

# American Athletic Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 9, 2023

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Dickies Arena

## Tulsa Golden Hurricane Eric Konkol

## Tim Dalger

### Postgame Press Conference



Wichita State - 81, Tulsa - 63

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement and then take some questions.

ERIC KONKOL: Wichita State's been playing good basketball. They had a very good win. And the games that we've played with them before we knew that we would play a very physical team, a team that would be trying to get the ball into the paint and score a number of 2-point baskets. Our game plan was to try to limit those as much as possible, try to force some contested long distance shots.

Thought we did that for a good part of the first half fairly successfully, and then the second half just got away from us there. They were able to get the ball inside with some offensive rebounds, some really good interior passing.

But proud of our guys for their fight. This has been a challenging year, but one thing that's been consistent is guys have shown up, Tim here to my left included, just trying to get better every day. So appreciative of them for how they battled here this year.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions, please.

**Q. They came you up and threw a haymaker at you early with the first 10 points of the game. I guess you touched on it earlier, what does it say about your guys to get it back to one right there before the end of halftime? And was it just an issue of kind of running out of depth being an issue in the second half there?**

ERIC KONKOL: We talked about them coming out strong. They did it at our place. We were able to come out, get off

to a good start at their place earlier in the year. But just talked about them being aggressive. It was a not a game that they just came out and scored, scored, scored. It was really just kind of a slow drip, and we weren't able to score. That was kind of really the entire first half. We held them under one point per possession. We just couldn't score quite enough to take a lead, especially after the deficit.

But then in the second half, those stops weren't there like we had in the first half. Give credit to Wichita State with some of the adjustments that they made in their execution. But I thought our guys just, again, kept battling, kept trying to do exactly what we were asking 'em to do, and Wichita State made some good plays.

**Q. You had 21 points tonight to lead all players in the game. What was working for you tonight offensively? And then a second part of that was what might have been different in tonight's game than maybe from the regular season games against Wichita State?**

TIM DALGER: Obviously shots were falling, a bunch of my teammates creating opportunities for myself, just executing the game plan, just being ready to shoot, being ready to make plays when my name's called upon.

But definitely the difference this game was just we had a game plan, tried to switch up some things from the regular season, trapping the post in different ways, a little bit of zone and man. It's just unfortunately we couldn't get the job done tonight.

**Q. Is the message coming into a tournament format like this that whatever happened in the regular season is hay in the barn and nothing you do and here's another shot at putting together a championship-level season, is that the mindset coming in?**

ERIC KONKOL: Absolutely. We talked about, first of all, how great it is to participate in March Madness, of course to be in an event here in the American Conference that's in a wonderful venue. So many teams have already been knocked out. We get a chance to keep playing.

But whether you're at the top of the standings or the bottom



of the standings, everything else is out the window and it's what made this really the greatest sporting month in the world. So we were just hoping to come out here and be able to take part of the March Madness and try to do it as long as we could. Guys gave a great effort, did a number of things very, very well, but unfortunately we are ending our stay in Fort Worth a little early.

**Q. The game ended 20 minutes ago, so maybe not the time to take the big picture look, but are you able to assess how your first year in Tulsa went kind of in meeting some of the challenges that you had to face, and then what needs to happen going forward to bring the program to where you expect it to be?**

ERIC KONKOL: I told the team that this group has endured probably more adversity than any team I've been around. We've got four guys that started the year with us and are not playing now. They all had experience. Had a number of younger guys getting a lot of time this year. So we've always taken a view of just what can we control and how can we get better. If you look at our basketball program there was things that we've gotten better at, even outside of what we've done on the court. Our attendance and our game-day experience and a number of different things. Came here to the University of Tulsa for a number of different reasons and one is that I really believe that we can be a contender in this conference and nationally. I know it's going to take some time, but these guys have laid a foundation of being consistent in their work ethic, in habits, and just trying to keep building from that.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, coach.

ERIC KONKOL: Thank you, everybody.

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