

NCAA Men's 1st and 2nd

Rounds: Detroit

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Detroit, Michigan



Dedrique Taylor

Kyle Allman Jr.

Arkim Robertson

Cal State Fullerton Titans

Purdue - 74, Cal State Fullerton - 48

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement from Coach Taylor, who is joined on the dais by Kyle Allman Jr., and Arkim Robertson.

COACH TAYLOR: Tip their hat. Got to the free-throw line an exuberant amount. Having said that, I thought our guys came out and fought, particularly in the first half, just hit a little bust there in the second half.

But I shared this with our staff last night and I shared this with this group of guys in the locker room: In spite of the outcome, this group of guys made history for our school. In spite of the outcome, no matter what happens the rest of their life, they'll always be able to go back to Cal State Fullerton and be honored in the history of Cal State Fullerton basketball. And so for that I'm extremely proud of these guys. I'm extremely proud of their sacrifice, what they've made, what they've done, the maturity they've shown and the ability to get better day in, day out. So I can't express my gratitude to each one of these guys enough, but as we always talk about, a part of our program is impact.

And I think these group of guys made a heck of an impact, not only our school but our community, the students, and most importantly themselves, their life. So I tip my hat to our guys and our program. Excited for what's to come in the future.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Kyle, your coach mentioned kind of the slowness that you guys ended up having in the second half. What do you think happened?

KYLE ALLMAN: Shots we usually hit weren't falling and their size kind of messed with us a little bit. So it was tough.

Q. Arkim, being the sole senior on this team, what does it mean to get this far even though you didn't get the outcome you wanted today?

KHALIL AHMAD: It means a lot because last year we lost in the semifinals to UC Davis and this year we won the championship and came here. So it means that the work we put in over the summer really, really helped us. To get this far, it's amazing. As Coach said it's an accomplishment we'll never forget.

Q. Kyle, what was the key to your efficient night, game from an offensive standpoint?

KYLE ALLMAN: Just being confident in my shot, being confident in the drives and trying to get to the free-throw line as much as I can, just going high middle ball screen and just playing off that.

Q. Kyle, you guys hit two 3s in a row to cut it 19-18, at that point how were you feeling? I know you needed your team to play great offensively to that point, but you're right in the game near the end of the first half. How confident were you at that point?

KYLE ALLMAN: I was confident throughout the whole game. My confidence didn't waver just because of those two shots. But right there seemed really good, like we had a really good chance to finish, but it slipped away in the second half.

Q. Coach, obviously you guys had the lead there with ten minutes to play in the first half, as he mentioned before, down to three minutes to play within the first half. Did you get the sense, hey, we belong here, with a team like Purdue?

COACH TAYLOR: I just felt like this group of guys, if they could just continue to give their best, we would see what happens. And I thought during that stretch they were at their best in terms of playing hard, in terms of rebounding the basketball, getting down in transition. Kyle and Khalil were aggressive getting to the paint.

We talked a tremendous amount about attacking the paint. And I thought if we could continue to do that, we'd give ourselves a chance to get some open looks. Just in the second half, just didn't go the way we had hoped it would go, just in terms of the open looks, didn't knock them down the way we did in the first half.

Q. Kyle, could you talk about Carsen Edwards hit 13 points in the first half, was really key when they started to pull away. What was he able to do that

you weren't able to slow down?

KYLE ALLMAN: He's a good player, started hitting shots, offensive rebound, ball screens and he made some tough shots, had some good looks.

Q. Thoughts on playing Haas, you watched him on film obviously, how does film compare to reality trying to defend him and push him around?

KHALIL AHMAD: He's a big dude. Like I didn't expect him to be that big, but he was tough to guard. So I just have to match his physicality. And as Coach would tell me, do my work early. So meet him before he meets me at the post. In the first half I was doing a pretty good job of it. But coming down the second half, it just slipped away.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach.

Q. Despite Purdue's size, you seem to be very hesitant to double into the post. Was that the game plan from the start? And how do you think it worked in the first half as opposed to the second half?

COACH TAYLOR: Yeah, our game plan was to try to guard the 3-point line and let Haas do what he was going to do. And in my calculation, too, is less than three. And so we wanted to guard the 3-point line. I thought in the first half we did a pretty good job.

I think Edwards got going there a little bit, caught us on some high ball screen stuff and got open looks. But for the most part I thought we executed our game plan in terms of letting Haas go one-on-one in the post and try to make it difficult for him. And I thought he missed some easy bunnies there and maybe thought we were going to double him but ended up not doing it.

So I thought maybe it took him out of rhythm a little bit. But again, they got going there in the second half. The first two or three shots they hit I think there were 3s and got themselves into a rhythm. And I thought the first team that could find their rhythm offensively would come out on top and unfortunately for us Purdue did that.

Q. What were the elements toward not being able to find your rhythm, and also when it was 19-18 and they had not really shown a lot of rhythm themselves, were you thinking that if you can get to halftime like this you might have a chance?

COACH TAYLOR: I thought we just needed to have quality possessions on both sides of the ball. Our possessions are very -- they're defined by certain criteria. And I thought the first half, even to that point, we hit each benchmark. But again Purdue is a really good ball club. They're not a No. 2 seed on accident.

And they continued to stay the course and continued to do what they do, and they're a good ball club. I thought defensively their physical presence kind of bumped us off our path a little bit and got us out of rhythm.

It was difficult to get into a rhythm with the level of contact on us, against us. So we kind of got back on our heels a little bit on defense and I thought they took that as an admission to be even more aggressive.

Q. You've talked about the importance of rebounding throughout this season. How crucial it is for your ball club? In the first half you guys were leading for most of the half as far as the rebounding battle goes, but it kind of slipped away in the second half. What do you think was the cause of that?

COACH TAYLOR: I think their size and their aggressive nature, and just their physicality. I mean, I think they got 12 offensive rebounds there, and that was a key point of emphasis for us.

In these types of games, you can't afford to give up transition baskets or second-chance points. And I thought that was a key element that Purdue did a really good job of executing. But I thought they had some 50/50 plays that they got to and hit a couple of 3s based on that. But, again, our kids battled and we came up short.

Q. What was the overall experience of these couple of days like in contrast to what they and you might have expected it to be, and also how much of a springboard do you think this will be toward next year and knowing that that's out there for you?

COACH TAYLOR: I think for this group of guys, I hope that they enjoyed the moment, because I just encouraged them to do that and document it the best way they knew how. It was an awesome experience, you know, to me. A little interesting, just the motorcade and the police escort, those type of things. I was sitting in front of the bus with a smile in my heart because I know these guys deserve this and deserve to be in this moment.

They put forth the necessary work. They met the challenges throughout the course of the year in terms of dealing with adversity. And for us to be able to come here and experience this, I think it most definitely is a springboard for this group moving forward, just like last year's, little bit of success that we had, it catapulted us to another level.

And I think we've got to take this to another level, especially with having a majority of our guys back in that locker room, all of them will be back in uniform, and we've already started talking about the work that

needs to be done.

It's not going anywhere. We've got to get better individually, which in turn we'll get better as a group, and I'm excited to get back to campus, give them some days off, but get right back to the work that needs to be done.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.