

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Texas A&M vs Houston

Sunday, March 24, 2024

Memphis, Tennessee, USA

FedExForum

Texas A&M Aggies
Coach Buzz Williams
Andersson Garcia
Tyrece Radford
Wade Taylor IV
Media Conference

Houston - 100, Texas A&M - 95 (OT)

Q. Tyrece, on the 3-point buzzer-beater shot, what did you see from the inbound, I believe you were inbounding the ball? And Andersson what was your view of the play and the ball going in?

TYRECE RADFORD: I mean our coaches drew up a play, and my belief in the coaches and the coaches belief in the players was just amazing. I knew when they were drawing the play up, somebody was going to be open. All credit to the coaching staff and my teammates and also Andy for just having the courage to hit the open 3.

ANDERSSON GARCIA: I'll say the same thing. I was just trying to do the little things, and that was something that I thought that I would be able to do to help the team.

Q. Was the initial outlet to Jace or initial look to Jace?

TYRECE RADFORD: No, it's really the open man. 4 started hitting, so obviously they was going to face guard him and take 4 out of the picture. But for Andy to step up and just show how brave he is to just knock down that shot means a lot.

Q. Wade, I know you all want to play again, but what's it say about you all that you fought back to push it into overtime to begin with?

WADE TAYLOR IV: It shows how resilient we were all season. We were in position a lot this season as far as



being counted out and still fighting to get back to the top. But I'm so proud of our guys tonight for staying in there, hanging in there.

Q. Considering the importance of this game, have you ever been in a game kind of like this one?

TYRECE RADFORD: I think the whole season we've been in battles, like tough battles, pound-for-pound games. But I think when we played Georgia, that's kind of when we pulled together. And that's when we started playing the most together we ever played.

I mean, if you go back to the beginning of the season, we had one of the toughest schedules in the country. And I think that's where it all started. That's where our guys had that belief in our coaching staff. Also had belief in just us as a unit. And we had a lot of games it was pound for pound. A lot of games, not just this one.

Q. Boots, when you look back at this season, what's your first kind of take on what it means to you? And I know you would have preferred to win, but the game the way it played out and how epic it was at the end, to kind of cap off the career at A&M?

TYRECE RADFORD: Big shout-out to Texas A&M university, 12th man. The coaching staff, Coach Buzz, my teammates, everybody who had belief in us. It's not only me. I couldn't have done it without the guys next to me the rest of the team and the coaching staff. Big shout-out to all the families. Everybody played a role.

Q. Just what felt like was the difference in overtime?

BUZZ WILLIAMS: Well, I think it was the same problem that we'd had the first 40 minutes just fighting incredibly hard to try to get consecutive stops. I think we probably scored enough points. We just couldn't get enough stops, whether that was our first-shot defense and they got a long rebound or an offensive rebound.

I don't know that there was much difference in the last five minutes than how I felt in the first 40 minutes.



Q. What was drawn up on the buzzer-beating play? What was the first look and what were your thoughts when you saw Andy shoot it and it went in?

BUZZ WILLIAMS: Down the stretch, obviously, we ran a lot of our specials. Probably more specials in this game than we have arguably all year long, some full-court specials, couple of sidelines -- I think only one sideline. And then the out-of-bounds play that you're mentioning.

Obviously thankful that Andy hit the shot. We altered a little bit of that special -- not the actual play, just where the players were within the play.

And kind of the same message that we had over the last six or seven ATOs -- guys, we've got to get some stops, stops in a row. We've got to collect some turkeys. And to be able to extend it to give us a chance the next five minutes. Obviously it's a shot that will go down in Texas A&M lore, but it was to tie, it wasn't to win.

Q. The Houston defense has a tendency to kind of wear teams down and break them. You're down 10 with a minute and a half left. What were you telling your team and how did they prevent themselves from being broken down and being able to come back?

BUZZ WILLIAMS: I tend to agree a little bit with what our guys said. They're phenomenal. They're the No. 1 team in the country, No. 1 in the NET and No. 2 in KenPom. And to your point is the physicality that they play with. And they play with that same type of leverage on offense that they do on defense.

I thought it was a heavyweight fight, and there were times where we may have won the round, and there were for sure times they won the round.

