

Pac-12 Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 9 2017

Sean Miller Allonzo Trier Dusan Ristic Arizona

Arizona - 92, Colorado - 78

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

COACH MILLER: First of all, I want to congratulate Colorado. I know they've had kind of an interesting season where they had that pocket in the Pac-12 where maybe it went the wrong direction. But the one thing about a coach, when things go right, it's easy to be happy and get a lot of credit. But to me, Tad Boyle and his coaching staff and those players, they did a remarkable job of turning it back around.

When I watched them play the last several days and then last night, it made us sick, because you work so hard to get a high seed in the conference tournament, and it almost felt like we were playing a team that was one of the top 5, because they've won nine of 12 coming in. These guys know we respect Derrick White as much as any player in our conference, and what he did to us tonight, and he's really done throughout the season. He's an unbelievable player.

So we knew we were in for a test, and that's what we got. They play really hard. They play together, very well coached and physical. I think our goal was that one thing. We wanted to outrebound them. We wanted to do a good job on our end of being physical ourselves, and I thought our team did a good job of meeting that challenge tonight.

Q. Allonzo, what is it about Derrick White that makes him so tough to guard?

ALLONZO TRIER: He's really good at using screens and getting away from you. He really makes it really hard. He's always in attack mode, so you can't really let up and you can't lose focus for a little bit, because that split second he'll get a shot off or get to the rim. So he's a really tough cover.

Q. Coach, tonight Rawle hit his first couple three pointers since USC at home. How big was that for



your team and especially the offense?

COACH MILLER: I said it after the game. I didn't think our team played as well in the first half. Give Colorado a lot of credit. But Rawle didn't play well in the first half. You could see it on his face at halftime, and he wanted to play better. I worry about freshmen at this time, because this is the first time they've entered this March Madness that they've been watching for so long.

But it says a lot about Rawle how well he played in the second half. I thought the big reason he won the game and broke the game open was his overall good play. Not just that he had a couple threes, but he made a lot of good basketball plays and emerged in the second half, maybe on the heels of a sub-par or a half where he didn't play particularly well. Which is a great sign for our team. And clearly we all know how talented Rawle is, we believe in him. But he had a very, very good second half tonight.

Q. Allonzo, as a first game for your team in the tournament, how do you think overall things went in your postseason debut here?

ALLONZO TRIER: I think early on we struggled defensively. But I think we did some good things to make minor changes that helped pick it up in the second half. And I think it was good for us. Colorado's a really good team, and they showed it. They battled us really hard. We're just excited to come away with our first win in the tournament.

Q. Sean, it seems that not too many people right now have a Pac-12 team penciled in for a top seed in the tournament. I'm wondering if you think that the conference is undervalued by some?

COACH MILLER: I really don't think that that's the case. The one thing that you learn is it's about what you do in March. A year ago we had seven of our 12 teams in the NCAA Tournament. You know how hard that is to get over half of your teams in the NCAA Tournament? But what happened to us is only Oregon really took care of it and advanced to the threshold of a Final Four. So because of that, I don't know if a lot of people talked about us last spring or over the summer or maybe even in March because we all bowed out.

So I think for us, it's about earning it. And we have -- whoever enters the NCAA Tournament from our conference, we have the ability to advance, and on a

couple levels, all the way to the end. So I have my fingers crossed, not just for us, but for all those teams. We respect everybody, but in particular when you watch Oregon, you watch UCLA, when the other coaches draw them, they will understand at that point how good those teams are.

You know, we'll see about us. Hopefully we enter that. USC's a very good team, watching Cal. I watched Cal before we played them, and they played Virginia at home. And that game really came down to the final possession. And Virginia's an excellent team, but I just use that as an example because that was the game before Cal played us. On a neutral court, Cal's capable of beating anybody. So we have a number of teams that are very good, and now it's up to us to use this tournament and then get into the NCAA Tournament and really pull for each other to see multiple teams advance. Hopefully we can hold our end of the bargain.

Q. You guys always have great support here in Vegas. But just a thought on this new venue?

COACH MILLER: It's awesome. We made a great decision, the Pac-12 made a great decision. If you truly want to be the best, you have to be willing to play on the biggest stage. I'm sure, like everything, the first year, although everybody's excited, it will only get better from here, because it's like when we moved the tournament from LA to Las Vegas, I remember the first year everyone kind of wondered, well, how will that feel, and then it grew and a lot of great things have followed. I think the same thing will happen with this new venue.

There was a time a long time ago when a conference went to play in Madison Square Garden, and I'm sure in that first year when they did it, everybody wondered how it would be, and then it grew. I think out here in the west, with us having the footprint that we do, this is how it should be, many playing in the best venue, the biggest crowds that we can possibly get and grow the tournament. You know, and our fans are awesome. They have a big stake in this growth.

Q. Dusan, when you shoot 7 for 8 like you did tonight, is that because you got the ball in the right places, or just because you had a great game?

DUSAN RISTIC: I would say that's because of my teammates. They really found me in almost every situation, and all credit goes to them. I was just there. I was open, and they found me. I just did what I was supposed to do.

Q. Do you feel like you guys are peaking at the right time? You've been through this March Madness grind a lot. How do you feel you are

living up to your potential?

COACH MILLER: I don't really have the answer for that yet. Fortunately, we play again tomorrow, so I think we'll know a lot more tomorrow. Coach Olson, to me, I've learned a lot from him with all the great teams that he had. Some of the teams that you look at as the best in the history of our school didn't necessarily do well in the conference tournament. They used maybe the extra day of rest, maybe a lesson that they learned in the tournament. Then they caught tremendous momentum and played their best next week.

No matter what happens this week, the one thing that I do know is it's about playing our best next week. But when you play in a venue like this, we just played against Colorado, and let me tell you, they're a tough out. They have a lot of upperclassmen, great coach, physical. It was a good test for our team. We passed that test. Tomorrow, guess what, the stakes grow. So every time we play on a neutral court, I think we gain more confidence, more experience. These guys are a fun team to coach. Sometimes when you're in bed at night as the head coach, you say, do we have it? Do we have that will?

We have it. Whether we win or not, it's not going to be because of lack of effort or passion. These guys have been there from the first day in late August until now. They've given us every single thing that you can give as a team. Hopefully we can keep this going, whether it's this week or next week.