

Pac-12 Men's Basketball Tournament

Wednesday, March 8 2017

Tad Boyle Wesley Gordon Derrick White Colorado

COLORADO - 73, WASHINGTON STATE - 63

THE MODERATOR: Coach, an opening statement, and then we'll take questions.

COACH BOYLE: Well, it was a tale of two halves, obviously. First half we were -- I thought our defense was atrocious. Pathetic I think is what I told Louis on the way out to the floor. But our second half our guys really, really dialed in. And the numbers show it. Washington State shot 56% in the first half and 30% in the second half. Then the rebounding, we were minus two at halftime, and we were plus ten in the second half.

You know, these guys get tired of me talking about it, but when we do those two things, the score kind of takes care of itself. I was really proud of our guys for their second-half effort. I thought there were some really critical plays there down the stretch. I thought Josh Fortune hit a big-time three for us in the corner. It made it go from a two-point game to a five-point game. X.J. had a big offensive rebound. Had a big tip, backtip play that got us an extra possession.

We did the things that we needed to do to win the game down the stretch. So really proud of these guys.

Q. Coach, everyone's going to talk about the second half. But how important was the end of the first half? You guys cut the lead from I think 20 to 12?

COACH BOYLE: Yeah, I think Troy just told me we were down 19 in the first half, and I didn't realize it was even to that degree. But we talked the last media timeout like trying to get it below 10 at halftime. We weren't able to do that. We got it to 14.

But I thought the beginning of the second half is really where we made our push. We did that last week against Stanford as well. So those explosive starts in the second half really, I think, gave our guys some confidence that we could get back in this game and win



it.

Q. Coach, can you continue to talk about just another great game from Derrick here. What did he do for this team in the second half, obviously, with the scoring, and then after that his assists also were critical?

COACH BOYLE: Yeah, I mean, one of the things in the game plan was to get the big guy, Clifford, in as many ball screens as we could. And I thought in the first half our decision-making off that was a little suspect at times. Our ball movement wasn't very good. But in the second half, I thought Derrick made some big-time plays hitting the role guy, hitting the guy in the corner. Hitting X.J. for a winged three, corner three because Wesley rolled. He hit these guys on some rolls, and he made plays off the ball screens.

And Derrick White is one of the best players in this league. Anybody that hasn't seen him play is missing something because he's special, and he showed why he's special tonight in the second half. Just made big plays for us.

Five assists to zero turnovers; again, he's pretty darn efficient.

Q. You guys gave up nine lay-ups in the first half and only four in the second half. What switched there defensively?

COACH BOYLE: Ball screen defense. In the first half, just, again, we were not -- for some reason our minds were not working. We weren't ready to play. We weren't communicating. Our ball screen coverage broke down. We were supposed to switch, we wouldn't switch. We were supposed to show, we wouldn't show. They're a good team. They've got good players.

But, yeah, the lay-ups in the first half just killed us. The second half, second half our defensive effort was much, much better. Again, the credit goes to these guys because these guys are the ones that get it done.

Q. Wesley, can you maybe talk about the turnaround in rebounding for your team? Like Coach just alluded to, you were down a couple rebounds at the half and wound up outrebounding them pretty handily?

WESLEY GORDON: Yeah, that's just what our

program is based on. We know if we don't play defense and we don't rebound, we don't have a shot. So that's just what we thought about at halftime.

Q. X.J. has that huge dunk and also that huge three-pointer to give you guys the lead, which you never turned back. Are those maybe the clutchest moments of Xavier Johnson's career?

COACH BOYLE: They were big, no doubt. And Josh Fortune made a big pass to him for the dunk, and Derrick made a big-time play off the ball screen. But X made the three, he made the dunk and the and one. He made his free throws. Yeah, it was big-time. You have to make plays like that down the stretch.

But I'll be honest with you, I expect those plays. The offensive rebound that I alluded to and the backtip off the free-throw line, those are the plays that he made that he normally maybe wouldn't have normally made, and he made them tonight at key points in the game that helped us win.

So it's easy when guys make shots. You're pretty happy with them. But when they make those extra possession-type plays, that's what helps you win games.

Q. A lot of scrapping, a lot of fighting in the second half. How key is it to come out tomorrow and put 40 minutes of that together?

COACH BOYLE: Yeah, we play a first half like we did tonight, and Arizona, number one, is probably not going to let us back in the game, and, number two, instead of a 14-point game at halftime, it might be a 24-point game at halftime. The one thing we know about Arizona, they're very efficient. They don't beat themselves. You have to go beat Arizona, and the way you beat them is to be rock solid defensively. You have to be efficient offensively, and you better compete your tails off on the backboards because they're a very good rebounding team and they have great size.

So great challenge. I think it's five out of our six years in this tournament we're facing Arizona. So I talked about that with Sean a couple weeks ago, and here we are again.

Hey, let's go play.

Q. When you guys lost to Arizona in the regular season, it was really the beginning of a losing streak for you guys. You're now 9-3 in your last 12. How different of a team is Arizona going to see tomorrow than they saw in the off-season?

COACH BOYLE: We're a different team. They're a different team. They've got Allonzo Trier back, and he's back in the flow of what they're doing. So that game

seems like it was a lifetime ago because it was early January, and now here we are in early March, it's two months later.

So I think you're going to see a different Arizona team and probably a different Colorado team. It's beyond, I think, Xs and Os now, I think. Our guys know what they need to do to be successful. Now it's just a matter of going out and executing and getting the job done.

Again, we did it in the second half tonight. We didn't do it in the first half. But against Arizona, you better put 40 minutes together. We don't have to play perfect, but the margin for error goes down significantly.

Q. Derrick, we haven't heard from you yet. Early in the second half you guys came right out, and I forget what the run is, but you hit a three-pointer, they took a timeout. Even though you were still trailing at that point, did you get a sense that the momentum had turned and you guys just had to keep pressing the gas pedal?

DERRICK WHITE: Yeah, I mean, it was a good start, but we knew we had to get over the edge. We've had good runs before early in the year, and we didn't go over that like five- or six-point barrier. So we knew we just had to keep defending and chip away at this lead.

Q. Derrick, last year you paved your way to come to the Pac-12 Tournament to watch these guys play. How different was it tonight, and did you get any experience just being out here last year with the guys?

DERRICK WHITE: Yeah, you kind of get the feel. It's a different feel out here than during the regular season and during the home games. So it was a good experience last year, and it's much better being out there playing.