

# Pac-12 Men's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 11 2017

## Sean Miller

## Allonzo Trier

## Lauri Markkanen

### Arizona

Arizona - 83, Oregon - 80

THE MODERATOR: Coach, you got it done.

COACH MILLER: Thanks. Appreciate it, Tom.

THE MODERATOR: You want to talk about it?

COACH MILLER: Yeah. Really, really -- not only really, really, very, very, I think those are the words I'll start off with, proud of this group of players and the team that we've become. It has never been easy for us. We have dealt with adversity and obstacles as much as almost any group that I've been a part of, and yet we've been able to continue to climb and grow. You always hope that it comes together for you in March. Right now that's really what's happened.

These two guys up here, right here are playing as well as they have all year, and I think our offense has gone to another level. Really even our defense, although tonight I think we broke down. I credit Oregon for a lot of those breakdowns. They're a very difficult team to defend. It's difficult in this year's tournament to win three games in three days. When you beat a quality team like UCLA and on the next night Oregon, I think it says a lot about the Pac-12 Conference.

But tonight's about us and our players. We're really, really proud of them, and very excited about next week. We have to build on what we've done, and hopefully we can continue to play.

#### **Q. Did you start the game differently because of Boucher's absence?**

COACH MILLER: No, we really did it to not allow Lauri to get in foul trouble. Dillon Brooks is really a difficult match-up. I mean, he had 25 again on us tonight. He can put fouls on our big guys, and they played a mismatch game on offense. If anybody who is going to pick up fouls, we were going to let Keanu pick those up. But in the eight minutes that he played there in the beginning of both halves, he did his job. He took some



pressure off of our front line, and we did not get in early foul trouble.

#### **Q. Coach, you limited Arizona's three-point attempts and their three-point makes tonight pretty effectively. How much was that a part of what you want to get done against them?**

COACH MILLER: These guys will tell you, the last time we showed up and played the Ducks, they made more threes than I have ever seen. They were 16 for 21 at one point in that game. So I think these guys didn't need a reminder, although we gave it to them, about how talented of a shooting team they are. They might have missed a couple that they normally make, but we did a really good job last night against UCLA. If you think about the firepower of both teams from behind the arc, that's one thing for me that I tried to really keep the compass pointed towards. Because in the NCAA Tournament and the Pac-12 Tournament, single elimination, the three-point shot is deaf. It kills you.

A team that's not quite as good as you, if they have that night, you can get bounced. And our three-point defense is one of our strengths. It was a great test in this tournament. I think if you look at our three-point defense, especially against the quality teams we played, that is a good sign for us moving forward, if we can continue.

#### **Q. What was it like to see Allonzo up there as MVP after everything he'd been through? What did you tell him when he was out to keep him encouraged?**

COACH MILLER: Well, Allonzo and I have talked about a lot of things. The 19-game stretch, the span of time went on forever. It was a very unique situation. I think a big reason our team was successful is he stayed very engaged during the absence of being able to play. Lauri will tell you. He practiced hard every day as if he was getting ready for the next game. And he stayed the course. He hung in there, and so did his family.

To answer your question, though, it's like a dream come true. How we envisioned it going for him, I couldn't think of a more appropriate ending than watching him walk away with the MVP. Again, I don't want to make this the finish line. This, hopefully, is a sign of things to come for us. Everybody points towards next week, and we're no different.

**Q. I want to ask, when did you learn that Chris Boucher wasn't playing? And did it give you enough time to change your strategy coming into this game?**

COACH MILLER: No, it really didn't. We found out late in the afternoon. Look, I feel really bad for him. I know he's been through a lot, and he's meant a lot to Oregon's program the last two years. He's such a unique player because he's an incredible shot blocker and yet he's an excellent three-point shooter. He does things that big guys just don't do.

Dana Altman's one of the game's best. They have a lot of other very talented players. But in fairness to them, I think they'll hit on all cylinders by the time next week comes around. Tough to change. You asked me how ready we were, I'm sure they couldn't do much either. So we recognize that. I wish he would have been able to play. Wish he'd be able to play for them in the tournament, because I still believe that they can make a run to Phoenix. But certainly they lost a key player.

