

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - NC State vs Texas Tech

Thursday, March 21, 2024

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

PPG Paints Arena

Texas Tech Red Raiders Coach Grant McCasland Warren Washington Joe Toussaint

Media Conference

NC State - 80, Texas Tech - 67.

MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement from Texas Tech head coach, Grant McCasland.

GRANT McCASLAND: This is always the worst part of it right here. And I'm so thankful for Joe Toussaint and Warren Washington, two guys that trusted us, and literally gave everything they had. I mean, there's nothing else these guys could give more to give our program a chance to compete for a National Championship. And what they did in this league, and the heart that we showed over the course of the season. And one thing about this team, we got down a lot. I mean we got down in this game. But I thought the last two and a half minutes of this game, three minutes just showed kind of the collective fight and grit of these guys, and it was the way we did it all year long. It never was perfect, but just a team that loved each other, and our team cares. I mean they care about each other. And that part as a coach is what you love and I'm so thankful for these two seniors that led us all year long.

Man, give NC State credit. I just thought they were tougher than we were. I thought Middlebrooks, Diarra, their rebounding, their physicality, and then the combo of D.J. and D.J. scoring and inside and out. And what a great team. They kept us on our heels. Their paint points was the difference in the game, and I thought they beat us. Give them credit. That's a great team. It's a hard way to finish your season, but I couldn't say enough about these two men and our team and how much I love them and how much they love each other.

Q. Warren, you've gone through a lot to be able to play



in this game. Can you take us through everything that's gone on for you since when you got hurt to be able to be on the court again?

WARREN WASHINGTON: First of all, I'd like to say thank you to the medical staff. They gave me the opportunity to be available in this game. And I mean, I could use that as an excuse, but it's no excuse. They were the tougher team. They have a lot of great players. So credit to NC State.

Yeah, this season has been filled with a lot of things I probably like can't control, but at the end of the day, that happens. I can't complain, and I just gotta move on.

Q. How do you guys want to be remembered? Throughout your college careers? How do you want to be remembered for your time in a Red Raider uniform?

JOE TOUSSAINT: I mean we brought a team that was dead last in the Big 12 last year to the tournament. The coaching staff gave us a chance to go to Sweet 16 if we would have won this game. So I feel like people can take it how they want, but we know in the locker room what we did. We know we're always together, we always will care about each other, no matter what.

So, honestly, it doesn't really matter to me what people think about us in this group. We know what we did and we know what we accomplished this year.

WARREN WASHINGTON: He said everything I honestly wanted to say, but like he said, we were dead last last year, and Coach McCasland and the rest of the staff this whole year have implemented a whole different type of culture, and I told the guys in the locker room to remember this feeling. And I know they're going to come back even stronger next year. I'm proud of all my brothers and what we accomplished this year, but this isn't the end for any of us. So, you know, at the end of the day we just gotta keep pulling for each other, and I love these guys, man. It's been a ride. It's been a roller coaster.

MODERATOR: Any more questions for the student-athletes? All right. Thank you. Once again,



please raise your hand. Questions for Coach McCasland.

Q. Can you just kind of take us through how they attacked you in the paint with their two bigs, especially tested Warren, got Rob in foul trouble there early?

GRANT McCASLAND: Yeah, their paint points was -- their paint points were the difference. I thought we had a good game plan, and it was -- it kept us in it. We wanted to double a few more times, and we had a double off the bounce. But also, I thought D.J.'s minutes obviously were significant in the post, but Middlebrooks was the one that really hurt us the most because he's been scoring, but he hasn't been scoring like this. And I just thought he got angles, and it's when you give both of those up. I mean, you kinda gotta pick your poison with them because D.J. Burns is such a good passer. It's like do you let him -- talked to a lot of people about him trying to figure it out. Do you let him shoot twos or do you let them pass and get open threes? So the rotation. I thought our double team probably should have went to it more consistently, but man, they're just a really good physical team and they were definitely more physical than we were.

