

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

Friday, March 17, 2023

Denver, Colorado, USA

Ball Arena

TCU Horned Frogs
Coach Jamie Dixon
Damion Baugh
Chuck O'Bannon Jr.
Mike Miles Jr.
JaKobe Coles

Media Conference

TCU 72, ASU 70

JAMIE DIXON: Well, first off, Arizona State was unbelievable, especially in that first half. They played like they did the other day, and we withstood a barrage of tough shots that they made. We talked about that they could do that, and they did.

But the character our guys showed in the second half, the commitment to one another, the response, the intensity we brought defensively changed it. We held them to I think 30 percent in the second half, so that was the difference.

But great execution, two great passes by Mike down the stretch, hit Damion for the three and then JaKobe on the play, two different options on the same play and he made the right pass. JaKobe caught an unbelievable shot. I think Damion coached the last two minutes. You subbed in a couple guys and you told the guys -- I think you said, get a stop here and we're going to win the game, and that's what you said and that's what we did. I'm glad I listened to you.

Q. JaKobe, first, just walk us through that final play, and how big was that for you to have that moment, considering all the stuff you've been through this season?

JAKOBE COLES: It was a big moment for sure. It was a good pass by Mike. I figured they were probably going to



try to double him. And I just take the shots I always take. I'm confident in them.

And there was a lot of shots today I was flat, and the last one I got it up, and that was the difference, and it went in. It was a good shot, and I'm happy for my team, happy for the win.

Q. Mike and JaKobe, Mike, you recruited JaKobe here, and last year I don't think he had the role he was hoping for. Talk about what he's meant to this team. And JaKobe, talk about the journey for you not playing too much last year and having a moment like this in the NCAA Tournament?

MIKE MILES JR.: Man, it's great. I'm so happy for him. We played two years of AAU together. He's like my brother. And I recruited him last year. He didn't have the role he wanted. But this year he's getting the minutes he wanted. He's stepping up. In the biggest game of his life, he made the game-winning shot. I can't say how much I'm proud of him. He knows how much I'm proud of him. He's worked so hard.

Man, I'm proud of everybody. We were down, we stayed together. We've been through a lot, so that just shows how resilient we are getting this win.

JAKOBE COLES: Yeah, this is my brother, man. I appreciate him recruiting me coming here. Like he said, it wasn't the role I wanted last year, but sometimes you've got to fight through adversity, sometimes you've got to get better. There was improvements I had to make.

And this year I stepped up for my opportunities, and everything went right, and I'm just happy, and I'm happy for our team.

Q. Coach Dixon, after this tough-fought game, how do you see yourself recuperating with the team and recovering physically and mentally with this tough battle against Gonzaga?

JAMIE DIXON: Well, we just had the tournament, and so really you're playing back to back. So the way I look at it,



we've got plenty of time and plenty of opportunity to get rest and get prepared for Gonzaga.

They played right before us. They had a tough game, as well. This is just what we wanted to do.

We're where we want to be, and I think we gained a lot of confidence from this game and a belief and understanding the defense has to win it. That's what we did in the second half, out-rebounded them in the second half by a good margin, too. Those things is what brought us back, and we've got to do that. It's another good example of that going forward for us.

Q. Coach Dixon, you kind of mentioned it earlier, Mike was doing everything the second half, passing, drawing charges, dunking on guys. What can you say about the leadership and just kind of the gritty -- I know he got banged up at the end of the first half.

JAMIE DIXON: Yeah, you could see he was really taking it on to try to bring us back, willing us to. And Damion is right there doing it, too. Like I said, there was stretch there where I liked how we were playing in the second half defensively. We were playing so hard, we were getting stops, but it seemed like we wanted to -- with 14 minutes left, we had to get it down -- we had to score 12 points on a possession. So we kind of rushed some shots.

But I think they recognized that. They executed better down the stretch, and our last five minutes is how we want to play.

Yeah, really, they're clearly -- we've got good leadership, but they're extremely competitive, and I just kind of felt that Mike and Damion were not going to let us lose. You know, that's a good tandem to have.

Q. For Mike, 12 lead changes, and each team led by 11. When a game is crazy and hectic as that, what was your message for the guys out there to stay focused and stay composed?

MIKE MILES JR.: All our message was just stay together. We had our run at the beginning of the game, and they started making tough shots just like they did the first game, and they took the lead, they got the lead, and we couldn't get it back.

So in the second half we decided to try to make them drive a little bit. We knew they weren't going to make the same tough shots, and we stepped it up defensively, and down the stretch we got buckets.

I trusted my teammates, and it was a good win. We're a

good team, good players, I love all my teammates.

Q. Chuck, it's no secret you haven't got the ball the way you wanted to this season, but to shoot the ball well tonight, talk about your year and how good does it feel to be playing this kind of basketball in the NCAA Tournament?

