

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Washington State vs Iowa State

Saturday, March 23, 2024

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

CHI Health Center

Iowa State Cyclones

T.J. Otzelberger

Tamin Lipsey

Tre King

Media Conference

Iowa State 67, Washington State 56

THE MODERATOR: The Iowa State Cyclones are with us. Head Coach T.J. Otzelberger is with us, along with student-athletes, Tre King and Tamin Lipsey.

Coach?

T.J. OTZELBERGER: It is an honor to be sitting up here, played a really good Washington State team. Coach Smith does a phenomenal job. Those guys play with a great purpose. They are a very physical team, and they had a tremendous season.

We knew it would take our very best today, and we were fortunate especially in that second half that we had that. Hats off to our guys to their toughness, their competitive spirit, and for stepping up especially in that second half, but we knew it was going to be a challenging game and hats off to Washington State because they brought the best out in us.

Q. Tamin and Coach, even though you didn't have much success offensively in the first eight minutes, could you sense that Tamin and Keshon's strides were starting to soften them up a little bit and that paid dividends later in the game?

TAMIN LIPSEY: Definitely. Me and Keshon were trying to stay aggressive, obviously our shots weren't falling from the perimeter to start that game, but we were locked in defensively trying to take our minds off the offensive, let that come to us, and just stay aggressive like we did.



We were able to draw some fouls, get to the line later in that first half and staying aggressive is the thing that me and Keshon do so well and that was able to be a big factor as the game got going.

T.J. OTZELBERGER: I would say we take a tremendous sense of pride in scoring off our defense. That didn't happen early. They did a good job spacing us out and having us behind the plays. Probably the stat that we look at the most to determine how well we're doing is points off turnovers, and we had 21 to 4.

I think our guys are a very together and poised group. We prepare and practice in such a way that we know we're going to have adversity and credit to Washington State doing a great job putting us on our heels and credit to our guys for not panicking, not getting too low or emotional and staying the course, waiting for it to come back around for us.

Q. Earlier in the year you talked about you guys having a diverse scoring, four or five guys with at least 10 points, 21 points off the bench. How much do you think that helped you guys kind of push through the struggles you had earlier in the game?

T.J. OTZELBERGER: It helped us a lot. Certainly we didn't score great early. Curt Jones hitting that 3 early on was a big shot. He has been that great impactful guard scorer off the bench and play maker for us when he gets in.

And Hason got to the foul line and was getting behind the defense. He's such a terrific lob threat. Again, balance, to me, it's about our guys making the right play and playing for one another.

Regardless of how a team defends certain things, we have a plan of attack to take advantage of that and our guys take so much pride in making the right play for each other. Usually what happens when you do that is there is balance to your offense. That's been really good for us, especially the last few weeks.

Q. You talked about Curtis's three-pointer. He has been someone who has knocked down big shots for you all season. How much confidence do you have in



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him being able to step up and make big shots and moments for you?

T.J. OTZELBERGER: There is evidence by his playing time and how much we have him out there in key situations. He's had a lot of games over the last eight to ten where he's led us in minutes played, and that's coming off the bench, which shows you how much we believe in him and then his teammates, the confidence they have in looking for him.

These guys do such a great job of finding each other, so proud of Curtis for staying aggressive and proud of his teammates for continuing to find him.

Q. T.J., you guys, there were ball screens and you were able to pass out on early on, not too much in the second half. Did something change in kind of how to get out of those?

TRE KING: Can you repeat the question?

Q. You guys blitz almost every ball screen and they were able to pass out of those early on. Did they change something up and that's how you forced turnovers or how did that change as the game went on?

TRE KING: I think it was more what we did upping our aggressiveness on the defensive end. In the first half, we were a little tentative, and we knew they like to play out of the skip. And I think early in the game, we were too worried about that and not focused on what we do well, which is turning people over.

So in the second half, we regrouped and talked about how we only forced five turnovers and how that's unacceptable to us and how we were going to, quite frankly, just triple it, like we normally do. So credit to our guys on maintaining the focus and really upping the aggressive especially in the ball screen and forcing the big turnovers in key moments.

T.J. OTZELBERGER: I would say certainly challenged our guys at halftime to be who we believe we can be as a team, regardless of the respect that we have for their program.

I also am confident that over forty minutes the defensive pressure can have a cumulative affect on you. Rice played forty minutes and Wells played 39. So over time defensively, it settles in for us, and we're able to have that affect. We've been pretty good separating in second halves of games as we try to wear people down.

Fortunate that it went for us that way in the second half.

Q. Coach, you talk about being focused on your daily habits, but now you're going to your second Sweet 16 at Iowa State. Can you reflect on how much that means to you?

T.J. OTZELBERGER: You know, obviously it's a tremendous honor to lead this program. You look at our fans and the support we have. I feel like I've grown up in coaching at Iowa State, so it's a place that means so much to me, to my family.

It's just -- it's truly an honor. I got one of my best friends on the planet right down here to be on this journey with him as our Athletics Director, the awesome support we have from our administration, our fans, those who have come before us.

I mean, man, it's a pretty awesome experience. So credit to our guys. They're the ones doing the hard work every single day and certainly thankful of them, but very humbling experience, for sure.

Q. How convenient is it to know that you can scout the team that you're going to play in the Sweet 16 right now? How different is that than what you have been used to and how beneficial is it to be able to watch the team as opposed to having to get tape or watch it on TV?

T.J. OTZELBERGER: I don't know about all that. I would just say we believe in our way of doing things, and we certainly want to be aware of tendencies of our opponents and things that we can prepare for and be disruptive, but we spend a lot more time focusing on us being the best version of ourselves.

So we will absolutely be very mindful of that opportunity, and at the same time, my messaging to our guys is going to be to continue to focus on us, being the best team that we can be.

We've had a great focus that way, and I feel really confident in our group as we do that.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, thank you very much.

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