Q. You went to a smaller lineup in the last six, seven minutes of the game, no Warren, no Rob Jennings despite them having success inside. What was the reasoning for that?

GRANT McCASLAND: You just get down significantly and felt like we needed to get some threes. And then the double team scheme, it kind of doesn't matter who's playing in that. If you can push them off far enough and get to the double team scheme, just felt like we needed a change of pace and tried to creat more opportunities to get space threes. And it helped and we went to a full court trap that kind of doesn't matter the length on that back side and tried something different.

Q. Coach, live and die by the three-pointer. Tonight, 7 of 31. Just couldn't hit shots. Can you just talk about that? Because in practice yesterday, they were just hitting them lights out.

GRANT McCASLAND: Yeah. Well, early I thought NC State did a great job defending us, and our threes in the first half were difficult. We didn't share the ball well enough the first half. And I felt like if we -- we got a few paint touches and we shot some really difficult twos and then we shot some quick threes, whether it be transition or maybe one pass. Just needed to have more patience and create multiple paint touch opportunities to get threes. And we looked at it at halftime and I thought we made a few adjustments, but we couldn't guard them in the second half and then we got on our heels because of their point

production and hit the panic button a little bit, and give them credit they got to the free throw line and made free throws. They shot 80 percent from the free throw line. So it was kind of that double combo. We got down, and I thought we had a little better flow to us offensively during that stretch, just couldn't get stops.

Q. You talked a little bit about it with Joe and Warren here. They kind of said it, too. But for you, having guys like that, veterans that came in and said, hey, I want you to help finish my career and to kind of go through this living life with them, what do you look back on throughout all this to get to where you are today from where everything was a year ago?

GRANT McCASLAND: Yeah, you know, this team had so many games where we got down double figures, and still found a way to compete and give ourselves a chance to win. We were pretty much competitive all year long, and Warren, when he was healthy and we had one of the best offenses in the country when he was healthy and he was moving well, and Joe's grit and fight. He just never missed a practice, he never missed a game. He was always out there competing. He never stopped playing hard. I thought that jump ball on the sideline where he was trying to wrestle it away, just I think it typified who Joe was. I think back to the Kansas State game where he had that lay-up in the paint to give us the win. He just willed us to so many things positively and tonight didn't shoot it great, but his competitiveness no matter the time or the score was always consistent. And I just love going into these games knowing that you got a point guard that's tough and will compete every possession and guard. And I thought he did a solid job on D.J. Horne just making it hard on him. And obviously we didn't make it hard enough as a team, but I just love their competitiveness and think about all the things that we did to overcome. And those guys really set the standard for how we want to compete every day.

Q. Coach, wrapping up the first year, laying the foundation, can you just talk about the future for Texas Tech basketball? Many great days ahead?

GRANT McCASLAND: Yeah. You know, one person that jumps out to me, and I'm just looking at his stat numbers, who played 40 minutes tonight, Darrion Williams couldn't even hardly walk in the semifinal game against Houston, and he comes out and plays 40 minutes, has 10 points, 7 rebounds and 6 assists and no turnovers. I mean just the grit that this group continued to show I just love, and guys like Darrion, I think, moving forward, are really going to be the foundation of what we do. And what he did tonight and showed, even though he was beat up, showed kind of the heart that I think this program will have. And we gotta be better defensively, and we'll continue to improve and do



things to improve our program, but the people that invest in Red Raiders across the country, our home court advantage, I just believe honestly we'll compete for a National Championship, and I believe it'll be soon. And I love the administration. I love the students at Texas Tech. I love the community of Lubbock, and our family loves it and I can't be more excited about where we're going and what we're going to do, and I do believe that the best days are ahead of us and I'm thankful for Joe and Warren and their investment in trusting us because they set the foundation to move this forward.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

GRANT McCASLAND: Thank you. Wreck 'em.

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