

Pac-12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 15, 2024

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Washington State Cougars

Coach Kyle Smith

Jaylen Wells

Isaac Jones

Postgame Press Conference



Colorado - 58, Washington State - 52

KYLE SMITH: Just a good postseason game, ugly one, but really competitive, I think. Colorado has been playing really well coming in. I thought they played really hard defensively. Really bothered us, turned us over probably if not the highest of the season probably one of the highest. We don't turn it over much. But their pressure bothered us.

But we were able to battle back, took the lead there in the second half. Just too many turnovers. Didn't shoot the ball well enough to win. We guarded them well. They're a really good offensive team. We really got on the glass with them.

We kept coming. I was proud of our guys, but they needed it. They got it. And they earned it.

Q. Is it too early to say this was a tough one but now we got the tournament --

KYLE SMITH: A little bit. It's kind of weird. You play a postseason tournament then you've got another tournament because it's more stuff going on.

No, it hurts too much a little bit to go there. But we'll try to -- we had some long faces. It was pretty emotional for our guys. They really wanted it. So I said part of our deal these two weeks is to have fun, enjoy.

But it hurts. It hurts to beat yourself a little bit. They played well, but 19 turnovers is going to stick in our craw. We take a lot of pride in not turning it over. So that hurts.

Q. You mentioned the 19 turnovers. Four of the 19 were from 3. What were some of the main issues on offense?

KYLE SMITH: It was their defense, their pressure. We had trouble getting the ball across. They were denying even, usually, like, I think at their place we were able to get, reverse it through the post in the middle of the floor. We struggled.

Kyman got us. He kind of helped us out, (indiscernible) threw a high-low to Isaac. He threw a nice corner, got Jaylen a corner 3, made some nice post moves that got us going scoring wise.

But up until then it was a struggle. Like I said, they're quick, they're long, they're good and they're well coached.

It was just hard to get a shot. It was hard to get a shot and then we were turning it over. I can live with not getting shots, or getting hard shots, but giving them the ball is tough.

Q. Isaac or Jaylen, from your guys' perspective this was the least points you've scored all season. Was it CU's defense, what all went into that?

JAYLEN WELLS: I think we got good shots. Just gotta hit them. They did pressure us a little bit. We had a couple possessions, empty possessions, didn't get a shot up, forced turnovers. Like he said, 19 turnovers is not acceptable if we want to win a game. So I think it just comes down to turnovers and execution.

Q. As you're trying to get Washington State to levels they haven't been in a while just how valuable are these tournament games to get these conference games as a coach before the NCAA? And do you feel like a whole -- what are things from this conference tournament that you can build on for the NCAA?

KYLE SMITH: Back-to-backs are always tough. You don't see those in the NCAA Tournament. But there's so much attention that's coming. We had to deal with that. And really this time in Las Vegas it's almost like Final Four because there's so many tournaments, coaches, you walk through the casino a lot.



That can be taxing and you've got to be disciplined on that. And then you've got to play a game, compete.

Just I think the more environments I think that our home stand we had -- being a favorite and having to win those games, you learn through experience. So the hope is that we remember this one and we'll have another situation like that, and know you've got to get shots. You can't turn it over.

Q. Isaac, being a senior on this team, was the message -- I know it's short and brief after a disappointing one like this -- but was the message, we still have Sunday and we've got to keep it going? Or what's the message in the locker room?

ISAAC JONES: Just to keep our head up. We've had a great season so far. That's not how we wanted to end it, and it definitely sucks because that was my last chance at it.

But we get to play another postseason and it's a blessing to do that. So we give all the glory to God and keep our heads on straight and lock in for the next game we've got.

Q. Building off that there, I know you guys talked about moving on here. How do you move on from this one? Just flush it?

KYLE SMITH: A little bit. We talked about these are elimination games. You've got to learn how to play with that kind of pressure. But we've got time to work on it, because I thought we did so well in the first half against Stanford. We took care of the ball, then didn't today.

So you've got to be improving this time of year. We've got time. We'll find out where we're playing Sunday -- it could be Thursday, Friday, Tuesday -- I don't think it's a Tuesday, hopefully.

But we'll figure that out. We have some practice time. Gotta be diligent in how you do it. You can't have long practices. But getting sharp and getting confident again.

Q. The match-up with Lampkin, what did you see there and how much of it was trying to get just kind of the right guy on him, whether it was Oscar or Rueben?

KYLE SMITH: He's physical. And I thought once he got his third foul we did a pretty good job on him. He didn't want to foul. He wasn't going to try block shots.

Isaac started going at him, did some good things there. Rueben played really good on the glass. He was awesome. Had some turnover issues. And just we went

small there at the end and thought it was our best chance to score, and we were guarding either way.

Lampkin is a good player. He hit about what he averages. He's good.

Q. For the players, what do you guys most enjoy about playing under Kyle and what are the main lessons you learned from him as a coach, and what do you most enjoy about playing under Kyle Smith.

ISAAC JONES: Just having fun. This is the most fun season I've ever had. Played every game with joy. At the same time I'm learning that we have to compete every possession. Also the most competitive season I've ever had in my life, for me personally.

JAYLEN WELLS: Just his passion and the trust he has in us. We all came from different places, but he makes us feel like we still can compete with anyone in the world.

And then I'm just going to go with, just, like, how dedicated he is as far as just a lot of stats and stuff. May not always agree with him but obviously it's working, and we're going to believe in it.

Q. Myles gives you 10 points, a few turnovers down the stretch. What did you make of his game and his decision-making down the stretch?

KYLE SMITH: He struggled a little bit. Obvious ones. He played so hard. Left him out there. I've got to give him some rest there in the second half. Put some of that on me.

But he laid it out there. He was playing hard. They play -- obviously went behind the back, a little transition and just go lay it in, don't worry about that stuff.

But it's hard for me to be too critical of the guy being a freshman, first-year guy, getting a lot of attention and rightfully it's earned. An All-League player for his first year at this level. It's pretty amazing. Going against KJ who is awesome, really good player, and we held him 4-for-15. We At that end of the floor we were awesome. We were really good defensively.

To beat a good team -- I think they're 24 in The Net or something like that. They're good, really good. And you've got to play better. We'll learn. Hopefully we'll learn, keep going, keep getting better.

Q. Jaylen, I know you're a competitive guy. (Indiscernible) that you have another tournament coming up?

JAYLEN WELLS: I want to say it softens the blow. I've gone through all the emotions, the tears, sadness, anger. All I can do is smile now. Blessed to have this opportunity to be here on this platform.

We have more games to play. I know I'll put that jersey back on and suit up. So just blessed.

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