

Pac-12 Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 10 2017

Sean Miller

Allonzo Trier

Lauri Markkanen

Arizona State

Arizona - 86, UCLA - 75

THE MODERATOR: Coach, can you summarize the game for us?

SEAN MILLER: Yeah, really proud of our team. You know, it's not easy to come back on back-to-back days here in the Pac-12 Tournament and play against a team like UCLA with their high-powered offense and the season they've had, and for us to come out of here with a win, we're really excited.

Never been prouder of a group of kids. We lost a tough game at home in our last game, and I think it really stuck with these guys and motivated them to be better. And we had the opportunity and we took advantage of it and thought we played a really hard-fought, physical game and came out on top.

Q. Coach, can you talk about the development of Lauri's game aside from the offensive end? Because he seemed to give you guys a lot on the boards as the season wound down.

SEAN MILLER: Yeah, Lauri can explain it himself, but he came to us as an incredibly skilled basketball player in FIBA basketball and playing at the international level. Actually, both of these guys have played at the international level. It's a 24-second shot clock, it's a game of skill, and there are some characteristics that I believe Lauri developed that he brought to us that not many players have, especially his size, especially his shooting, his awareness away from the basket.

I think the adjustment of zone defense, the physicality of college basketball, a longer shot clock, it took us a while as a coaching staff to really put him in a better position to use his size close to the basket.

So over the last month, he went through, whether it was a drought or maybe a number of games where he didn't make threes, but keep in mind, in one of those weeks he was actually the National Player of the Week, and he didn't make any threes. So he's learned and



he's grown offensively close to the basket, offensive rebounding, he's a much better defensive player. I think he would tell you that.

So I think as he focused a lot on the development of that, he probably got away from focusing on the things that he's always done naturally. Now for the first time I believe he has both qualities, where he's physical around the basket, more comfortable, we're more comfortable as a team with him close to the basket, and now his shot returns.

There aren't many players that are better, and I think Allonzo would attest there aren't many kids that are better teammates. He does what we ask him to do every day. Tonight he was spectacular.

Q. It looked like in that last break you let out a big yell and then a bit of a smile. What was that moment like for you under a second left?

SEAN MILLER: You know, I love Kadeem Allen, and we didn't end his senior night the right way. Tonight was about making sure that we paid Kadeem back. And I just wanted him to know how much we love him, how much we appreciate him, how hard he plays. I mean, he had people driving from the state of North Carolina to Arizona for that game, and it didn't work out. He ended up shooting a basketball on the last play. A lot's made of that when you miss that shot, and he was playing with a finger that most people wouldn't even bother to play. So I wanted him to know how much we loved him.

I think we learned from UCLA in that game just making sure your team is poised moving forward when they called their timeout late that we wanted to do the same thing. Make sure our team was poised moving forward.

Q. Seems like you guys pushed the pace a little bit tonight and have done so against the Bruins throughout the year. What is it about the match-up that makes you want to get out and run on the offense?

SEAN MILLER: We love to push the ball. Look, we've had a lot of guys hurt. You know, we've played over 50% of our season with seven available players, and this guy, Lauri, it's one thing to have seven available players, but sometimes we only had three guards, so he was the fourth guard. If any guard got in foul

trouble, he played the guard position. So you have to be smart. You have to play to win. We couldn't play as fast during a lot of different stretches. You know, when we're in the half court, we want to take a great shot.

But clearly we pushed the ball every day, and we're at our best when we can get out in transition. Again, these guys can explain it. But I think Parker is really, really playing well. Keep in mind, he didn't play with us for eight weeks. Then I would say it took an additional four weeks for him to really regain his quickness and his pace. But when you look at him out there now, he's the best player that he can be. Really, he ignites our transition game.

Q. For both of the players, I heard you yelling, getting excited, screaming on the way back to the locker room after that win. But as big as that moment is, yeah, you still have another game to play and it's one of the other teams that you suffered a defeat to. So where's that balance in being excited and moving forward and playing with that excitement, but not letting that sort of overwhelm you with one more game to go?

ALLONZO TRIER: Well, we know what we came here to do and we know what the task ahead is tomorrow of playing Oregon and a team that beat us already. There's nothing wrong with playing another night and getting a good win, and we're not going to let this overshadow and let us sleepwalk into tomorrow. We're proud of the way we played, and we're going to come out prepared tomorrow.

LAURI MARKKANEN: I don't have anything to add. It's just it's a great feeling to win on a neutral court. So UCLA's a great team, and we're just happy we got the W. And now we'll start focusing on tomorrow.

