

American Athletic Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 10, 2022

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Dickies Arena

Wichita State Shockers

Isaac Brown

Ricky Council IV

Postgame Press Conference

Tulsa 73, Wichita St 67

ISAAC BROWN: Thank you guys for coming. First off I want to give Tulsa a lot of credit. Great game plan. They came out ready to go. They did a tremendous job. They did a great job. They deserved to win tonight. We got off to a slow start. The matchup zone bothered us a little bit. We didn't get the ball inside enough, and when we did get it inside, we were unable to score. I thought their big guys walled up pretty good.

In the second half, I felt like we got a little more organized on offense and we started to get paint touches, getting it in there, scoring the basketball. We cut it I think to a one-possession game two times. And one time we had a turnover where they went down and got an and-one. We cut it to one possession again. They got an offensive rebound and I think they got another basket.

But, you know, I like this team. I like our players. I just told these guys and I'm pleased with everything they did for the program this year. I want those guys to continue to work. It's not just about basketball. It's about doing the right things in the classroom and off the court, and all year long I slept good at night knowing that these guys did the right things off the floor and in the classroom. And I just told them I wanted them to continue to grow.

And we've just got to be better next year. And told them the work starts -- probably take a week or two off and we'll get back at it. But other than that, I told them I loved them, and give Tulsa a lot of credit. They deserved the win tonight.

Q. Yeah, Coach, there was a lot of expectations going into this year just because of the group that you guys



had. What maybe stopped it from being a real special year for you?

ISAAC BROWN: Coming into the season, you know, I thought we had a young team because we got, like, five new faces. So, you know, we were missing some guys but I thought we had a young team. Got off to a tremendous start. You know, going on the road, beating UNLV, beating Oklahoma State, beating Mizzou. I thought there was a time where we had some hiccups with the COVID, missing a couple guys. Felt like, you know, going into the conference after those first two losses and we were shorthanded a couple games, we kind of lost our confidence. But the guys battled throughout the year.

We don't have a senior on the roster. So we'll see. The work starts in two weeks. I feel like we didn't shoot the ball great from the three-point line this year. I think that's something we've got to improve on. And that's something we wanted to do coming out of the summer. I think this year we were probably 30 percent from the three-point line. In order to be a great team that number has got to go up.

But I know these guys will work. They'll put the work in this summer. They'll get in the weight room and work. They're going to work in the classroom. We've got high-character guys. So we've just got to get ready, got to start working for next year right now.

Q. Coach, obviously the fans are used to winning around here and for it just not to really happen very much this year, I mean, obviously a lot of disappointment in the fanbase. Do you guys feel disappointed in the way the season played out? Or how would you I guess respond to criticism from the fanbase for how the season ended?

ISAAC BROWN: Yeah. And I take all that. That's on me. That ain't on the players. I take all that. The one thing I'm going to do is I'm going to try to make sure we're better next year. We didn't have a great season this year. I thought the guys battled. We had a couple games, you've got to understand, where the point guard, he didn't play. We were 0-for-5 when Craig Porter didn't play, whether that was due to COVID or an injury. And I felt like that hurt

our team.

But overall, I've got to do a better job. And I know these guys are going to fight. You know, we won a championship last year. We didn't win a championship this year. We're never happy not being in postseason and we've got to do better. I've got to do better as a coach. I've got to get these guys to play harder and it starts in two weeks. We've just got to get better.

Q. With the offense, you mentioned just the shooting struggles that seemed to persist the whole season. Sometimes the ball wouldn't move -- the players wouldn't move on offense. What do you credit that it to? Is that just have to -- what was missing I guess on offense this season with seemingly a lot of talented players on offense? Why do you think it never really clicked?

ISAAC BROWN: I've got to do a better job of making sure the ball moves. I thought early in the season, we moved it a lot in our bounce offense but we still weren't scoring the basketball. And we just got to do a better job of turning down a good shot and getting a better shot. And that starts with the head coach. I've got to do a better job of getting those guys in position. I've got to do a better job of this summer making sure those guys get 500 shots a day. You know, I take all that. That's on me. And in order for us to be great, I've got to do a better job in that. And I know next year I will.

We're not going to stop the fight. You know, last year we were picked 7th; we won a championship. This year I think we were picked 4th or 5th; we finished 7th. We came up short. And for whatever reason, I give them all the credit tonight because they came out and they just did a better job than we did

Q. Ricky, this is a question for you: As a true freshman coming in from the American tournament you come in and you take 16 shots coming off the bench. Where do you get that confidence as a true freshman to just come in and let it fly?

