

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Wofford vs Tennessee

Thursday, March 20, 2025

Lexington, Kentucky, USA

Rupp Arena

Wofford Terriers

Coach Dwight Perry

Jackson Sivills

Corey Tripp

Jeremy Lorenz

Media Conference

Tennessee 77, Wofford 62

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Wofford Head Coach Dwight Perry and student-athletes Jackson Sivills, Corey Tripp and Jeremy Lorenz. Coach?

DWIGHT PERRY: Yeah, obviously first off, congratulations to Tennessee. They're a really good team. They played really well. They're a 2 seed for a reason. They did a great job, I thought, executing their game plan on both ends. They're a tough and physical team, and obviously Chaz Lanier really got going, which obviously helped them.

More than anything really proud of these guys. We talked in the locker room. There is not going to be one game that's going to define what this team accomplished, and at the end of the day, there is only six teams in Wofford basketball history that can say they played on this stage. In a program that is rich in history and tradition for this group, for these guys up here, and the guys in the locker room to be able to etch their name in Wofford basketball history is something that nobody can take away.

So really proud of this group. We shot the ball relatively well. There were definitely times where we had some errors that probably cost us being able to go on more runs and shorten the gap.

But overall couldn't be more proud of this group's effort. We fought until the end and obviously we lost to a really good team. Really happy for our group of what we



accomplished overall this year.

Q. Jackson, you're getting to come back to your home state and play in an arena that you were denied a trip to your senior year in high school. What does that mean to come back in here and have a great performance?

JACKSON SIVILLS: Obviously it's pretty cool, but I was just focused on doing all I could for our team. I know that it's obviously a great experience for me, but the team is more important.

Like Coach said, we lost to a really good team today, credit to Tennessee. They're a very, very good team. I'm just blessed to be able to put this jersey on and very blessed to be a Wofford Terrier.

Q. Corey, so much gets made about what conference people play in and all going into this tournament and the difference in the physicality or the size. How much, if there is any, is there a difference from what you see when you are in the conference season to coming here and playing a team like Tennessee?

COREY TRIPP: It's not much difference. Mid-major, they got to start respecting. A lot of guys on Tennessee, their best players came from mid-majors. In Division I there is not much of a gap anymore with the transfer portal so I don't see much of a difference.

Q. Jeremy, you were able to bust free a few times on that right elbow and hit a couple of shots. Was that something that Tennessee was giving space there or was that something that you kind of went into the game thinking if I can get to this spot here, I can have some success?

JEREMY LORENZ: No, I think that was just completely the way they were playing. That's something that I know I can cause problems with for teams that play in the 5 is their big guys aren't always used to guarding a guy out there who can shoot it. I think that's something I realized I was going to be able to take advantage of.

I didn't know it going in. But it's always something I look to exploit with teams. And it was there and I shot the ball with



confidence and luckily it went in.

Q. Jackson, at the end there, it looked like you were waving goodbye to the crowd, giving them a send-off. What was going through your head in that moment and what has this experience been like?

JACKSON SIVILLS: Yeah, we were just thanking everybody for coming. And, you know, we've had a lot of support this year. Especially at the Southern Conference Tournament, everybody that was there knows how great of an atmosphere that was, and that was because of the Wofford faithful.

For people to come up here and spend money and spend time and go all the way from Spartanburg to here, wherever they came from, it meant a lot to me and my teammates as well. Obviously I was trying to soak it all in. This is a once-in-a-lifetime experience and I knew that. Just trying to do my best to leave it on the floor.

Q. Corey, the shots not falling from deep today, but you were able to find your way inside. Tennessee one of the better defenses on the inside in the country. What strategies were you taking to get the ball inside and score?

COREY TRIPP: Just trying to pick my spot, to find the gaps, see who is sleeping in the gaps. Just playing aggressive. That was our game plan, to get in the paint and find the gaps, and I just tried to do that to the best of my ability.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, gentlemen, for your time. Questions for Coach?

Q. Dwight, I know the focus was I'm sure on your players and team today, but obviously you getting the chance to coach at an NCAA Tournament game at a place that was so much to you in your formative years, can you describe personal feelings and emotions and what it was like for you today from that perspective?

DWIGHT PERRY: I think a big part, a huge amount of gratitude, fortunate to be able to experience a moment like this with a special group of players, special group of coaches, and obviously a lot of family and friends that were here as well.

To be able to experience that anywhere, I think, is something that I don't take for granted. To be able to experience it at a place as special as Rupp Arena in Lexington, Kentucky, that I was able to grow and mature from a young man into a man, is something that I can't even really fully put into words.

Really, really appreciative and just have a high level of gratitude to be able to experience such a special event at a special place.

Q. Coach, you go into the SOCON tournament as one of the lower seeds and then you were able to get through some tough teams this season. What was your message going into the postseason that gave them the ability and the fight to be able to go through that winning streak and bring it into Rupp Arena tonight?

DWIGHT PERRY: Yeah, there is no hiding. Obviously, we've had some ups and downs, but a lot of that comes from us playing really good teams and it starts in the nonconference. We play one of the 40 toughest nonconference schedules in the country. So there are definitely games we wish we had back that I thought and our whole program thinks we could have won, but we didn't.

But we challenged and pushed ourselves and you can apply that same philosophy and logic to the conference. The Southern Conference is the one of the five best mid-major leagues in the entire country. And this year is really not an anomaly. The last five or six years, it's been one of the best mid-major leagues in the country. Analytically, we were one of the three best teams.

