

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - TCU vs Utah State

Saturday, March 23, 2024

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Gainbridge Fieldhouse

TCU Horned Frogs

Jamie Dixon

Emanuel Miller

JaKobe Coles

Media Conference

Utah State - 88, TCU - 72

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement from Coach and then go to questions.

JAMIE DIXON: Yeah, obviously it's hard to end like this, a disappointing loss. As I told our guys, though, especially these two guys here that have been here and been in the tournament three times in a row and can't thank them enough, so proud of them. I spoke to our guys after the game about the type of kids we've had, which I've been saying all along, we have really good people, good character, high-character guys. I know it's probably not what they wanted to hear after tonight's loss, but ultimately that's the most important thing. Love every one of 'em. They represented our school so well and they're just good people and that's the most important thing.

Tonight just wasn't our night. We got off to a good start, but still didn't feel like we were doing what we needed to do defensively and as it went on, they just continued to get layups, continued to out-execute us, and simply put, we were outplayed. We did out-rebound 'em by 11, we got 21 offensive rebounds again. We are just not finishing with those as well as we need to and it's been kind of a problem of ours.

But simply put, we were outplayed again and I'm disappointed for our guys, but proud of 'em at the same time. So we got a good group.

Q. Before the tournament, you felt pretty confident you guys had turned the corner defensively. Was the performance on defense surprising or I guess how did



you evaluate that?

JAMIE DIXON: Well, I also recognize that this was a very good offensive team that we were going against. I thought we had made some improvements in areas that I thought could help us against them, but then they had some other guys that stepped up and they hit some shots. They made every free throw, they hit some threes at the end of clock. Probably should have gone zone a little bit more, but they hit the three against the zone and the clock. But too many turnovers. Our turnovers led to baskets. It's been a problem of ours all year long. Some of our shot selection leads to baskets too. So, yes, I felt like -- I don't know if I was hoping as much as felt it, but I think we were better, obviously Ernest makes us better defensively, so having him back I think was part of that thinking. We had some guys take some steps forward defensively, but they just out executed us -- and from different guys. Give 'em credit. It wasn't -- obviously Johnson 20, 19. I mean, Martinez, 3-7, hit some end of clock shots. And they make every free throw, 14-15. I'm a little surprised, I thought we didn't come up with loose balls maybe in the first half that they got some layups out of on some things underneath the basket. That hurt us. But, yeah, they, there's no other way to put it, they simply out executed us and killed us in the paint. I mean, 46 points to 26 is pretty much says what it is.

Q. You guys cut it to two right out of halftime, then they went on a run, from your perspective what do you think happened at that point after you guys cut it to two?

EMANUEL MILLER: Credit to Utah State. They're in this tournament for a reason. Great coach. Great program. Great culture. You know, they competed. We went on a run and they did a good job responding. You got to hang your head high. You battled, you competed, but you also have to give the other team credit. They came out here, they executed, and they fought. We cut the lead down to two, we want to build that momentum, we want to build off that momentum, but they responded. And those responses were where we need stops, but time and time again they responded and responded, and so just good credit to Utah.

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Q. You had a team-high 19 points, most of that came in the second half. What were you thinking, and were you just thinking it was on your back to get back in the game?

JAKOBE COLES: No, honestly, just taking the shots I always take. Some went in, some didn't. But it was more just trying to I guess give a little bit more push on the offensive end, but that really didn't matter today because we couldn't get no stops. I'm going to shoot the shots that I'm comfortable with and confident in. I thought coach did a pretty good job calling some plays for me, getting me some good looks and a lot of 'em looked good, so I think that's what happened today.

Q. I know this loss was tough, but how do you hope this group, I know some guys are going to come back, some guys are done, how do you hope this group will be remembered in terms of their legacy?

EMANUEL MILLER: You know, what we started here is special. What we're leaving behind is special. The freshmen, the guys coming in, I know the program's going to be in good hands. Yeah.

JAKOBE COLES: It's going to be in good hands. We got a lot of young guys that are coming in that are hungry, fight hard. I thought the last three or four years we done a good job of just executing and believing in the system. Just a few steps away from being a really elite program. So I'm proud of the guys that I came with, came in with, I love 'em, I'll go to battle with any of 'em. The program's going to be in good hands, so that's all I got to say.

Q. You decided to come to TCU eight seasons, eight years ago. Just reflecting on that time, I know this is a tough moment in it, but the guys that you've had, the guys that you have on the team this season, just what being back at home at TCU has meant to you and the positives that you can take from the gentlemen that you coach.

JAMIE DIXON: Well, yeah, I mean, thank you for recognizing that. We obviously have set all kinds of records, different things, and these guys have been a big part of it, these two guys here especially right next to us. It's kind of not the best time to be thinking about it, just, but I guess that kind of reflects what we've done. This wasn't good enough and, you know, eight years ago it would have been. It was a miracle when we got in. It hadn't been done since I guess when I had played. So that kind of reflects it.

Right now, we just feel like we could have done more. Our

goals were bigger, and that comes with what we've done in the last eight years I've been here. So, I guess I'm really more about tonight. I think, as I said after the game, about these guys, what they have done, how they have handled themselves. They're tremendous kids. They get along so well. They're around together, they hang out together, they do things together, and I wanted for them to just have a special ride in this thing and we didn't get it done. We weren't even close what we needed to do, and they know it. We knew we had to defend a very good offensive team. We didn't.

So I think they recognize it. I want to make sure that they did and it's probably not the best time, but they have done some amazing things and there was, what, I don't know, three NCAA tournaments, only like 12 of them have done that or something, have won games in it, so, in the country, and so, it's obviously a big step for us in the right direction. So, and these guys are responsible for it.

Q. Emanuel Miller, it's clear that you are a leader on this team, you've been a veteran, and I know it's an emotional night, didn't end the way we wanted, but your accomplishments this season have not gone unnoticed. You have over 20 games with double digits, tonight being one of those. You have nine with 20 or more points. You're a top scorer in the Big-12. Named AP All Big-12 team. To kind of end with all those accomplishments, what does this season mean to you?

EMANUEL MILLER: Everything. This season means everything. And not only this season, but my time at TCU. Cherish for the rest of my life. Never forget it. Something I'm going to tell my kids one day, you know. I'm just so blessed I've had an opportunity to play here at TCU. The community means everything to me. This program means a lot to me. I'm just happy I got to be here.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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