

Pac-12 Men's Basketball Tournament

Wednesday, March 8 2017

Andy Enfield Chimezie Metu Jordan McLaughlin USC

USC - 78, Washington - 73

THE MODERATOR: Coach, an opening statement and then questions.

ANDY ENFIELD: It was a great win for us. Washington played so hard and so well. They really settled in, especially without Fultz. They started running their offense, and they looked really good tonight. Made some threes, really scored in the paint. So give them credit. They played extremely hard and extremely well.

I thought our players did a great job of coming back and taking the lead in the second half and holding on. So with that, any questions, please.

Q. It seemed like in the first half early on, like at the end of the regular season game, you guys kind of started off slow, a little sluggish it seemed like. Then after a timeout, you guys kind of picked up the momentum and it carried you in the second half. What was said to the players to kind of keep them back in rhythm the way that you know they know how to play?

ANDY ENFIELD: Well, we took some bad shots early, contested jump shots, and we just weren't playing like we're capable of offensively, and that affected our defense in transition, and we took the bad shots. They got long rebounds, got out in transition, and scored a couple early buckets and we got behind. So we have to play smarter on offense, and we have to come out of the gate and play well.

Q. How big of a swing do you think the six-point possession was in the game?

ANDY ENFIELD: Anytime you score six in one possession, it's pretty good. So didn't determine the game, but it helped us at that point.

Q. What do you think about the game tomorrow between you and UCLA?

ANDY ENFIELD: Well, we split this year. We won at



home, and UCLA beat us at their place. So it should be a great game. It's two high-powered teams, and offensively they shoot the three, they get out in transition, and it should be a fun game.

Q. What did you guys learn from the last match-up with UCLA that you guys weren't able to execute that you will be able to execute coming up on Thursday night?

JORDAN MCLAUGHLIN: I would say that we've just got to play hard, be focused and locked in. We came out a little sluggish at the UCLA game. We played hard throughout the game, though. But we've just got to battle for 40 minutes, come out strong, and just try to stay on top.

Q. Why were you guys not able to get the ball to Bennie or Jordan, your two best free-throw shooters down the stretch?

ANDY ENFIELD: Well, we did get it to Bennie three or four times and we got it to Jordan.

Q. When they were fouling you guys?

ANDY ENFIELD: Well, you can't script everything when they're trapping. Shaquwan Aaron's a 78% foul shooter. So we feel pretty good when he goes to the foul line. You can't script everything when they're trapping. Jordan got denied. We're just not going to throw it at the other team. We had no turnovers against the press. The pressed us eight or nine times, and we had no turnovers.

Guys have to step up. Bennie can't shoot every free throw for us. It would be nice, because he shoots 90%, but at some point this is a team game and you have to step up and make plays down the stretch. When you miss two or four free throws in the game, you give yourself a chance to lose. We didn't lose tonight, but you saw in the NCAA Tournament last year we couldn't make free throws and one or two games this year where we struggled down the stretch.

So our guys have to step up and have confidence. We're shooting 75% as a team, you put a 78% shooter up there, an 85% shooter, an 82% shooter, and we expect them to make shots.

Q. We put a bigger emphasis on rivalry games just because they're crosstown from you guys. But is it

any more important for you guys playing UCLA as opposed to any other school tomorrow?

CHIMEZIE METU: I wouldn't say so. You know, we're going to come out and try to play hard and try to win the game just as we would if it were any other team in the tournament. Yeah, it's going to be a fun game, but, yeah, we just have to come out and try to play hard and try to win the game.

Q. Jordan, do you echo that?

JORDAN MCLAUGHLIN: Yeah, same thing. Just playing hard. We've got to come out and play hard from the jump. Can't fall back early, especially with a team like that. We've just got to fight for the whole 40 minutes.

Q. Last week you guys talked about each game being a must-win for kind of the tournament. Was there pressure going into this one knowing you don't want to come to Vegas and be one and done essentially, making sure you're able to play on and kind of boost your resume?