Again, similar to the nonconference, we definitely dropped games that we wish we didn't and we wish we could have back, but we were a really good basketball team. And obviously our record may not have indicated that, but we were still playing really good ball.

There wasn't a lot I had to say. Our team knew we were a great offensive team and we were putting things together and playing hard and well defensively. And we went into the conference late. The three teams we played, we had already beaten, and obviously they're really good teams. And the reality is, in order to win three games in three days in Asheville, you're going to have to beat three really good teams.

And to our credit, the guys had the confidence because they have beaten those teams or we have been in a position to have really good success against those teams. So credit to our guys for staying with it, for believing. I think a lot of guys, a lot of teams would have let that adversity shut 'em down, but our guys kept fighting and staying true to our overall message. And I thought credit to them, and it's a big reason why we were cutting down the nets on Monday night.



Q. Dwight, I don't know if anybody has secrets this time of year with the film and the analytics, but it seems like all season Tennessee has used a lot of different screens but a lot of those when Lanier curls around the elbow and they have success. What makes it that makes it difficult for people to stop?

DWIGHT PERRY: First and foremost, he's a great player, right? It's the reason why he was able to have the success he had at North Florida. And similar to what Dalton Knecht last year has been able to transfer and have similar success, if not more, at Tennessee.

He's a really good player. I thought we did a pretty descent job. A lot of times -- he took 22 shots and I bet two-thirds of those were contested shots. He elevates on his jumper, he has a high release. So even if you're there, he's still going to be able to get those shots off, so credit to him.

He does a really good job. No matter if you're in front of him or not, he can get a shot off against anybody and he's not a guy that can just catch and shoot. He's quick. I think he does a really great job of utilizing screens, they do a great job with their physicality setting screens for him.

So I think anytime you face really good players and really good teams, right, to your point, there is no secrets, and you're not going to be able to pitch a shutout. You're going to have to live with certain shots. I think the shots he took in the mid-range, those are shots for the most part we would live with as a team.

I think the biggest part for us going into halftime, they had a 50% offensive rebound rate. So when we were getting good, quality looks, they were getting back half of those. We did a better job in the second half. But with a team like Tennessee, to spot them a 9-point lead at halftime -- and obviously large credit goes to them for getting that lead -- it's going to be really hard to make up ground.

I thought we did a better job in the second half to be able to score, but we weren't able to generate enough stops. And obviously credit goes to their ball screening, and their shot making.

Q. Coach, can you talk about how Wofford made it here and your history, what does it mean for you to go forward knowing that this is a place that you all deserved to be, you guys fought, you had a great season. This is somewhere for your guys -- you all deserve to be here moving into the off-season knowing that you have a goal every year to be back here. What does that look like for you going forward and how can you reassure your guys that this is something you work and strive for each and every day in practice and

games and the film room.

DWIGHT PERRY: Yeah, we have a great group of guys. And to your point, this is a rich history and tradition. One thing we talk about and -- obviously a large -- I'll be honest a large credit goes to Mike Young. The foundation that has been laid and what we stand on right now as a program, a large part of that is due to him. The foundation and the culture that he really helped cultivate here, starting with their first championship in 2010.

So for us, we talk about it. We're open and honest with it. I thought our guys, they did a great job today us just being here. For a lot of teams just getting to the NCAA Tournament is more than enough, and there is nothing wrong with that. Everyone's situation, every program is different. And for us, we talk about it in recruiting. It's not about just making it to the NCAA Tournament. Be open and honest, our goal is to be a Sweet 16 team.

And there's probably people that will look at that and say that's delusional or too unrealistic, but to be honest, nobody in that locker room -- coaches, players -- no one cares whether it's unrealistic or not. We know it's realistic. It's going to take a lot of hard work, to your point, in the off season. It's going to take us getting back to working and getting mentally and physically stronger, but we have the ability to do it. We have the guys in that locker room to be able to push this thing forward.

We've done a great job over the last 15 years of being a staple in March Madness in the NCAA Tournament, and moving forward, our goal is going to be to continue to push that forward and go above and beyond. We have done a really good job so far, and so far our guys in the locker room, their objective is going to be the same next year, to get to this platform, and to be able to go above and beyond this first weekend.

Q. You talk about this being attainable for schools like you and people think that's silly. The players mentioned it. The best players on these teams are mid-majors because of the transfer portal. So going into the season is that a mindset you show, look these guys are going here and you are playing against guys that you played against last year in mid-majors, does that give you confidence to get to the Sweet 16?

DWIGHT PERRY: Yeah, to Corey's point, there are a lot of good players across the board, low, mid, high, east coast, west coast, northeast, southeast. There's good players across this country and across the world. For us, when the year starts with the group we have, we can't worry about what other teams are doing, how good other teams are.



All we can focus in on is how Wofford basketball can be the best we can be. So the group we have, that's going to be our singular focus. It was this year. Our goal is to be the best possible team we can be at the end of the season in March. We wanted to be playing our best basketball. Our guys did that.

We came up short tonight, but I tell you what, there wasn't a group I've went around that's been able to maximize and reach their fullest potential more than the group that I was able to coach this year. I couldn't be more proud. So I think it starts with that.

When you have a group of four seniors that, again, laid the foundation for what's to come moving forward, I think when you have guys that come in behind them, it only helps elevate and push what we're trying to do forward more and more.

So when the off season starts, we gotta get to work. The work starts really quickly. We're going to obviously give guys some time off, but starting this spring and summer, it's time to get back to work, and I think our guys are up for the challenge.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, we appreciate your time, thank you.

DWIGHT PERRY: Thank you.

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