

# American Athletic Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 11, 2022

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Dickies Arena

**Tulsa Golden Hurricane**

**Frank Haith**

**Sam Griffin**

**Jeriah Horne**

Postgame Press Conference



He's such a tough match-up off the bounce too. He can get in the paint. So when he's shooting the ball that well he becomes doubly tough to defend.

**Q. Sam, you started with the first eight points, first eight out of nine for you guys. What was going on offensively and what were you seeing through the defenses?**

SAM GRIFFIN: I just got it going early. I saw the ball go in once early, so I kept firing away.

**Q. Frank, SMU might be the epitome of a bubble team. According to all the bracketology have been on the bubble and having to play on either side of it. When you say that team for the third time, is that a bubble team in your mind?**

FRANK HAITH: That's ridiculous. I hate our league don't get any respect. They're a really good team. And I've been around this business a long time. And I've coached at a lot of different leagues - SEC, Big 12, ACC, this is a hell of a team. This team is an NCAA Tournament team without any question. The fact that they're in the bubble I think is ridiculous, and I don't play any attention to that mess, to be honest with you.

**Q. For both of the players, obviously you've gone through a long season but playing on back-to-back nights, how much did that contribute to simply running out of gas a little bit at the end?**

JERIAH HORNE: I mean, first and foremost, just give all the credit to God for the opportunity to be able to play.

Kind of reminded me of AAU a little bit. Just making sure we've got to take care of our bodies. It's more got to be mentally focused as well, locked in. I mean, our trainers and Coach Deets did a great job making sure we were prepared and ready for this game.

**Q. Coach, just what you can say about looking back on this season, you were able to get that victory over Wichita State in your first game here. Just what the positive takeaways are going to be as you look to build**

SMU 83, Tulsa 58

FRANK HAITH: Obviously give SMU a lot of credit. They played very, very well. I felt like to beat them, we had to play our best basketball. Coming off of last night, I thought we busted our tail last night. To beat this team, we needed to be on point defensively, like we were last night. And we needed to execute offensively, like we did yesterday.

But give SMU credit. They took us out of a lot of things with their defense. And offensively, Kendrick got it going there in the second half. Even when I thought we made a run -- could make a run he turned it up another level. And played like the Player of the Year in this league. He's a very talented kid.

But our kids, I thought we fought and competed for the most part, but I thought we ran out of a little gas.

**Q. You mentioned Kendrick and you held him to 0-for-10 shooting in the first half. What was working in the first half and maybe didn't work as well in the second other than just him heating up a little bit?**

FRANK HAITH: Yeah, he made a really tough three there at the beginning of the second half and I think it got him going. Our communication was good in the first half on him. I thought we had good contests on his shots. We trapped him a little bit to kind of keep him off balance. We changed defenses. But obviously he made some really tough shots. If you go back and look at the shots he made in the second half, and once he made a couple tough ones, he got it going.



## forward with Tulsa?

FRANK HAITH: We struggled this year. We had a lot of things that didn't go our way. We lost like nine games by five points or less. We lost our ball handler when we lost Keyshawn Embery midyear. Then we lost Anthony Pritchard. Both are point guards. And so I thought we came together, and it was good to have -- it's a good finish here. To win over Central Florida is a big win. And Wichita State is a team that we've -- I think we've lost four in a row to, so it was good to get a win there against them, our rivalry.

So there's some things we can look forward to in the future and building this program back to where we're capable to be one of the top four teams in this league.

**Q. You mentioned the fact of bracketology and how you don't mess with any of that. This is a strong league. When you look at the coaches around this league, just how you define the talent of the leadership of this league?**

FRANK HAITH: Outstanding coaches. You're talking to someone -- I've been around a long time so -- Tim is a hell of a coach, outstanding coach. And he and I have kind of had the same background. And we were assistants at -- I was at Texas; he was at Kansas.

But just besides him, I mean, the coaches in this league, Coach Sampson is a Hall-of-Famer. There's great, great coaches in this league. You've got to really be prepared when you compete in this league. I just -- I'm a little fired up when I think about how disrespected our league gets across the country.

And, I mean, Memphis, they've got the number one recruiting class back to back. How can you be disrespecting those guys? The talent in this league is unbelievable. The guard play in this league is tremendous. And that gives you a chance to win in postseason. And we saw one of the best ones in the country tonight in Kendric. So there's a couple other good ones in this league too that are still playing.

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