ANDY ENFIELD: Sure, as far as the NCAA Tournament selection, Washington is a very good team. The way they played tonight they were exceptional, okay. But their RPI is lower. Our RPI is in the 30s, the high 30s, and we're 24-8. So we feel like we're in pretty good shape for the NCAA Tournament being a decent seed as well because we have 24 wins, and tomorrow will be our eighth game against teams with 27 or more wins.

We're the only team in the country that played that kind of schedule. So a quarter of our schedule has been teams with 27 or more wins -- UCLA three times, Arizona twice, Oregon twice, and SMU, who we beat early in the season.

So we're not worried about the NCAA Tournament selection. With 24 wins and that type of schedule, and some of the -- we haven't had a bad loss all season. You could say the Arizona State, when we lost at the buzzer, missed a shot to win the game at the buzzer on the road. But that's a Pac-12 game against a pretty talented team.

If that's the only loss we have outside of the top 70 RPI and our RPI is in the 30s, we feel great. In fact, we think we're confident, but we're not even talking about the NCAA Tournament as a team. We haven't discussed it with our players. Our staff just said, hey, look, we probably have to win some of these games the last three games, which we did. And we're totally focused on the Pac-12 Tournament. We like to compete in the Pac-12 Tournament here in Las Vegas, and we'll worry about Selection Sunday when it happens.

Q. This game started like at 8:45 Pacific time, which is 11:45 on the East Coast. Pac-12 Network, which virtually nobody gets. Is there any concern -- I know it's college football, but is there any concern at all that this tournament starts so late and it's so hard to watch that that could affect you or any other team down the road in seedings and things like that?

ANDY ENFIELD: I think there's an East Coast bias in the media. I coached in the ACC for five years as an assistant coach at Emporia State. I knew it then. But when you're out on the West Coast, it's very obvious. Our games start later. A lot of the media and the people that are bracketologist, they don't even watch our games. They get the internet. They're in bed by 10 p.m. East Coast time and our game's just starting or maybe it hasn't started yet. And then they cover certain leagues all season, and they don't really cover the Pac-12.

So I'm not saying -- it's just human nature when you don't watch and you don't cover games and you have business allegiances or alliances with certain leagues and you have personal relationships with certain coaches that you either coached with or coached against or have known for 30, 40 years, you're going to favor those teams entirely.

So I feel bad for the Pac-12 because we've had the most draft picks of any league in the country over the last few years. First-round draft picks in the NBA. We have great players in this league. We have great coaches and really good teams. And so I just think that sometimes -- you asked about the late start times, I don't fault -- look, if I was covering the media, whether I'm on TV or in the -- a writer or on the internet, I'd probably be in bed by 10 p.m., too, and I wouldn't stay up to watch USC play Arizona on a Thursday night at 8 p.m. So that's the tricky part with the West Coast start times and just the allegiances and alliances of the East Coast media.

Q. Should the Pac-12 cater at all to try to help the conference's exposure to cater to starting times to bring them earlier here to make them more playable for the rest of the country?

ANDY ENFIELD: It's one thing to do in a tournament, that might be possible to move it up a little bit because you have all day. But this round, we have four here, I think we have four games tomorrow. It's tough when you have four games. But during the regular season with all the television, television dictates when you start the games.

Give you an example, we played Arizona on a Thursday night at 6:00 p.m. Now, who the heck in

Orange County is going to fight traffic, get off work at 5:00 and be there by 6:00? It's not going to happen. So they'll watch it on TV.

Then we have 8 o'clock games. So, that's TV, and we're good with that. All our games are on national television, but it does affect -- in Los Angeles especially because of the traffic, but it also affects when you play late, it affects the whole other part of the country watching your games live.

Q. Jordan, you talked about playing 40 minutes. What's it going to take for you guys to play 40 minutes consistently and not have the lulls that you've had? And maybe, Chim, you can chime in as well?

JORDAN MCLAUGHLIN: It's on us as players. The coaches do a good job getting us ready for the game. Defensive strategy and everything, they set it up perfectly, and it's on us to come and play with energy. So it's just us.