Q. Allonzo, you guys were able to keep Lonzo Ball in check tonight. What were you able to do to be so effective?

ALLONZO TRIER: Just play really hard, follow our schemes and do a good job of playing team defense. When everybody's helping each other, everybody's competing at a high level, playing hard and playing for each other, and so we did a good job of that tonight.

Q. Sean, last night you said that this team had really -- you felt like you couldn't tell if they were peaking yet and you said you could tell more tonight. It seemed you were playing with a level of physicality with an edge to you. Do you feel that way?

SEAN MILLER: I hope so. That's what March Madness is about. You lose, it's over. Nobody talks about you. It's deafening. When you have a great season like we've had and you've gone through as

much as we've gone through, you don't want it to end. I mean, I think the thing that you can control is your togetherness as a team and how hard you're playing with great effort.

You know, if you're really together and you play with great effort and you lose, so what. We'll move on. We'll move to next week, and if that happens next week, then, look, we'll box it up and say, man, we've had some magical moments over the last six months. But we have a special group of guys. We really do. We have a lot of energy. We have a will to win, and sometimes that's a lot more important than making shots or running a play or things like that.

And we're led by really an interesting guy. I mean, if you think about it, the National Junior College Player of the Year who red shirted. Doesn't happen a lot. He's just emerged, and he's -- I think these guys will tell you, every day with his effort, it's incredible. He got at us through a lot of adversity. And now that Allonzo's back, I think Allonzo's playing his best basketball. We just talked about Lauri. So, hopefully all of us want to play our best at this time. I think we'll know more tomorrow if we're peaking, because the team we're getting ready to play tomorrow is really, really good. I think they can win the National Championship.

Q. Coach Miller, how many times has Lauri made you just say wow when he does something amazing on the court?

SEAN MILLER: You know what it makes me do is like what am I going to do to help him get the ball again? And ditto for Allonzo. When we have these two guys together in offensive action, a lot of great things are happening for our team because they both can really score. They both can drive the ball, and they both can see. Allonzo had 31 assists a year ago. He knows that number, I've told him about it a thousand times.

And if you look at it, he's over 31. Yesterday he was three assists to one turnover. He had four turnovers tonight, but he had four, so he had seven assists in the last two games, which is awesome because that's something a year ago he didn't necessarily have. He's added that to his game, and that really brings out the best in our team when he can beat you with the pass as well.

Q. What needs to be different against Oregon tomorrow compared to the first meeting?

SEAN MILLER: I mean, they have to miss a few shots, man. They went on a roll like I've never seen before. I wasn't even helpless. There was just nothing you could do. They made, I think, 16 of 21 at one point. And one of the ones they missed, Jordan Bell heaved one up at the end of the half. I thought that was going in. So we have to defend the three-point shot. They're

an outstanding defensive team. They do it in a different way. We have to execute like we did tonight. I think a lot was made in our last UCLA game about our inability against the zone. Tonight, our ability against the zone was a big turning point in terms of winning or losing. We executed really well against their zone.

So Oregon has a different type of switching, man-to-man match-up zone, and hopefully we can do the same thing. Learning from the first game, executing better, putting these two guys in more of a better position to score. Look, anyone who plays Oregon has their hands full. I'm really excited for the Pac-12. We have a brand-new arena, world class, a sellout, national television, and you have two teams that are vying for whatever seed we're vying for. But I think it speaks volumes for the Pac-12 Conference. Really, I have a lot of pride for Arizona. Tonight we beat a really good team. I'm very, very proud of our guys and the way they responded and the effort they played with.

Q. For the players, this is supposed to be a neutral site game and a sellout, but it seemed like a pretty pro-Arizona crowd. What's that like, playing Las Vegas, but it sounded like a home-court advantage?

ALLONZO TRIER: It's a great boost for us, and we're very appreciative of our fan base and how much they support us and the energy they bring us. But at the end of the day, it still comes down to us playing hard and doing the right things and playing well. They can be here all they want. If we don't go out there and play well, it doesn't do anything.

Having that fan base is great, and hopefully we can go play well for them?

LAURI MARKKANEN: Yeah, it's an amazing feeling we're actually having that kind of crowd. I'm not used to it. So I don't think we've had -- seen a road game this season where we don't have U of A fans. So that's an amazing feeling.

SEAN MILLER: He thought I was lying to him when I described that. When I flew over there to see him. He knows how it's true, right?

LAURI MARKKANEN: Yeah.