**Q. Can you maybe further that point, discuss these three teams moving forward, UCLA, yourselves and Oregon going into the tournament, and what kind of damage these three teams can do for a run to the National Championship?**

COACH MILLER: Well, we're pulling for everybody. Hopefully there is a fourth or maybe a fifth team as well. I know USC, I certainly would not like to play them next week in the NCAA Tournament. But UCLA, from an offensive perspective is a team that I have never seen before. When they're hitting on all cylinders, they're almost impossible to guard. Lonzo Ball, he's a tremendous, tremendous player. Ditto for T.J. Leaf and Bryce Alford. They have talent at all five positions. Oregon's maybe more balanced and they can do it on defense and offense, and they have a style that's so unique. Unless you face it, it can really catch you off guard.

Then there's us. I don't know how many people put their chips on us this weekend. My sense is that we would have probably been the third favorite, not the first or second.

But these guys did a great job, and ask them a couple questions.

**Q. Considering everything this team has gone through and overcome, is this team do you think worthy of a No. 1 seed in the NCAA Tournament?**

COACH MILLER: I'm not even going to get caught up in that. The NCAA Selection Committee spends countless hours of evaluating. They have hard decisions to make. Our record speaks for itself. The losses that we had, if you do your research, and I know

you guys have, we didn't have a full team. As a matter of fact, Allonzo missed two of our four losses. Parker and Allonzo missed one of them.

But at the end of the day, whatever seed we get, it's about us being the most ready. These guys, they have to play great. We as a team have to play great and build on what we did here. Wherever we're sent, our role and objective is to be ready. Doesn't matter. We're not going to be disappointed in any seed. It's a matter of us taking that seed and advancing.

**Q. Lauri, you've had a couple big nights in a row. Tonight you didn't really score as much but you were still so effective in the game. Can you just talk about how complete you've become as a player up to this point in the season?**

LAURI MARKKANEN: Yeah, I'm trying to do a lot of different things so I'm not depending only on scoring. So of course I didn't score that much tonight, but it didn't matter. We won, so that's the most important thing.

**Q. Parker Jackson-Cartwright seemed to have a lot of timely plays tonight. He had a couple big threes, a couple driving shots. And it seems like teams kind of go after him when he comes into the game. Can you just talk about what he brings to you guys?**

COACH MILLER: They're not going after him anymore. He's answered that bell. He's really a good player for us. He's playing at the top of his game, and these guys will tell you when he's in the game, he sparks our transition. He's one of our team's best defenders. He finished fifth in the Pac-12 in three-point percentage, and he made -- what did he make tonight? Two threes tonight. So his rise to prominence, he had a rebound tonight. It's one of my favorite plays I think I've ever seen. He jumped like 12 feet. I can't wait to see it.

But just those are the things that he's now doing that maybe early in his career he didn't do as much. But his growth and development has been a real source of pride and I think something that's helped us finish very strong to this point.

**Q. Allonzo, like your coach said, you had to miss a lot of time this season. Just considering having to sit out for weeks and being frustrated and not being able to play, what's it mean for you to be here right now?**

ALLONZO TRIER: It's a great feeling. I mean, I don't think we had the picture painted like this. Everything looked so down. But just extremely proud to be a part of this team. Extremely happy to be able to play basketball again and do something I really loved that was taken away from me for quite an extended period

of time.

So this is just a great feeling. I appreciate every time I take the court. I don't take the game for granted at all.

**Q. How would you describe the sixth week when you lost in Oregon to today? What did you change the most?**

COACH MILLER: We continued to work to develop and we continue to do so, our team and Lauri, to be both inside and outside offensively, so that he can bring value both around the basket and behind the three-point line. He's a tough match-up for a four man. If you try to switch him, and Oregon does as good a job as anybody, we want to allow him to get closer to the rim where he can rebound the ball and score it. That's one thing.

Then I think the other part is just continuing to practice hard and learn our team. Allonzo missing as much time as he did, just you don't just wave your magic wand and he returns back to form and so does our team. We went through an awkward period of time because the first time that he played was at UCLA, and we played a great game. So it was almost like, hey, we're back.

But we went through two or three weeks where we all had to find ourselves and figure out how this was going to work. But I think we're a far cry from where we would have been at that point in the season now.

**Q. Could you talk a little bit about how you felt the second half of Oregon making that charge and then the missed free throws from the other guys and then you go up there? How did that feel and what was going through your mind?**

ALLONZO TRIER: We never expected it to be easy when we walked in here tonight. Oregon's a really good team, and they weren't going to lay down and just let us walk away with a win. So credit them for making a surge and really trying to challenge us and make a run to try to win the game. And we showed that we were together and we were tough, and we did what was needed. Even though we missed a few free throws, we did some things like get big rebounds. So we were really together tonight.

THE MODERATOR: These two players made the All-Tournament team, and Allonzo was the Most Valuable Player.