen today. That's my point guard, and he hasn't really practiced at point guard all year. And there was even a practice this summer I didn't let Dalen practice. He traveled 13 times the day before. I told him, if you travel I can't play you. You need to go over to a side basket, you need to go to footwork boot camp and you need to learn how to not travel.

To see how far they've come is special. Credit goes to the staff. Credit goes to those guys. And they're always going to be near and dear to my heart.

Q. The way the game was called, the tightness of it, did you have to adjust anything on either side of the ball? Was it a matter of trying to avoid that?

COACH LLOYD: I don't know if it was being called tight. It's just how those games go. You just have to hang in there sometimes. We had seven guys, plus Adama. And the mood was, we don't win the game without Adama's six points today. Are you kidding me? Took a kid who turned 18 in December and makes two 3s after hardly playing all year. That's impressive.

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You have to hang in there. And sometimes the whistle flips. Today it did. And in the second half I kept looking and we're in the bonus early. And that's always a good formula for us.

Q. You talked about everybody that stepped up. In the first half about halfway through they kind of had some momentum going, at the ten minute mark. And Larsson I think scored four straight for you. Talk about his production, especially in the first half, before the foul trouble.

COACH LLOYD: Pelle is a really good player. And he went from basically starting at Utah, transferred to us, broke his foot this summer. Missed out on a bunch of our offseason workouts. And then to be sixth man of the year, he sacrificed coming to us. And it's what makes us great.

Those guys off the bench are unbelievable. And you throw Justin into starting now to Pelle -- how about Oumar today? Are you kidding me? Mindboggling. He's dominating games when he's in there. And so to have that many good players is a good thing.

But to have that many guys that are willing to sacrifice a little bit of individual accolades for team success, that's what makes great teams. And I think we're on a way to being a great team.

Q. I wanted to address Adama's great play off the bench. I know you stated a few minutes ago, but how comfortable does that make you feel being able to utilize him next week knowing that he went in there and held his own?

COACH LLOYD: Hey, you know, the great thing is he's ready. And I've told my staff multiple times, he's had a head coach that's maybe held him back a little bit. And even I thought about putting him in the second half. But I'm like, man, this game's getting pretty tough. He had a great first half.

He's going to be one of our best players in the near, near future. He's a special player. And he has some magic to him. Even the lob he threw to Oumar -- might not have been perfect, but had the courage as a young player. Oumar didn't quite come down with it.

I believe in that kid. And I'm thankful that he stuck with the plan. And the plan was not to play this year. Not redshirt but not play. And not many young kids would do that. And it's going to pay great dividends in the future for him and for Arizona basketball.

Q. Ben scored 27 points, really came on in the second half. What did you think about his performance? Could you talk a little bit more about him?

COACH LLOYD: Ben, he was special. Took him a while to work himself into that game. They were denying him and making some of his catches tougher and tried to find ways to loosen that up.

He made two unbelievable 3s off a baseline screen on the right side in that second half. And, I mean, incredible. And I told our staff I just thought those were great play calls, which I'm totally joking, because those were impossible shots.

I was like to have a player that can sprint off a screen like that and rise up and stick a jumper in a sold-out 18,000-seat arena is pretty special.

And he's been great. He's had a great competitive spirit to him. I'm so happy for how far he's come and everything that's coming his way, it's well-deserved.

Q. Is that your first career ice bath, ice water bath?

COACH LLOYD: These guys got me a few times this year. That one was cold. But truth be known, I do like a good ice bath. I used to have one at our house in Spokane. That was cold, took my breath from me. But a good feeling.

Q. Speaking of Spokane, Gonzaga, Boise earlier today, you now, I think Long Beach is up like 10. What kind of feelings does that generate, all that to come together this week?

COACH LLOYD: It's incredible. I think if you knew our relationship, you know that we're colleagues but we're genuine friends first.

Our families are literally intertwined. Our kids are like cousins and nieces and nephews. That's what the relationship is amongst those families. And Tuesday night we all got together, after Gonzaga won, Leon was in town and Munns (phonetic) was in town, and we all got together and shared a moment, just us four. It was really special.

Those guys -- I'm the youngest one in the group by far. They took me in as like a little brother. How they've mentored me and the belief they've had in me has helped be a catalyst in my career.

Q. After the Thursday night victory over Colorado, you had given props to all the fans from Tucson. You said you couldn't wait, you heard good things about the

crowd on Friday with all the Tucsonans coming in. After experiencing that, what's your opinion of the crowd on a championship Saturday, from Tucson?

COACH LLOYD: I think it was Stanford on Thursday, Colorado on Friday. Do my math right. It was awesome.

I'm just so appreciative to be in this position. And listen, I know some people were like, think I'm questioning the fan base or whatever. Earlier in the year, they made us earn it, which is a good thing.

I'm all about earning everything. Everything we get, I want to earn. And listen, I might want it for me, I want it for the players. Those guys deserve, the work they put in, the loyalty they have to the University of Arizona, they deserve for that arena to be full, every night, no matter who we're playing. It's a sign of respect for Arizona basketball.

And that's all I want. I want our fans to give our players the best experience imaginable those years they play for us.

Q. Can you talk real quick about you guys not panicking, finding a way -- you've done that a few times this year, where does that come from, and maybe you or somebody --

COACH LLOYD: Listen, you just gotta hang in there sometimes. These games are long. And you hang in there. And we're a team that makes runs. So I'm always like, hang in there, hang in there. We could be a possession or two away from a run. And we did a good job hanging in there.

You keep it close. Playing UCLA, you have to keep the game close. If you get down eight or ten to UCLA, they can really dictate the tempo.

And I think we got down early in the second half. Luckily we made a run right away. You don't want to get down more. In the first half, with all the crazy foul trouble I had, I just wanted to go in close at half.

We were in position, if we made that run, we could get some separation. And we made some separation. And then it was tough for them to score quick. We were able to sub some offensive/defensive lineups in there.

And once we got a little lead in there, we kind of put a few defensive lineups in there. Got hard to score around the basket. Our guys did a good job protecting the paint and making sure the right shooters weren't shooting 3s. And luckily they missed a few here and there, because you need a little bit of that, too, but we got rebounds.

Q. Could you talk about Bennedict, he's a very nonchalant -- a coolness to him. Did you prompt him tonight where he had to go and get it?

COACH LLOYD: I mean, no. I mean, Ben, I just make sure I grab him, prop his chin up a little bit, we make eye contact, and I tell him simple thoughts. And at the end of the day, it always ends with have fun and smile, because this is special. And I want them to enjoy it.

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