CHUCK O'BANNON JR.: Well, the year didn't start the way I wanted it to, but I'm just trying to stay together, stay consistent. This is the best time of the year for shots to fall for me. I'm just happy that coaches and my teammates stayed confident in me so we could get the win.

Q. Damion, obviously Coach mentioned you were kind of coaching the last couple minutes there. What was your message to the guys after Arizona State hits the game-tying three with 16 seconds left?

DAMION BAUGH: Just stick with it. It's a game of runs. Got on a run early, so it's the end of the game, we're going to score, just get a stop, do the best we can.

Q. Mike, we talked about you guys having a chance to make more history, the opportunity to get to the second weekend. Playing Gonzaga, I know every game is important, but when you're playing a blue blood, does it make you more excited for the opportunity?

MIKE MILES JR.: Yeah, I feel like that's the type of team we are. We welcome challenges. We like to step up to big games. And today was a big game, tomorrow is a big game. Every game from now on is a big game because we can go home after we lose.

We're going to stay ready, prepare for Gonzaga. We know they're a great team, got one of the best players in the Drew Timme. Prepare for them the right way, come out with the same intensity and try to get the win.

Q. Mike, how important was it for you to get to the free-throw line tonight? Obviously you're 12 of 14. Arizona State's famous alum James Harden, but you put on a pretty good James Harden impression getting to the line like you did tonight. How important was it to stay in a rhythm?

MIKE MILES JR.: It was huge. I'm big on getting to the line and seeing the ball go in. As of late I haven't been getting it, but I seen I was getting it, so I just tried to stay aggressive, get to the rim and try to finish or get the contact and draw the foul. I did that, and we got the win.

Q. Your team throughout the season, the best fast

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

break team in the country. The Sun Devils outscored you in that category tonight, and for the most part held you in check throughout the majority of the game. Can you attribute that to the Sun Devils defensively? What did you see from them throughout the game that led you guys to take it there late?

JAMIE DIXON: Yeah, no, part of it was they made shots, so you're not going to get a lot of transition opportunities. They had 13 turnovers, so we didn't get a lot of -- as many deflections. Second half we got some. But they're a good defensive team, and obviously it's not hard to figure out what we do and we do well.

I don't think it was that we didn't convert in transition as much. I'll have to -- they're hard to score on. Around the basket they change some shots, there's no question about that. So that was something that we, I think, adjusted to in the second half. We started shot faking, getting fouled a little bit more, and that was good.

But when they make the shots, you're not going to get many in transition in the first half, and a low turnover game in the first half, as well. I'd like to point out that we only had five turnovers, too, so that's a pretty impressive stat that hasn't been touched on. But that's probably where we won the game.

You know, I thought we were getting good shots. Now, our shooting percentage doesn't show it. I thought our offense was good. We made up for it with the 14 offensive rebounds and the five turnovers. But we didn't finish around the rim as well, but they had something to do with that.

Q. Question for the players. Arizona State shot amazing in the first half, but they dropped -- you guys dropped their shooting percentage by nearly 23 percent in the second half. How did you guys rally around each other to really lock down Arizona State to get yourselves back in the game and get it down to that last shot?

MIKE MILES JR.: To we had to get more aggressive. We knew they were all -- except for Frankie, we knew the rest of them were dribble pull up guys. So we had to get into them, either make them take the same shots and hope they miss or make them go to the rim.

The second half they got kind of tired, we started getting into them again, and they started missing shots. That was the whole game plan in the second half, and we executed.

Q. Any of the players, did you notice the altitude at all today?

DAMION BAUGH: For sure.

CHUCK O'BANNON JR.: I didn't feel the altitude until the second half, but second half came to me pretty quick. When we first got to Denver, we made sure to practice first, to get up and down the court, open up our lungs a little bit. So that definitely helped. We were told to stay hydrated, and everybody had water on them at all times. So we were prepared for this game.

Q. Coach, obviously you've had a lot of success in the NCAA Tournament historically, but to do it for your alma mater in these last couple seasons, how special this is for you, and how special this group is this time around.

JAMIE DIXON: Well, I mean, the most special thing is for these guys. They stuck together. I'm just happy for them.

Yeah, it means something more, alma mater, and kind of taking on a program that needed to step it up. But most importantly, these guys stayed together and battled, and they willed themselves to win. That means a lot to me.

Altitude didn't affect me today, just in case you guys are wondering.

But these guys are so connected, they're so -- we play with so much emotion, and I love that about them, and they put it out there. Yeah, we didn't play great, but we played tough and we competed and we figured it out and we kept battling with a big deficit, and that shows a lot of character and a lot of belief in each other. That I love.

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