

Pac-12 Men's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 16 2019

Dana Altman

Paul White

Payton Pritchard
Oregon

Oregon - 68, Washington - 48

DANA ALTMAN: Fellows, really just proud of the team. Fellows did a great job, and they fought adversity. We had a lot of ups and downs. All of us were frustrated, the coaching staff, the players. But the resolve they showed to fight back and to really become a team and play for each other, it was really neat to see.

Last three weeks have been amazing, a lot of fun to work with them. I'm really looking forward to continuing to play.

Q. After you guys gave up 62 second half points to UCLA to drop your third straight game, it appeared the team hit rock bottom. How were you able to regroup to reel off 8 straight wins and show a rejuvenated defense?

PAYTON PRITCHARD: In the first half of that game, we played good D. We were playing good. But they started hitting shots and went crazy.

Even though we were upset at that game, I would say the USC game is when we hit rock bottom. After the UCLA game, we kind of felt we gave it up, but we built momentum off that. We didn't stop, there we started in practice. We started going harder. And then we just came closer. And then our momentum grew.

PAUL WHITE: I think it was key that everyone came together at the right time. I remember talking about after the UCLA game, talking about how those games going into the tournament is probably what would be the deciding factor of how well we do in the tournament. And we really played well with the Arizona schools, and we just carried that momentum. And now we're here, Pac-12 champs. I couldn't be more proud.

Q. Seemed like that game plan kind of fell right from the start. You guys got in there, and once they separated a little bit, never -- UW would get 8, 10 in a row, you were able to keep them at bay, and then finally had the closing stretch.



DANA ALTMAN: We screwed up some switches and some communication the first half and gave up some easy baskets. But I thought the first ten minutes of the second half was the deciding time. I know at the 12-minute timeout, they had scored two points, and Kenny had blocked shots. And we kept the ball in front of us. We had some deflections.

But I thought that was the 8-, 10-minute stretch that really decided the game. Our defense was really good. We did make some plays offensively. But it was our defense, and Kenny really protected the rim and put some thought about getting in paint. And then we contested their threes. And that was the deciding period of time.

Q. How were you guys able to sustain your energy and effort after playing four games in four days and to be the aggressors tonight?

PAYTON PRITCHARD: I think everybody just took care of their bodies really well. We have a great support in the coaches and everybody else connected to the organization. So we took care of our bodies and we got sleep, we hydrated well. And I think that showed, game in and game out, we just came prepared. And fatigue never really hit us.

Q. For the players, can you take us in the locker room at halftime? As the coach just mentioned, it was a two-point game, but you came out and blitzed them quickly after the break.

PAYTON PRITCHARD: It was a two-point game, but Coach, if the score is low, we'll live with that, he preaches. If the score is low, it means we're playing decent defense, we'll take that.

We knew we had to stop turning the ball over as much and start hitting some shots, and they started falling for us. And then keep our defense up, and that's what ended up happening.

PAUL WHITE: I think the players, I think everybody started to kind of sense that all we need is 20 more minutes of playing hard and we'll be Pac-12 champs. I think we absorbed that energy really well. Coach was preaching to us about stop turning the ball over but keep in mind that we do have the lead.

So as bad as we felt like we played in the first half, we

still have the lead. So if we cut down on those mistakes, then the results should turn out very well for us.

Q. Of all the teams you've coached over the years, does this four-week stretch -- is there anything you can think of that defines this team? Is this the most resolve you've seen out of a team? Just anything that --

DANA ALTMAN: Guys, as I said, I think we grew up a lot as a team. Everybody kind of gave themselves to the team. NCAA Tournament is not an individualized sport, we either all go or no one goes. Those guys really wanted to go.

So I think every one of them gave up a little bit of what they wanted to do for what the team needed them to do. And that's so important, the chemistry, that's so important. Guys believing in each other. And that unselfishness really helped us in the growth of our team.

So to answer your question, in the 39 years I've been lucky enough to do this, I've never seen a team make that drastic of a change in a three- or four-week period. They really grew up quick and really believed in each other.

I thought the Arizona weekend was huge for us because we held Arizona State to 51 and then we held Arizona to 47. We beat them both bad, and the guys then really realized we can guard like this game in and game out, regardless if the ball is going in or not.

And tonight it went in. We shot above 50 percent. We hit 20 free throws in a row. I think we missed our first two, and then I think we hit 20 in a row after that. We shot free throws well, we cut our turnovers down the second half. We out-rebounded them in the second half. So all the things that we talked about were really -- the guys were performing and did a great job.

Q. Did you know that Lou would be able to go with the ankle, or know how much? And Payton, just what you've seen the last four days out of him, just seems like the aggression and getting to the hoop and the defensively getting out on the guys?

DANA ALTMAN: Lou we thought would be okay, because I talked with Clay this morning, and Clay said there wasn't any swelling. It was sore but not swollen. There wasn't any swelling. So we felt like if he warmed up that he'd be okay. So we thought he'd be able to play, but you never know. You start warming up sometimes the adrenaline doesn't flow. But he obviously wasn't bothered by it.

Payton did an unbelievable job, four-day stretch, 22

assists, four turnovers. Played with tremendous energy. There's so many guys stepped up. E gave us really good minutes the last two games and will was solid. Paul hit big shots. There were a lot of people.

But Payton, just tonight, 7 for 9 from the field, 2 for 4 from the three, hit four free throws, six rebounds, seven assists, four steals. Just really, really good performance.

And it starts with good guard play. I've never been with a team that was successful if they didn't have good guard play.

And so he's really been solid. He put a little too much pressure on himself during the year. Everybody wants to have a great year, and sometimes you put too much pressure on yourself. But his aggressiveness, his confidence grew, and he continued to make simple plays, which really helped.

Q. That lefty dunk at the end was certainly the exclamation point. What was going through your mind on the fast break and when is the last time you dunked in a game?

PAYTON PRITCHARD: The last time I dunked was last year versus Washington State, but...

PAUL WHITE: Wrong.

PAYTON PRITCHARD: It was a dunk. It was a dunk.

PAUL WHITE: Wrong. It was a power layup.

PAYTON PRITCHARD: You know, I thought if I got a steal then I'd give it a shot, go up and see what I could do. And I had the opportunity, so just the perfect way to put an exclamation point on the game.