

Pac-12 Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 14 2019

Tad Boyle

Alexander Strating

Evan Battey

Colorado

Colorado - 73, Oregon State - 58

TAD BOYLE: Boy, I couldn't be more proud of our guys. Our defense, the last two games, has just kind of ratcheted up to another level. And knew we were challenged in a different way tonight than we were yesterday with Cal. Oregon State has got three really, really good players. I can't say enough about Tres Tinkle and the Thompson brothers, because they're good players.

We knew in the second half they were going to make some sort of a run at us, and they did. We bowed our backs. We never let it get below 6. And I don't like to use my timeouts, for those of you that know me, but felt like I had to kind of stem the tide. But our guys kept it in that 6-, 8-point range and bowed our backs and broke out at the end.

We got our heels a little bit off, and they turned the pressure up, they started getting into us and heating us up and got on our heels, and we finally started attacking it, which is what you have to do.

So great team victory. I can't say enough about this guy to my left. He didn't play yesterday and comes in today and gives us big-time minutes. Tyler was in foul trouble. Evan was in foul trouble. So Alex came in, did a great job guarding Tinkle. And it's a tough matchup. He did a great job in Boulder. Really proud of him, and really proud of Evan. Keep taking those charges, you'll start getting them.

Q. Talking about the guy next to you there, they've cut it to six, about six minutes left, 5:50-something, and he takes it to the rim and scores his 10th point. Starts an 8-1 run. With all the people on the floor, was that the guy you're going, okay, that's the guy that's going to start the run for us?

TAD BOYLE: When we recruited Alex, it wasn't because of his size, it wasn't because of his strength, it wasn't because of his skill. Although, I thought he's a good shooter when I first saw him. But we recruited



him for one reason, and that's toughness.

So the play you're talking about shows great toughness. It shows great mental toughness and physical. It was a physically tough play, because there was contact, and he finished through the contact.

And so I couldn't be -- again, for a guy that didn't play yesterday, that's just who he is. And he's always ready when this team needs him. His teammates love him. He's the epitome of toughness.

THE MODERATOR: Alex, is all that true?

ALEXANDER STRATING: Yeah, if Coach Boyle says it, then it is. (Laughter.)

Q. Can you talk about the sequence that Coach just talked about, you had the big lead, they cut it to six? What were you talking about amongst yourselves obviously to kind of hold it off?

EVAN BATTEY: We just talked about being patient on offense. And really keep guarding the same way we did the first half. And that's about it.

Q. Talk about that start there. It seemed like you were contesting the first eight, nine shots. It felt like defensively you didn't really give them many looks early and kind of got them off kilter a little bit?

EVAN BATTEY: We wanted to guard them the whole night and really contest every shot. They're going to make some. They're good players. And just contest every shot and be there for every shot and box up.

Q. Can you talk about some of the depth that you have on this team? You had five players record double-doubles today, especially when a guy like Tyler Bey, who's one of your strongest players, has been relatively shut down these first two games?

TAD BOYLE: Yeah, I just told Tyler in the locker room tomorrow is his day. He's too good of a player to be -- and foul trouble hampered him today. It was a really tough first half for him.

When you have that big lead you don't want to risk the third foul. Quite frankly, when it was six or eight, I was -- Evan had four, Tyler had four, and we started going offense, defense, and I thought just in case this game

goes to overtime, we're going to need Tyler and we're going to need Evan both. And it didn't, but that was my thinking.

We've got great depth on this team, and we've got quality depth. Lucas Siewert is really important coming off the bench. Daylen Kountz has had, for a freshman, two games in a row, really big-time minutes in big-time games. And obviously Alex tonight.

It's not just our five starters. It's an 8-man rotation. It's truly a team. And what's nice about a team, is when it's some guy's night, maybe Tyler is having struggles, Alex steps up for him, and that's what teammates do.

Q. Congratulations on the win. Alex and Evan, how much were you playing for Buff Nation, with all that's going on with the weather, the deadly blizzard in Colorado? How much are you playing for fans? I know so many couldn't make it here today?

EVAN BATTEY: We got a letter from a fireman like a month ago, two months ago, and it really just said like how much we mean to the State of Colorado. We play for them every night. And just really lay our hearts down on the line every night for them.

ALEXANDER STRATING: I think Evan pretty much covered it all. There's a lot of people can't make it out here tonight, that's all right. We understand; it's very dangerous out there. And we're playing for the state of Colorado and for the university, and we just want to represent the state as well as we can.

Q. You mentioned a little bit of a scare they obviously gave you in the second half. Just in the span of 24-hour period, just day and night in terms of energy coming out of the gate. How did you did the turnaround in a short period of time?

TAD BOYLE: We knew yesterday offensively was not who we are, turning it over 23 times. I looked at the stat sheet at halftime. I told these guys. I said, 10 assists and five turnovers at halftime. Totally different than what it was yesterday.

I've got a lot of confidence in these guys. They have confidence in themselves, in each other. And so sometimes -- look, I think the first game of the tournament is -- there's some jitters, I don't care what anybody says. There's a little bit -- I think Oregon State went through that a little bit in the first half, maybe. I don't know what they would say about that. But I know we had some guys feeling that yesterday.

So sometimes the team that plays the first day has an advantage on the team that didn't play the first day. We all want the bye, because we want to only have to win

three games instead of four. But there's an advantage for the teams that play that first night that a lot of people don't recognize or realize. And it was an advantage for us, I think, having kind of got our jitters out yesterday. And today our guys were ready to play.

Q. Felt like you guys threw the first punch there, and defensively seemed they weren't getting good looks early on to get the good start?

TAD BOYLE: Our defense has gone to a whole new level. It's interesting, because they normally start Reichle as kind of a fourth guard, and we had our matchups all ready and they did what they did in Boulder, and they started the Hollins kid. So it changed our matchups. And Shane was going to start on Reichle and now he starts on Ethan Thompson. We challenged him. And Shane answered that challenge.

He's gotten so much better defensively. We know how good McKinley is. We know how good Tyler is and that these guys. D'Shawn Schwartz has become a very good defender, as well. That's what we're going to need tomorrow as we head against Washington.

But tonight our defense in the first half went to another level. Second half they started driving us, and we knew that's what they were going to do. They put a lot of pressure on you. They put foul pressure on you. And our guys did the best job they could. But couldn't be more proud. And our program is based on defense and rebounding.

Q. What does it mean for your program to be back in the semifinals, first time in five years? And early thoughts on the Washington matchup?

TAD BOYLE: It's been a while. I thought about it. I didn't talk to these guys about it, because these guys haven't been around. I didn't want to put undue pressure on them. I felt as a coach, we've won in the first round every year we've been here, but we haven't been in the semis in a while.

In order to get to the finals, you have to get to the semis. We did what we had to do. These guys are playing like they don't want to go home. It's cold back in Colorado, so there's a good reason for that. I know the warm weather is coming. We want to extend the stay as long as we can.

Washington obviously is champion of the league over an 18-game schedule, and they're very, very good. They've got a lot of good players. But the teams that have had success against Washington are the teams that have really guarded them well. And we're going to have to do that again tomorrow.

Obviously we're going to have to handle the zone and take care of the ball. We had 19 turnovers last time we played them in Seattle. Hopefully we can have that turnaround like we had today, taking care of the ball and ratcheting up our defense. And if we do, that we'll give ourselves a chance.