

American Athletic Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 11, 2022

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Dickies Arena

SMU Mustangs

Tim Jankovich

Kendric Davis

Marcus Weathers

Emmanuel Bandoumel

Postgame Press Conference

SMU 83, Tulsa 58

TIM JANKOVICH: Proud of our guys. Heck of a performance. You know, first round, you know, elimination tournaments, you just never know how guys are going to react. I couldn't have been happier with 90-some percent of what went on.

I've coached a long time. And added to this Tulsa -- well, let me say this, Tulsa I want to give a lot of credit it. They played outstanding yesterday to beat Wichita. I was so impressed with them yesterday and they started out pretty impressive today. Tulsa is top 20 in the country in forcing turnovers. And that was not a huge emphasis of ours but something we talked about that we needed to be strong with the ball. I don't think I've ever, ever coached a team that had three turnovers in a major college game, let alone a postseason tournament game with as much as on the line. So start there. That was a phenomenal performance.

I thought our defense most of the night was great. I thought our effort was great. Made a few mistakes. But we shared the ball. Lots of assists. And just, you know, feel great. I mean, I couldn't hope for a better game in the first round.

Q. Tim, you said with first games in conference tournaments you never know how your team is going to react. When did you gain confidence that tonight was going to be as good of a night as it turned out to be?

TIM JANKOVICH: It just felt good early. Sometimes you



can -- when a team has played -- my experience is there's a plus/minus being the team in Tulsa's situation. The plus obviously is they've already gotten the feel of, we're in a conference tournament, the pressure that goes along with that. They won a game, they gained confidence. The next night they're playing again and usually there's a comfort in that. Of course the downside of that is you're not as fresh as the other team.

So in a first round, I think first rounds are the hardest. I always have because you just don't know if your players are going to get comfortable quickly, and I could tell we were comfortable early. So I did feel good really the first 3, 4, 5 minutes, I could tell that we were in the right mindset.

So I didn't know that we would play as well for the whole game that we did or certainly the second half. But I could tell that we were in pretty good shape early on.

Q. Kendric, you finished with 24 points and obviously struggled with your shot in the first half. Coming out after halftime, what do you go through in your head to try to shake out of that and get back on track for the second half?

KENDRIC DAVIS: Nothing. My teammates just told me keep shooting. I had great looks. And this isn't my first half that I went struggling. I done had a couple halves like this. You just keep shooting. Eventually they'll either go in or they don't. I'm going to stay aggressive.

TIM JANKOVICH: They told you to keep shooting, huh? I almost told you to quit shooting.

KENDRIC DAVIS: That might be a career high, 15 threes.

Q. Could you just talk about the performance from Michael Weathers tonight finished with 12 points, 7 blocks, 5 rebounds. What was it like to have those kind of stats on the defensive tonight?

TIM JANKOVICH: He had 7 blocks? I had not seen this yet? I had not digested this. The twins, as you well know, they stuff stat sheets. And per inch, they get as much done as maybe anyone in the country. Michael certainly,

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even Marcus you've got to admit, per inch Michael's got to be the best shot blocker in America without a doubt, let alone just period, but I've never seen a guy with a better knack or at 6 foot 3 that can do that. But he's had double-figure rebounds. Seven blocks is just amazing. He scores. He drives. He does so many things.

You know, the twins have a knack for that. Emmanuel's been fantastic all year long. Emmanuel doesn't get enough credit. Not near enough credit in my mind and a lot of others. I know his teammates would say the same.

So we're lucky. I'm lucky. I've got some outstanding players that have outstanding courage. Have outstanding competitive fight. And I kind of figured that out in June really when we first started out, I could see that these guys are a little bit different. And they've been fun to coach.

But they bring a lot to the table, all of them.

Q. When you face a team for a third time in a season, how do you balance wanting to continue what worked well the first two times as opposed to adding something new, adding new wrinkles to give the other team something to think about?

