

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Regional Final - Texas Tech vs Florida

Saturday, March 29, 2025
San Francisco, California, USA
Chase Center

Texas Tech Red Raiders
Coach Grant McCasland
Chance McMillian
Darrion Williams
JT Toppin

Elite Eight Postgame Media Conference

Florida - 84, Texas Tech - 79

GRANT MCCASLAND: I wanted to sit in that locker room forever, honestly. I don't know. You get in these moments and a lot has happened in a short amount of time because the game has a scoreboard. But in my heart what Chance McMillian did today just doesn't have anything to do with the score; it just has everything to do with what I want to live my life like.

He's obviously in a situation where he probably could have not come back. And I told these guys in the locker room, there's something about laying down your life for your brothers in a position where you could take, I don't know, just the path that is easier, and Chance didn't. I'm so inspired by him. And because of him I do believe our program is different forever.

These guys won the most road games in the Big 12 for the Red Raiders. Won the most conference games in the Big 12 for the Red Raiders. And they just were like always finding ways to win games through tough circumstances.

I think Chance's heart and will to win really was the difference. And the way he competed tonight is so inspiring. I'm so thankful.

And I think the two other guys over there, Darrion Williams and JT Toppin, have been remarkable. And I hate that we aren't continuing to play because I know these guys love each other. And the way Chance prepared, gave us hope we could win the whole thing.



Q. Chance, hearing what Coach had to say about you and playing your final college game here in the Bay Area what did that mean to you, especially the night you had tonight?

CHANCE MCMILLIAN: I came in with the mindset of playing and giving my team the best chance there is. It took a lot. I know by playing there were a lot of risks that came with it, but I love that's dudes, so I was willing to risk that.

Q. Darrion and JT, what are the emotions you're feeling right now, from walking off the court and having this run end from what you did accomplish?

DARRION WILLIAMS: I think we accomplished a lot, not what we wanted, obviously, but we were picked to finish seventh in conference. If anybody told you they thought we would be in the Elite Eight they would be lying to you, besides our team and our inner circle.

At the end of the day, it hurts right now. We look back at it, feel like we could have went farther but I think overall we had a good season.

JT TOPPIN: Same as what he said. It was a good season. Nobody picked us to be here. Just to look back at it now, I'm proud and I just love my teammates. And I'm sad about the outcome.

Q. Chance, first just trying to make sure I got it right, you mentioned Star of the Sea and St. Thomas Apostle where you went to elementary school in the city.

CHANCE MCMILLIAN: Yes.

Q. At what point did you realize you could play? And a lot of times athletes say, when they're coming back from injury, they're first getting over the injury physically, and then you have to get over it mentally, that maybe you feel okay but you're not sure. So how did you deal with that part of it?

CHANCE MCMILLIAN: Shout-out to big Mike. That's the dude who always pushes people and tell people what it is. And he was pushing me when I was doing treatment with



him. So he definitely helped me get past that mentally.

I was just putting in the work. When I woke up this morning, I knew I was playing.

Q. Was there a moment where you guys thought, okay, this is over for us, or did it sink in when the clock hits zero, when the game was done?

DARRION WILLIAMS: Yeah, it kind of hit when the clock was zero. I wish I could change a few plays that happened. But can't go back and do that. But, I mean, I thought we could win until it hit zero.

JT TOPPIN: The same. I thought we could win it the whole game. There wasn't a doubt in my mind until the clock hit zero. Obviously, was definitely some plays we could have changed, especially on free throws. But, yeah, I thought we was going to win it the whole time.

CHANCE MCMILLIAN: Same, until it hit zero.

Q. You talked a lot about what Chance, what he had to go through just the last 24 hours to get to play. I'm curious what you feel like he embodies in terms of the players you like to bring into this program?

GRANT MCCASLAND: I told the guys -- we do a free shoot the night before we play on the road. If we get in early enough and it's an evening game and it's open, they can do whatever they want.

Chance goes to the block and does form shooting on both ends. And then he goes to the free-throw line. And then he shoots 3s at each spot. And he does it on both ends. And he goes back to the free-throw line and finishes until the end of the clock.

He is diligent and he's focused. And to me, I did not think he was going to really play. I went into the game thinking he would play maybe a couple minutes if we had him. But he warmed up and the whole staff was like, let's put him in there early and see how he does.

Man, it's almost miraculous what he was trying to do, really. And we didn't win the game. So it doesn't have the same thrill for everybody to write stories, but to me in my heart it doesn't change anything.

I mean, what he was willing to sacrifice for the guys to put himself in position, I don't think anybody really understands it. In my heart and in our guys' hearts, they know he loved them that much that he was willing to do whatever.

You know, there's not many times you get to see guys do

that. And he did.

And that's how he lives his life. And that's how he approached the whole season. That's how he was every day. It's not today. It's how he is every day.

That's why we got the opportunity to be in the Elite Eight. And it does hurt that we couldn't win it and give him another opportunity to compete.