I don't think that there was ever any point where our guys felt emotionally as if it was over, similar to what I said to Travis, because of time, score and momentum, we were having to run a lot of specials down the stretch. And our staff has been very consistent in practicing those and our guys had good comfort with it.

We were a little out of sorts even on that play. Mo had already fouled out. So that kind of changes the dynamic over the last three and a half weeks. But a large portion of their success is because of the physicality, the toughness, the intensity that they play with.

But without arrogance, a credit to them. I don't think that we stepped back from any of that.

Q. I know y'all were a point away from playing in the

Sweet 16 in Dallas, but you got an NCAA Tournament victory. Could you sum up this season?

BUZZ WILLIAMS: Thanks for asking. I think that it's so hard to live, to practice, to coach, to play and to be committed to something regardless of result. And I think our group was steadfast, whether it was an injury, a suspension, hard schedule, winning streak, losing streak, on the bubble, not on the bubble. I think regardless of result, they had great belief and ownership in what we did.

And in some respects, I actually think the 45-minute game tonight was just a microcosm of what you've seen from us, good and bad, throughout the year. And I just admire our guys so much.

We need to do better. I need to coach better. We need more guys -- all of the things that a coach would say -- but I don't want to rush to the next thing. I understand life is now, but I just have such gratefulness and admiration for how they've handled all of it.

I think our staff was a huge component of that, and all of the people that would never have a chance to get up here. Eli has the same amount of belief as Boots does. I've known Eli a little over six months, and I've known Boots a little over six years.

I just think it's a rarity, and I'm disappointed that we're not playing in Dallas. I'm thankful that we won a game here. Just as thankful that we got here, and just as thankful that we handled the five-game losing streak with such character.

I know that's a long answer, so I just admire the steadfastness that our group has displayed no matter externally what was going on.

Q. Going off of that, Coach, you made the decision a few years back to come to Texas A&M. And reflecting on how far the team got this year, how close you were to a team that, like you said, was at the top of the rankings nationally. Just what's been the most rewarding part of the run, not just this season, but to be the coach of the Aggies?

BUZZ WILLIAMS: Very thankful. I thought I was going to be a 2A high school coach or a junior college assistant. So this is, for sure, more and better and bigger than any dream that I've had.

And specific to Texas A&M, like you and everybody else that's here, over the last five years, there's been a lot of change. I think we went 10-8 and won our last five in year one, and then the world changed. We were fighting a lot of

problems throughout COVID.

I had the longest diatribe ever in year three on not playing in the tournament and still won a bunch of games and had an incredible experience all the way to New York.

I think, actually, over the last calendar year we've made a lot of adjustments that have been beneficial not only for this year's team but hopefully for the future.

I appreciate Justin Moore, the deputy AD, and he's been here the entire time I've been here. He's been the one constant that has been incredibly supportive to try to help us internally build it the way that we would like.

Obviously the portal started during that time. NIL started during that time. So there's been a lot of massive changes that every program has been through. And we're trying to continue to evolve and morph without sacrificing what we believe is most important.

And our staff has been great. I think we have had two staff changes in five years, which is remarkable. And I think we've done a really good job in identifying the right character and the right talent. We just need to keep doing better and more. So thanks for the question, and I'm sorry I'm very inefficient with my words.

Q. I was wondering, did you get a sense that your guys came out maybe a little tight or overhyped or anything, too emotional? If so, did that contribute to the issues at the free-throw line early? And when you look back, will you have extra frustration thinking about how close y'all came and what might have been if you all shot the way you typically do at the free-throw line?

BUZZ WILLIAMS: I actually think our guys have been really mature emotionally throughout this week. And I think our staff has done a good job of giving them digestible parts to the game plan.

We haven't been doing extra long sessions. We've kind of added an extra one over the last few weeks that has been good for us.

I did not sense that. To shoot 45 free throws is outstanding. That tells you that we're playing the way we would like to play. I think our offensive rebound percentage was tremendous. I think that's a season high of 26 offensive rebounds. I don't know how many possessions. It was a fast game for us.

I think in any game like this, not necessarily now -- and I won't watch it for a while -- but for sure, you know, make a

free throw, I wish we would have got that long unclaimed rebound. There will always be specifics to the game that in a two-possession overtime game against the No. 1 team in the country to go to the Sweet 16, I think you'll always wish that it would have been different.

But I don't think that it was anything in regards to the excitement of it all.

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