TIM JANKOVICH: Well, you know, in this case we didn't know who we were going to play, which is another tricky thing in our position. Of course the other team only has one day to prepare for us. Tulsa or Wichita, they win the game they have to do what we're doing, scramble to prepare, which is really the whole conference tournament, that's what it's about.

So you're not going to probably change too much because you don't even know -- and especially like Wichita is mainly a man-to-man, Tulsa is mainly a match-up zone team. So they're not even complementary of each other.

So we weren't going to change much. Maybe one or two little tiny things but we just wanted to make sure we knew what we were going to do, what we'd been doing, what we feel works against them, what we don't. And our guys in a short period grasp a lot and they had a good memory as well of some of the things that we covered when we played them last time

Q. Marcus, Tim's talked before about how the bubble doesn't really exist it's something we in the media make up as time goes on, but if there's been the epitome of a bubble team, it's you guys. And with that, it feels like a lot of pressure. I'm just curious, do you guys feel pressure knowing what's at stake from the outside world that you guys are on the bubble quote/unquote? Do you feel pressure or is it just go

out and take care of the conference tournament games?

MARCUS WEATHERS: No, we don't feel no pressure. I think it's just one game at a time. We just control what we can control, and we just go out there and play hard and live with the results.

Q. Emmanuel, to have the night you did to kind of help the team through that first half when KD was still finding his shot. Do you guys just pick each other up and say you got this, I got this, let's keep this thing going? What does that say about the depth on this team overall?

EMMANUEL BANDOUMEL: Like you said it's just about -- everybody picking each other up like, you know, not everybody going to have a good game. Somebody just switching up, sometimes it's Marcus, sometimes it's KD, sometimes it's Mike or me or Zach. It will change every time. We've got a great team. It's just about being ready all the time when your name is called. And we do a good job of finding the hot hand. Like in the first half it was me and Darius, switch up to KD. It's just about finding the hot hand all the time.

Q. Coach, you've talked about managing the minutes for Tristan Clark, you got 10 1/2 out of him tonight. Did you limit him more than you wanted to, knowing you may have to play him tomorrow?

TIM JANKOVICH: We're hopeful that he could play throughout the tournament. At the same time, you know, Tulsa went small for a good part at the end or otherwise I would have played him more and Frank more honestly. But they went to a very small lineup. Started putting Horne at the 5. That's a pretty tough match for Tristan or Frank or Jahmar. So that actually extended some minutes maybe that we would have liked to have been rotating more.

But the plan was a little bit more for all the big guys honestly. But the game dictated that way. And we just try to -- I'm not trying to look too much -- we've got to win this game first, so we just try to make sure to do that. But hopefully he'll about be good tomorrow. If we're fortunate enough, hopefully he'll be good for Sunday as well.

Q. Coach, taking a look at this season as a whole, the players were asked if they feel anything of that bubble. Just how you view this team with 23 wins at this point in 30 games, and moving on from here with an opportunity to fight for a championship in the AAC?

TIM JANKOVICH: Well, I guess my first thought is will anyone care what I think? Because if this will help the

cause, I'll be happy to share exactly what I think. And that is that's a good question. I'm going to share it anyway.

I always hate hearing coaches whine and complain, so I don't want to whine and complain. But we're in a really tough league. I mean, this is a high-level, major basketball conference. And we just finished one game out of first place. And to not be in, like -- I don't understand.

And, again, this isn't the Committee speaking. We don't know what the Committee is going to do. We listen to one or two guys that have expertise -- and maybe they do. Maybe they're connected to the -- I don't know. I don't really know exactly how it works.

What I do know, to answer the question is, it baffles me that a team could be in second place, one game out of first, in a league of this quality and not already be in. And then, you know -- well, I'll stop it there because I certainly am not trying to get anyone else out. But I just think these guys deserve to -- there shouldn't be a bubble in my opinion. We should not even have that discussion in my opinion.

But as I said at the beginning, I don't think anyone cares a lick about what my opinion is. So I only said it because you asked the question.

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