Q. Clayton obviously hit some big shots down the stretch. What about him is just hard to match up against? And then he also has the ability to get to the line as well.

GRANT MCCASLAND: That was the part that, honestly, I was disappointed in, was just that he got to the free-throw line so much.

He's a hard cover. He's just so difficult. He can hurt you in so many different ways. He's dynamic at shooting. But he's crafty in his change of pace. And they do such a good job of moving the ball.

And we decided we were going to live with those forwards making 3s. And that's what made it difficult when you're keying on him, and then he's starting to get fouled. And then other guys need to step up and they did.

I did think we got fatigued late. Like, that last five minutes, we didn't quite keep two on him. We lost him twice.

But his motor's real and his ability to get a shot off is -- and that's a great Florida team. And I do want to give them a ton of credit because they had a good plan for the last five minutes, and I didn't do a good enough job of keeping the ball out of Clayton's hands. And I didn't do a good enough job of getting our guys in the right position offensively so that we could finish the game and win it.

Q. There's a big difference in terms of the free-throw line attempts. They attempted almost twice as many. But then they also made 92 percent while you all were 53, 54 percent. For such a good free-throw shooting team for the year, it seemed it cropped up at times, some bad free-throw shooting. Why do you think that happened tonight, was it fatigue or what went on?

GRANT MCCASLAND: You know we have been a great free-throw shooting team all year long. Unfortunately, I think JT got in a rut. He's the one that missed five of them. Other than that Darrion Williams -- I know they were trying to intentionally foul at the end, and we recognized it. That's where I didn't do a good enough job.

But they weren't trying to intentionally foul Darrion Williams. That was a mistake. He went up there and missed the front end of a one-on-one.

In these moments that's not what got us beat. I'm not just saying that as coach-speak. I think we pushed the tempo a little too quick late in the game and rushed some things. I feel if we had a little more composure, and if we would have been able to defensive rebound and limit the 3s from Clayton, I think that would have been the difference in the game for me.

Obviously who doesn't want to make free throws? Everybody does. Nobody steps up there and misses intentionally, especially in those moments. But everybody likes -- there's more effort things in this game that we could have done. And I could have done a better job coaching us down the stretch to put us in better positions.

Q. When Florida starts getting on that run where they're hitting the string of 3s that you mentioned, with Clayton, in particular, what does that do to a defense? How does that change what you want to do? And also emotionally how does it change?

GRANT MCCASLAND: I thought No. 10, Thomas' 3s, were the ones that really hurt us. But those were the ones we were willing to give up because putting two on the ball and the rotation.

We actually got a great contest and did make Clayton miss; we just couldn't rebound it. That to me is the difference.

We did end up with 14 offensive rebounds. But the offensive rebounds on the miss, those are the ones that you can't give up.

Q. I know you hate when I ask you broad-stroke questions but when you took over you said you felt you could win a title here. You got so close coming to this point. What have you learned throughout this whole process of the two years to get to this point that you're going to take with you the most moving forward as a coach here?

GRANT MCCASLAND: I'll tell you, it's the character of your guys and their will to win and their heart and love for each other. And I thought it was on full display with Darrion Williams playing through injury and Chance McMillian playing through injury.

And then the guys that we added to the roster, I told them in the locker room, like Kerwin Walton was just always ready. And I don't know if we even play in this game

because how great he was in that UNC Wilmington game we're here. You just never know who it's going to be.

But those guys were so willing to do whatever it takes to win. And I think that's the foundation of what we'll do moving forward is making sure those guys -- those guys we added, like Elijah Hawkins, how awesome was he? He has a triple-double almost in the NCAA Tournament. And he was unbelievable.

And Clayton, Clayton didn't make a 3, I think, for the majority of the game until we got toward the end and a big part of it was Elijah. But he did draw some fouls on Elijah. But I thought his competitiveness changed the complexion of their offense and really made them less dynamic. But them getting to the free-throw line and getting fouled was really difficult.

But man, just the heart of these guys that we've added and the guys that were here, they all really want to win. They don't care about individual performances, and that's the thing I think, moving forward, we'll keep focusing on.

Q. You've got a couple of seniors moving out. JT and Darrion have pro aspirations they have to consider, and you mentioned with the portal, everything shifts. Is it even more important now to focus on each season is its own thing rather than trying to take all of this and moving to the next one, because you just never know?

GRANT MCCASLAND: Yeah, I'm thankful -- I'm just thankful that this group of guys, I think, did get a taste and did get to see what it means to really love your teammates the way that I think God tells us to give everything we have. And I mean it. Like, how do you give everything you have? How do you lay down your life? How do you sacrifice for other people? How do you love other people in a real way? And I think that's what builds from year to year.

And I believe that's the heart of the guys that we have and that's what will be the most important part of these rosters is that heart, and we'll be able to do it with the guys that we'll have returning because of it.

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