

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Regional Semifinal - Clemson vs Arizona

Thursday, March 28, 2024

Los Angeles, California, USA

Crypto.com Arena

Arizona Wildcats

Coach Tommy Lloyd

Jaden Bradley

Oumar Ballo

Sweet 16 Postgame Media Conference

Clemson - 77, Arizona - 72

TOMMY LLOYD: First off, congrats to Clemson. They were the deserving team today. They kind of have a little formula now. They're kind of jumping people in the games, three games in a row they got up and forced teams to play from behind.

We dug deep and we got ourselves back in the game but we were just never able to take that next step. So they executed a few really good plays down the stretch that they got us on. They banked in a 3. And those things make it tough to overcome. Congrats to them and wish them the best of luck going forward.

Q. I know for you guys the shooting tonight wasn't what you were expecting. Ballo I know the (indiscernible). How big is the rebounding to you to the team and rebounding in general for basketball?

OUMAR BALLO: Rebounding wins games. And I wish we did a little bit better job of that on the offensive glass and also on the defensive end because (indiscernible) took two offensive rebounds in a row. It was kind of, like, killers. I wish we did a little bit better job boxing them out.

Q. Jaden, you're the X factor, spark plug coming off the bench. Tonight, relentless attacking. What was your mentality going into the second half?

JADEN BRADLEY: We got to a little slow start in the beginning. So halftime we harped on dig deep, dig deep,



get stops and do whatever it takes to help my team.

Q. Coach, this is the second time you got into the Sweet 16. What did you do differently from the first experience, last year's experience to this year? What would you change moving forward?

TOMMY LLOYD: We'll analyze all that after the season. I'm proud of these guys. These guys did an amazing job this year. They're a great team. They're a team that we had the ability to get to a Final Four and we didn't. And that happens. It's nothing to look down upon.

There's probably eight or 10 teams that can say that this year and only three or four of them will probably actually get to the Final Four. And we were one of them.

I'm proud of these guys. They dug deep all season we worked really hard on taking the next steps of our culture with Arizona basketball, really hard, and we're very intentional with it. These guys are great (indiscernible) and they really allowed me to kind of continue to build on the foundation of what we started at Arizona and what was there before us.

So I'm thankful for that, and that's what we're going to do. We're just going to continue to build on that foundation. We're going to continue to get teams that are this competitive, and you know our day in the sun will come.

Q. Jaden, can you talk about the way the team kept battling back despite being down double digits?

JADEN BRADLEY: We harp on toughness. In the beginning we weren't so tough, but I feel at the end we did a great job battling and trying to get stops. But Clemson did a great job with their plays and their shot making, and we couldn't really get over the hump. We had the lead a couple times but they kept battling as well.

Q. I know this is, like, the last year of the Pac-12 as we know it. What does it mean to you to be kind of like the last remaining Pac-12 team in the tournament? What does it mean to you? What's the conference mean to you? How has it made you better?



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JADEN BRADLEY: I'd just say that being the last Pac-12 team, proud of the guys and proud of our coaches and our culture. We've been harping on that all year. We were able to achieve the goal we wanted to achieve, but still a tight group. Still love each other. Still love each other off the court. So it's good.

Q. Jaden, you came in from Alabama, unknown expectations, amongst this fan base at least. Your development over the year and then to end it like this, basically trying to carry the team in the second half, what has been your process and how do you feel about your year overall and heading into next year?

JADEN BRADLEY: Shout-out to the coaches and players for taking me in and helping me develop my game. I was familiar with Coach Lloyd and the culture. And just have a fresh start, kind of seemed like. He did a great job of helping me achieve my goals. But (indiscernible) next year and just love these guys.

Q. Wasn't the best night shooting from beyond the arc. But you guys were able to do a lot in the post. Were you trying to get your guys to drive more and stop taking so many 3-point attempts?

TOMMY LLOYD: I thought Clemson did a good job and kind of got us on our heels offensively early in the game. And we settled for a lot of tough shots. And then that's what kind of allowed them to get out. Because I think our defense was actually okay early -- low scoring early and we were right there.

And then they got it going offensively a little bit and we just never quite did until later in the first half. And the second half we made a more concerted effort. We wanted to attack the guys, move the ball, attack, drive closeouts, play with our feet on the ground in the paint. And our guys did a much better job of that in the second half.

Q. When you were able to make the run to start the second half, briefly take the lead and then Clemson kind of punches back, gets up, and you tie it again, did it just feel like you had enough punches to just keep maybe pushing them aside?

TOMMY LLOYD: I thought we were fine. I mean, we didn't play well the start of the game. We were only down eight at the half. As you guys who have followed us know, we had other games we were down 19 or 20 and been able to come back and win them. So I thought we were fine.

I thought we were well-positioned for how we started the game. And we made that first run in the second half, which

was great. And from there, they're going to probably make a little run. But then hopefully it's a little one and we make the next run and we can kind of eventually build a four-, six-, eight-point lead. And we were never able to do that. So Clemson gets a ton of credit for that.

Q. You outrebounded them, scored more points on fast break, second chance, points in the paint, all these things that you normally see when teams win. Other than maybe the shooting percentage, what do you feel was the difference?

TOMMY LLOYD: Well, you're right about the shooting percentage. Right now I think our starting guys that shoot 3s were 2-for-23, which is a lot to overcome, and I feel like some of them were good looks and shots we've made all season, and today they just didn't go in.

And so I think our guys deserve a ton of credit. To have that sort of shooting night and get yourself in the game where you have a position to win, and I think it's incredible. And it just shows the resiliency and toughness of these guys.

We kind of had to adjust plans and our guys were willing participants in that. So I'm really proud of them for giving themselves a chance to win, because especially without J.B.? Playing the way he did, maybe we lose by 14, 16 points. But J.B. got in there and we were down to the last minute and gave ourselves a chance. On a night where we didn't shoot the ball well.

Q. When you have a chance to reflect on this year, what do you think will come to mind for yourself?

TOMMY LLOYD: Love. I love these guys. I love the culture we're starting to really build at Arizona. I feel like I'm real big on eventually getting some compound return on our investment. I think we're going to do that. I think we're doing all the right things.

Obviously we're not perfect and no one is, and we don't ever want to be perfect. We just want to be making progress. So I love where we're at. I think I wasn't ready to take a breath but I'm going to take a breath and we'll re-evaluate, and we're going to have another really good offseason and continue to build.

Q. Keshad and Caleb provided a lot for your team this year. When you take a step back and look at their production and what they contributed to this program, what is your ultimate takeaway going to be?

TOMMY LLOYD: They're incredible guys. I'm so thankful that they took a chance on coming to Arizona and playing



for our staff. I mean, it was an incredible experience, all offseason and season long.

I'm just thankful. It reinforces to me that you can do the things the right way, run the right culture and put your team in position to compete at the highest levels. So we're just going to double down on all that. Those guys reaffirmed my belief we need to continue to do it with great, high-character guys.

Q. The last few possessions defensively I believe that Oumar was out. Was that partly to avoid if they were to foul him, and did it just lead to a breakdown?

TOMMY LLOYD: Not necessarily. We were just trying to give it a different look, pick our pressure up the court a little bit. At that point you're hoping you get opportunistic with a loose pass and someone can break on that, just things of that nature.

We were probably in a bit more of a pressing mode and get a switch at all five positions instead of the four positions. But, hey, Clemson kind of -- they found an answer down the stretch and they were able to get, like, I think, maybe three baskets off slips versus switches, which we just didn't execute well enough and they get credit for executing.

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