

Pac-12 Men's Basketball Tournament

Wednesday, March 11 2020

Kyle Smith
Jeff Pollard
Isaac Bonton
CJ Elleby
Washington State

Washington State - 82, Colorado - 68

KYLE SMITH: It's good to get one. We haven't had one of these since 2009. Our guys knew that going in, and they've got some pride. I thought we played really well tonight, and our defense was excellent. And just stayed with it the whole time. We had a couple of ups and downs, but stayed the course and played one of the better games of the year.

THE MODERATOR: How did you do? You led for 36 minutes?

KYLE SMITH: I thought we did an awesome job on McKinley Wright, 6-for-17. He still had 21 points, but on 17 shots, that's great. And I think we got a couple of threes late when we were in pretty good shape there.

But I just thought we did a good job there. And did a good job on the glass. We're a little bigger now when we've got Bobe (phonetic) out there and Tony Miller, and we're just a little different team. And playing CJ more at the three I think helps us.

Q. So craps later, Coach?

KYLE SMITH: You never ask for a 7. You don't root for the 7. You need to know that. I'll put the lesson out there. Go ahead.

Q. Just explain, or explain your feelings right now. We talked about the special moments yesterday that you've had. This is definitely a special moment for you guys in your first season. Can you describe the feeling that's going through you right now?

KYLE SMITH: Pretty calm. Trying to get ready for tomorrow with Arizona State. You have to stay in the moment. You have to flip the page to the next one.

I'm really proud of these guys. They've really bought into what we're trying to do. We're not going to be



perfect by any stretch. The idea is we're going to improve every day. We don't set team goals. But we found a few things along the way where we could make a mark.

And tonight was where we had one. Haven't had one since 2009. I think Colorado is a program we want to be like. They have nine or ten guys that are good players. They're solid. They're sound. They're old. And I think they let our guys know they were that, and we can be something like that, too, if not better.

Q. For the players, any of you guys, what was the difference between this game and the game two months ago in Boulder?

ISAAC BONTON: I don't think it was too much of a difference. I think just we put 40 minutes together. In the first half, we didn't play bad against them in Boulder, but the second half we let it slip a little bit, got kind of complacent and sped up a little bit.

This time we stayed focused, stuck with our game plan and really slowed it down, and just keep playing defense, keep playing hard defense on McKinley. Making sure we're rebounding, doing little things that we work on in practice every day for 40 minutes.

Q. You hit your first two or three pointers of the game. After the second or third one, did it have a feeling this might have been your shooting night tonight?

CJ ELLEBY: You know, maybe. But what's more important is just I feel like it got my team going, it opened up things, you know. And once I saw those go in, it was going to be a good night, for sure.

Q. Jeff, congratulations on getting engaged Sunday. Can you talk about the historical significance of winning for the first time since 2009 in your senior season, then also the last week getting healthy and playing with a broken finger tonight?

JEFF POLLARD: Yeah, getting the first win in the tournament since 2009 is a big deal. Obviously first time since I've been here that we've gotten past the first round. It's a big moment for all of us.

But at the same time we know tomorrow is another day, and we're all kind of on the same page, looking forward

to that. And getting ready for that.

And then the broken finger, it's just another thing. Senior season, going into my last Pac-12 Tournament, I was like there's no way that I'm not playing if I can walk and run.

Q. Jervae Robinson is from Colorado, from the Denver area, I don't know if you have any insight on this, is this win particularly meaningful for him? It looked like he had a big part of the defense on McKinley tonight.

KYLE SMITH: Yeah, I think the a little bit. Jervae has been like that. I don't know if I've coached a guy that's improved as much as him over the course of the year. I was really excited. We knew it and our locker room knows it, that he takes the toughest guy every night, whether it's Payton Pritchard, McKinley Wright, you name them, he's taking them.

And he's been great. It's really nice that the coaches recognize him. He was Honorable Mention All-Defensive Team. I'd love to have him up here, too, just because he's been a rock solid senior, just keeps getting better. And it would be hard to replace. Played 36 minutes. I didn't want to take him out of the game.

Q. For the players, that last tournament win came with guys like last names Baynes, Klay Thompson. They've been a little more involved in the program this year. They've spoke to you. What's it been like to be able to speak with them and relate to them and get that first win since then?

CJ ELLEBY: I think that just comes with building the Coug culture back up. And Coach Smith has done a great job bringing people who have been there and have importance in the Coug community.

It motivates us and inspire us to chase those things. They're really good basketball players, but even better people. To listen to them, spend time with them, I think it helped us, bring us together a little bit.

Q. Coach and players, too, now you get Arizona State. You just played them. Is that a good or a bad situation that you're playing a team that you literally just played, and what do you look to get out from that game?

KYLE SMITH: I'm not sure how that goes. We think it's pretty fresh on us. I don't think there will be any major adjustments. But I thought we played about a ten-minute stretch we played really well against them and got ourselves back in the game. They're a really good team. And we're 1-1. It's the rubber match, it will be a great opportunity for us.

Q. You guys are going to be playing in a pretty

empty arena tomorrow, what do you think that will be like, it's a pretty unprecedented thing?

KYLE SMITH: It will be like our scrimmage we saw in Washington or Montana.

CJ ELLEBY: We'll have to bring the energy there. We'll have family and close friends. But the energy comes from within the locker room, and we'll have to rely on each other for that.

Q. Isaac, what does this mean to you, your first year in this program, to make such an impact, to be going through these moments with those guys up there?

ISAAC BONTON: I think it's special. The journey I've been through and everything, it's been a tough journey. But I feel like I'm in the right place. And I just give all the credit to my teammates and my coaches. They've done such a good job welcoming me here and acclimating me back to the Division I level.

Moments like these, winning a tournament game for the first time in quite a while, I just want to share it with my brothers and come back tomorrow and get the win.

Q. Coach Smith, you don't know what it's like to lose at the Pac-12 Tournament. But a lot of these players do. What does it mean to you to get a win for them tonight?

KYLE SMITH: It's great for our program. I think CJ hit it on the head. I think it means more to guys like Aaron Baynes, Taylor Rochestie, Klay Thompson, George Raveling. Those people have come through this place have a lot of love for their time spent in Pullman. I know when I get to my phone I'll get a crazy text from those guys. They have a lot of pride and it makes it special.

These guys think I brought them back, Pat's the one that organized it and did the thing for Klay and George and his staff. Those go a long ways with just -- the place is special. Pullman is special. People, they really -- they're proud of their Cougs, and it's good to show them how -- reward them with a win.

ISAAC BONTON: Pat Chun is one of the most professional people I've met in my life.

Q. The routine for you going pregame, did it change up for you with the hand? Can you go into detail on that? You've got quite the wrap on it.

JEFF POLLARD: Yeah, I tried to keep it as normal as possible and just try to get it as functional as possible. Definitely wrapped up a lot right now. But, I mean --

KYLE SMITH: Shout out to Dr. Henry.

JEFF POLLARD: She helped get it all ready to go. But

like I said, as long as I've got a hand and I can run, I'm playing.