RICKY COUNCIL IV: I see 13. But Coach gives me a lot of freedom. I have to take advantage of it. I mean, he has a lot of faith in me. And I think I did a pretty good job throughout the year of -- I don't know. I don't have much to say. I'm just I'm disappointed in myself and the team. And it's a tough, tough way to go out. Tough way to go out.

Q. Building off of that, how would you sum up this season with the ups and downs and kind of what did you take away most from this year and the growth maybe from you and the team?

RICKY COUNCIL IV: Just starting from last year, I was just thinking when I wasn't playing as much when I finally got in the rotation, I was going to help the team a lot, which I feel like I did but I also wanted to win; that didn't happen. We didn't have the best record in the world. And we're not going to postseason play.

So it's obviously disappointing. Disappointed in myself. And we just came up short, like I said.

Q. And then, Coach, you kind of mentioned it there just with Craig Porter, you guys are without him 0-5. How big of a loss was that tonight and with the offense not finding a rhythm?

ISAAC BROWN: Man, that's a big loss. He was having a good year. He got hurt against K-State up 12. We ended up losing that game in the last 10 minutes. Same thing versus North Texas. I think it was a time where he got injured or had COVID during the conference. And you know we had an individual instruction on Monday. And it was 3-on-0 it wasn't a contact and he pulled a groin. We came up short.

But I give those other guys a lot of credit. They fought. We've just got to be able to win those games.

Again, I give Tulsa all the credit. They came out they were a better team tonight. They scored more in the paint. And we didn't do a good job of scoring in the paint.

Q. Ricky, obviously you guys have a lot of talent on this team. Was there always kind of a -- you know, the thought of even though the season didn't go the way you wanted it to, there was always Fort Worth there's still one more chance to put this together. What was just the mindset coming into this week? Like you say I'm sure it's disappointing that it didn't go the way you guys wanted. Right?

RICKY COUNCIL IV: I mean, ever since Saturday our last regular season game against ECU we knew one plan, to get in the NCAA Tournament and to do that we had to win four games in four days. Losing this first round really hurt. I mean, honestly I expected to get to the championship. I mean, who wouldn't? And we came up short at this point.

Q. Coach, talk about this group. No seniors on this bunch, and season finishing like it is, how much is the expectation with this unit coming back together and Porter being able to play next season healthy?

ISAAC BROWN: So the question was, you're talking about for next season our team?

back out there.

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Q. Yes, sir.

ISAAC BROWN: Okay. Yeah. We won a championship last year. And I felt it was my duty to go out and get some guys that could come in and back these veteran guys up. And we had a young team. We don't have a senior on the roster. I think we've got to add some pieces. I think we've got a good nucleus coming back. I think the biggest thing we've got to become is a better shooting team. We've got to become a team that can play inside out.

And when Porter's healthy, we're solid. We've just got to add some pieces and make sure we get better. We've got to have less turnovers. We've got to rebound better. We've got to shoot the ball better from the three. And that starts in the summer with me. I've got to do more drills that if we don't make shots, we've got to run for it. I've got to do more contact drills where we rebound. I couldn't do a lot of those drills this summer because we were shorthanded with bigs and my big guy had a shoulder problem. So next year, if we can have enough big guys that we can add, that we can do more rebounding drills and become a better rebounding team.

Q. And, Ricky, what seemed to be just missing from this team? A lot of the same pieces coming back. Just what did the players feel like just never really clicked? Or what was missing, you feel like, this season compared to last?

RICKY COUNCIL IV: I would probably say defense. I mean, last year, coming off the bench and watching a lot, like, the defense just looked amazing. Teams couldn't even score at times. And this year, I think we started off really well in the first couple games, and then that just fell off too.

But like I was telling the media earlier, like, our offense started off slow and our defense was great. And then our offense got better and our defense, like, I don't know, collapsed. And we've just got to give 100 percent on both ends.

Q. Ricky, this one's for you. You talked about chip on the shoulder and everything. Do you instantly after a loss like that, how hungry are you to get back at it and sort of restore some of that Shocker brand that you guys know is there with this fan base?

RICKY COUNCIL IV: I'm ready to play right now. I hate we came up short. I was hoping we could at least get in overtime, then have an equal chance to win it. I'm ready to go right now. I mean, this off season is going to be big for me, whatever I decide to do for it. And just ready to get

