

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Texas A&M vs Nebraska

Friday, March 22, 2024
Memphis, Tennessee, USA
FedExForum

Texas A&M Aggies
Coach Buzz Williams
Wade Taylor IV
Tyrece Radford
Manny Obaseki
Media Conference

Texas A&M - 98, Nebraska - 83

Q. Tyrece, it seemed like you all were playing a little bit different defense, trying to prevent them from getting the 3-point. What kind of did you all change, what was the emphasis and what was effective in keeping them at least at bay from what they normally shoot at the 3-point line?

TYRECE RADFORD: I don't think we changed anything defensively, we played with HOH, hands over our head. Because they've got really good shooters and we tried to prevent them from going off or getting hot. We knew that was a good team that was going to make a couple of shots. But all credit to the team just by staying in it.

Q. What did you see there late in the half that made you go off?

MANNY OBASEKI: I'm thankful for my coaches and teammates for trusting me. They gave me the ball and allowed me to do my thing. I knew I had a mismatch all night. They let me take advantage of that.

Q. Last Friday night you were in Nashville. You silenced (indiscernible) nation. Tonight a lot of fans you silenced them. Does that add motivation; talk about that and the motivation factor coming into the game.

TYRECE RADFORD: We just (indiscernible) that channel and focused on the guys who rode the bus with us and flew



on the plane with us. That was our big objective, keep our circle small and try not to participate in things outside our circle.

Q. What was the idea of taking Rienk Mass out of the game in this particular game? You guys were really double teaming him hard and your rotations were really crisp to get to your shooters. What was your idea and game plan in that to take Rienk Mast out of the game?

MANNY OBASEKI: He's a really good player, one. And credit to our coaching staff. They prepared us at a high level. We knew if we had effective traps, whenever he posted us up, we'd be good because high hands and our cover 2 and high nail. They did a really good job of taking care of cutters and things like that. Credit to the coaching staff and us for taking care of business on that end.

Q. Wade, when you have a big night, do you ever get -- is there ever something that happens early that makes you feel like you're going to be able to have a really successful night? Or is there anything that goes on for you that kind of gives you this idea that it's going to be a big night for you?

WADE TAYLOR: I would say probably the consistency in our work. We work every day the same way, no matter if we have a good game or bad game. My teammates have been phenomenal on both ends.

I feel the circle and camaraderie we have together plays a huge part in how we come out and perform each night. So just credit to them.

Q. Wade, you started the game off hot. Manny you started cooking in the first half. What's it like when one guy gets hot and then it becomes it's both of you going back and forth, hitting shots at will from wherever you want?

WADE TAYLOR: I think it's great to see Manny flourish, how he's been these last couple games. We see each other work out every day. We work out every morning. And we know just how much each other put in. And that



opens up the floor.

If I'm coming out cooking, as you say, and they start helping on me, that opens the floor Manny and Boots and also 4. Probably just trusting each other is the biggest thing so far.

MANNY OBASEKI: It's been fun playing alongside Wade. It's been an honor. I played against him since fourth, fifth grade, just seeing his game and seeing him succeed at a high level makes me happy. And I'm just happy that I'm able to join him and Boots as well.

Q. About the 10 minute mark of the first half you started to drive to the basket. Was that something that was planned early on? Or, like you said, you realized you had a good mismatch all night.

TYRECE RADFORD: That's my game. Putting pressure on the rim, that's my game from jump ever since I was young. Talking about Manny, like he said, he had a mismatch the whole night. Once we see that as a team, we try to play through him, and he just lived up to it tonight.

Q. All season long and postseason play, you guys seem to be a brotherhood. After bad losses and big wins, you have each other's back. Talk about the camaraderie you have across the board and the relationship and that bond you have with each other?

WADE TAYLOR: I think this summer when we got back together it's been a brotherhood. I don't think we let the losses and the wins change how we treat each other. I think that's why we're doing what we're doing today is because of the brotherhood we have. We'll keep that going and see where it takes us.

