

Big Ten Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Wednesday March 8, 2017

Tim Miles

Tai Webster

Evan Taylor

Jordy Tshimanga

Penn State - 76, Nebraska - 67 - OT

THE MODERATOR: We'll ask Coach Miles to make an opening statement.

COACH MILES: I'm obviously greatly disappointed that our season's come to an end. We have a guy like Tai Webster who developed into an all-league guard, have his career end. He's been a pleasure to coach.

I have to credit Penn State doing the things, took away some of the things we do well, and made enough shots to stretch it out in overtime and get the win.

We'll take any, questions.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Tai, talk about the overtime, what happened in the overtime? Did you go ice cold during the overtime period?

TAI WEBSTER: They just made a couple plays down the stretch. The ball seemed like it wasn't dropping in for us. Had a couple good looks, but unfortunately couldn't capitalize on those looks.

Q. For any of the players. It seemed like the first time you played them this season, Mike Watkins was held in check. He had a big game tonight. Did you try to guard him differently tonight?

EVAN TAYLOR: Honestly, I mean, the game plan was the same. Obviously he's a good player. Good players are going to make plays.

I feel like our bigs, they did a good job on him. Us as guards could have helped more. I mean, there's not really much to say about it. Credit to him having a good game when it mattered.

THE MODERATOR: Fellas, you may return to the locker room. We'll go to questions for Coach Miles.



Q. Tony Carr has a lot of the final positions throughout the season. Were you keying him towards the end with the final possessions?

COACH MILES: Yeah, we thought that Tai was matchup on him. Tai is a strong guard, Tony. He felt like he could go one-on-one with him. It got him in foul trouble, though. I think that was a key part of the game. We talked on and off about doubling. We went after one of his ball screens pretty hard the first possession of overtime. We brought two to him. Then Isaiah Roby tagged. Threw it back to Stevens for his second of the game. That was a big play, to get overtime started.

Then sure enough, we go down, I think a possession or two later, and Tai misses a bonus and fouls out. Just kind of frustration. That kind of sums up our year.

Q. Along that line, how would you describe this season? You've had some good wins, a tough finish, the rollercoaster nature of it.

COACH MILES: As we went into the year, we knew we were going to be a little bit short on outside shooting. At Christmas, we played probably the number one non-conference schedule in the country, so we played Creighton when they were ranked and healthy, at Kansas, played UCLA, we played Clemson at Clemson, Virginia Tech, Dayton, a lot of quality teams.

We were only 6-6 at Christmas, but we felt very good. We started out 3-0. We're feeling it. Ed Morrow says, My foot hurts. That was kind of the beginning of the end. He tried to play the next game. He didn't play for how many? 1-6 in that stretch. Lost consecutive one-point games.

I think at the end, there were some guys that were worn out, but I was proud of them tonight coming out. Although we didn't have great rhythm, we fought back, found a way to get it to Tai. Showed a lot of resolve that way. But then, like I say, that play where Tai misses the bonus, Shep circles in and out, hits the background, goes in. I don't know how you would have called that one on a radio. That seems like it sums up our year. Simplest error, someone makes a play on us, look up, you're dead in the water with two minutes left.

Q. It seemed like you would go through long stretches where the offense would hit a wall, then

bounce back out of it. What do you attribute that to?

COACH MILES: I think Watkins had a big deal to do with that. He had eight blocks. More importantly, every timeout, we have it at the rim, twos and threes. We have our numbers at 12 for 35 at the rim. You'd expect to shoot 55%, 60% at the rim, at least, even in a well-contested game.

I thought they did a good job of protecting the rim, even in transition. We had a few plays, one in overtime, where I thought we were at the rim and maybe we had a chance to draw contact and get a foul. Penn State did a great job defending. We just couldn't get anything going at the rim. That hurts us.

Q. Tim, talk about your seniors, your two seniors. What have they meant for you guys this year?

COACH MILES: Well, Tai Webster is the one that plays, right? Tai has been a kid that I'm proud of because he never quit. He came as a much-heralded recruit, started on an NCAA tournament team, but wasn't very productive. I think they called him the least productive Big Ten starter. That's not a great reputation to start with, right?

The next year he fell out of the rotation, then he fought back, had a pretty good year last year, averaged over 10 points a game, even more than that in the league. This year he's been really good for us all year.

It's always the same thing with Tai. Guard their best player, score all our points, right? I have a lot of respect for him not quitting, just staying with it. A lot of times nowadays guys, if they're not getting exactly what they want, they'll go. Tai would never do that. Had every opportunity to. He had professional offers I believe at the end of almost every year. Back home, for sure. He turned them down, turned down a lot of money to stay with his college basketball career.

Q. Coach, right after the game, your athletic director tweeted out, Looking forward to next year with Coach Miles in charge.

COACH MILES: I'm back (laughter).

Q. What were your thoughts?

COACH MILES: He and I talked over the last few weeks. There was no doubt that he was with me and supporting me. I knew he would probably do something after the season in his own way.

He's a man that believes in us, supports us. Even when we were struggling, he wouldn't waver. Although the media has a field day with it, I guess they're just bored.

He's been there and I'm going to come through for him. We're going to show him his faith in us is justified.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, coach.

COACH MILES: Thanks.