Q. What does it mean for y'all to get your first NCAA Tournament win, and to get Buzz's first NCAA Tournament win here at Texas A&M?

TYRECE RADFORD: I mean, it feels good. We try our best to live in the moment as long as we could. I told the team in the locker room, the job is not finished. Yes, it feels amazing to win. It's an honor to even be here. But we just can't get stuck on this win because we still have a long tournament ahead of us.

Q. You started the season hot. You finished the season really hot. How close is this team getting to where you want them to be?

BUZZ WILLIAMS: I think we're going in the right direction. I think this is our 29th week and there's been a lot of volatility. Some of it we could have controlled better.

Some of it was out of our control. But I think there's been great resolve and great resiliency within the group.

These three guys for sure, but even the guys that maybe wouldn't have an opportunity to be here or come to the stage, they've had great belief and they've had incredible ownership in what we do, how we do it and maybe, most importantly, why we do it.

So we understand that it's a winning/loss type of business, but I want to make sure I'm held accountable that the lives are judged, so to say, in hopes that we're changing it for the better.

Q. I talked to you, I think it was Thursday after the Ole Miss win and the SEC Tournament.

BUZZ WILLIAMS: We played good that day, too.

Q. You talked about how proud you were of your team after that win and the tenacity that you guys showed in that SEC Tournament. And now you're carrying it over to this regional here in Memphis. Just talk about that and your toughness. Defense has always been really good, but now offensively you guys put up the most points you've pretty much scored in the NCAA Tournament?

BUZZ WILLIAMS: I think they just did a good job of never letting an event become their identity. I think that's really hard to do in 2024.

We were 6-4 with a huge win over Tennessee and then we lost five games in a row. And a lot of things transpired outside of our control that we learned a lot from. And I think even though it doesn't make sense to lose five games in a row, I think the lessons that we learned watching what transpired was maybe a catapult to what has happened this month. And we're thankful, joyful.

Q. What piques your interest more -- I know you haven't seen the tape yet -- but what piques your interest more, the way they're able to shoot the ball or the way you're able to defend the 3 in that last 30 minutes?

BUZZ WILLIAMS: I think they're really good offensively, as I mentioned to you yesterday. Coach is a savant offensively. And I never thought we were ever in a really rhythm defensively in the first half. Andy -- it was probably Andy's worst game of his career at Texas A&M.

Solo is in foul trouble, and 4 is in foul trouble. You've seen most of the games. We don't have the maneuverability to absorb all of that.



So our offense has been so up and down that we can't rely on our offense. We're happy when things go good and when we make a shot or when we get fouled. But our reliance has to be on our ability to get stops and finish with a defensive rebound.

I think we only had one turkey in the first half. And we would get two stops and then foul. We never got to the bonus in the first half. And they were in the bonus at, like, six or seven minutes. I think they had 13 or 14 points from the free-throw line at halftime. Those are bad numbers in what we judge.

And so I thought the plan was right. I thought the coaches were phenomenal in installing the plan. I think our preparation was really good in regards to the execution of that plan. But we're playing with a lineup out there for a lot in the latter part of the first half that we hadn't played in forever.

I thought Jace and Henry were game changers. And they led us not only towards the end of the first half but also in the second half.

Q. What's your emotions after your first win, NCAA Tournament win at A&M?

BUZZ WILLIAMS: Faith can't just talk; it's gotta walk, too. And I think this group is walking out the faith in one another. That's uncommon. They're uncommon people with uncommon character. And they have walked out the faith in one another despite all that's transpired over the last five weeks.

And without arrogance or without ego, I think that you don't gravitate to the standard you request. You gravitate towards the standard you set. And I think we've all kind of -- I mean, you're hearing what they're saying. I mean, that's great maturity, despite the fanfare that they've walked that faith out in one another. And it scarred my heart in a way that I'm very thankful for.

Q. You referenced the one turkey in the first half, but the last eight minutes of the first half your team was able to pull away. What was kind of the difference in that period versus the first 12 minutes where it seemed like you all were trading shots?

BUZZ WILLIAMS: I think we were just, offensively we looked good. And we're not used to looking good. So we're a little bit of Jekyll and Hyde sometimes offensively.

But I didn't think -- the game plan per se is drastically impacted when Andy doesn't play, who is among the best

in the country at rebounding. Solo is in foul trouble for the largest portion of the first half in a long time.

But I thought that Jace and Henry gave us some steadiness on the glass on both sides of the ball, really big defensive rebounds. Henry was great on the offensive glass.

I just think in that segment you're mentioning, we just happened to be good offensively, and because we're not used to it, we don't really pay much attention to it, we're just trying to see if we can do better defensively.

Q. Where does your team's unflappability rank on the list of positive qualities this team has? And also there was a couple times in the second half where you were pretty animated. You were jumping around and pumping your fist and stuff. How much fun was --

BUZZ WILLIAMS: I'm just their biggest cheerleader. I think sometimes coaching is overrated. Relationships are underrated. And I think what I try to do is just love them well, including in that responsibility of loving them well is telling them the truth.

And everybody says they want to hear the truth until you hear the truth. But what I respect about these groups, this particular group, which goes to what you're saying, they receive the truth. They don't resist the truth.

And true love doesn't have an agenda. And so if included in the responsibility of true love is telling the truth, that means you have to tell the truth when things are hard, when maybe in their sphere they're not hearing those words. Maybe on social media they're not hearing those words.

But if on team bus1 they know that the truth is required and it's received, no matter who says it, it can't just be me telling them the truth. They have to tell me the truth and I have to receive it in the same reciprocal manner.

And I think that that's what makes the recipe such an intangible, how do you articulate that? I can talk around it but I can't really put my finger on it because it's so intangible. But it is around what I believe true love is.

Q. What went into scheduling Houston in Houston? And does that familiarity, if that's indeed the match-up, on Sunday do you like it or not like that?

BUZZ WILLIAMS: I think Coach is the best example of what a coach is supposed to be as a man and as a coach in the country. I think he's been that for decades now.

Obviously I've known him since I was a kid. And I hold him in the literally the highest of regards personally and professionally.

For whatever reason he's always been very good to me no matter where he's worked, whatever the name of the school was, how they operate has always been the same. And for him to do it over the last 30-plus years at places where it's never been done since, and at places where it's never been done before, just speaks to who he is.

And I love the fact that all them guys that are running around coaching with him now, most of them started as students with him. I think that in some ways that's the way life is supposed to be. If that's who we end up playing. I'm going to go out and watch them.

The way the schedule turned about was, can we find the date? Can we play at the Toyota Center? Is the Toyota Center available? I think the complexion of their roster has changed somewhat.

Once you get into conference play, the coaches that say they watch a lot of games, I'm just not smart enough to do that. The only games I'm watching are of our next opponent. So I really don't know much, but I do know that there is some familiarity with what they do. But it's really how they do it.

They're the second No. 1 seed because of how hard they play and how competitive they are and how every single thing you try to do is a tug of war.

**Q. When did you ditch the three-piece suit?
Superstitious and have you brought a suit on this trip?**

BUZZ WILLIAMS: No, I'm sorry. It's the first time in my career that I haven't worn a suit. That's important to me. It's probably more important than it should be. I know that everybody wears to games what they wear to practice. I try not to do that.

But when we lost five in a row we were trying to do anything. I was making coaches shave. I was making coaches get their hair cut. I was trying to shave, get my hair cut. Wear something different.

And it worked. And so there is some level of superstitious with it. I think we've won six out of our last seven. So I'm wearing the same shoes, boxers, socks, jeans, undershirt and pullover. That's probably, my wife would say that's too much information, but we need to find a cleaners in Memphis because they're wet after every game and I'm making everybody wear the same thing over and over, which I've never done.

But I'm not saying there's causation, and that's why we're winning. But in case there is, that's what I'll wear on Sunday.

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