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An interview with: Northern Colorado



THE MODERATOR: For Northern Colorado we've got Taylor Montgomery, Devon Beitzel, Elliott Lloyd, Chris Kaba and Coach Hill. Coach, if you can start with some opening remarks.

COACH HILL: Can't fault our guys' effort. I thought they played extremely hard. Thought we followed the game plan for about 34 minutes tonight. Hat's off to San Diego State. They're even better in person than what they are on video.

When they shoot the ball like that, there's not too many people in the country that I think can beat them.

I thought our guys played their hearts out for being here for the first time. I don't think they were intimidated. I thought they just went out and did what we've done since December 25th to win the Big Sky Conference championship. Couldn't be more proud of them.

Q. Devon, did you pretty much, once you started falling behind the second half -- or in the second half in general, were you pretty much taking it upon yourself to kind of get them back in it?

DEVON BEITZEL: I was just trying to stay aggressive. That is all that was. I was just trying

to stay aggressive. The guys were doing a good job setting screens and finding me when I was open, you know.

Q. Elliott, were you not getting the same looks in the second half that you got early in the game?

ELLIOTT LLOYD: Well, I just wanted to be aggressive in the first half, find my teammates in the right spots. We just wanted to execute the game plan offensively, which is get my teammates the open shots they deserve. I just wanted to make it easy for the seniors.

Q. When San Diego State really started shooting well there in the second half, what were they doing differently or was it a defensive lapse, what was it?

DEVON BEITZEL: Um, I know a couple of plays I got stuck in some screens and let 22 and 11 get some open shots.

You know, they're just a good team. They got a lot of weapons on their team. They spread it around really well.

You know, I think they had four, five guys with double figures. So, I mean, when you got a team doing that, it's really tough to guard.

Q. This is for Taylor. What do you think the team's emotion was, how uptight were you or how loose were you coming into the game when the game started and do you think you did everything that you wanted to do except hit the shots?

TAYLOR MONTGOMERY: I feel we were very loose. We were very comfortable. We didn't feel too tight. We just knew we were going to have fun out there. All the pressure was on them to win. We were just thinking we'll play our game and do our thing. I never even thought about the game. Slept fine last night. It was just another game.

But we executed the game plan for the most part, as coach said, for, you know, 34,



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36 minutes. We had it going. And they just knocked down shots. When they shoot that well, there's only so much you can do.

Q. Taylor, part of the game plan was to crash the boards and dominate them. You pretty much did defensive. What were you doing to keep them off the offensive glass?

TAYLOR MONTGOMERY: Just sticking to our defensive principles. You know, just hit a body and create space and go get the ball.

We knew they loved to crash. And they had players that really got a lot of offensive rebounds and crash all the time. So our main focus, I know for the front line, was to hit bodies and create space, then just go get the ball.

Q. B.J., you didn't obviously get much production out of Kingman. That kind of gets your offense out of sync. Did you expect more from him?

COACH HILL: Well, I mean, we're --

THE MODERATOR: We're asking for student-athletes until we're done with them. Thank you.

Q. Chris, how much did Kawhi impress you tonight?

CHRIS KABA: He's a lottery pick (laughter). You can't say too much more about that. He was a cool dude. For one, he is a big guy. He is about 6'5", 6'6", 6'7", maybe 225. He has a high motor.

A lot of shots I played right there and he still just raised up and found a way to get it in. He is a very good player. I fully intend to see him in the draft next year.

Q. Devon, only eight free-throw attempts for you guys as a team. How much did that change the game plan not being able to go to the rim? Did that make you shoot more threes than you normally would?

DEVON BEITZEL: I think we settled a lot more than we should have for threes, or jump shots in general.

You know, they do have a lot of size in there and it's hard to get in there and get your shot up. Especially for us little guys. (Laughter.) You know, but, yeah, I mean, they did a good job shutting down the paint and forcing us into longer looks.

Q. Devon, you've been coming off picks all year, did they chase any harder than people you faced before? And what did Coach Fisher say to you in the handshake line there?

DEVON BEITZEL: He just told me, Good game, great career. And, I mean, they pretty much did the same thing the rest of the teams that we've played against did: Chase me off screens and try to force me to attack. And, I mean, they did a good job.

They fought all game. And they obviously did enough to win.

Q. Just for the seniors, being here in this game in your final season, what does this mean to you guys?

TAYLOR MONTGOMERY: It feels amazing, you know. We can walk with our heads held high. Even though we lost this game, you know, from the beginning of the season this is what we talked about. We talked about winning our conference, winning the tournament championship, then make it to the NCAA's.

Now, would I have liked to go further in the tournament? Of course. But, you know, I had a blast and this is just a great time that I'll always remember. I feel like I can walk out with my head held high.

DEVON BEITZEL: We made history this year. We made history as a program. We did a lot of firsts. And, I mean, we have nothing to feel but proud for doing so.

Q. You guys have talked about before you left and the first few days of practice about wanting to prove that you belong, that this program belongs. Maybe directed to Elliott. You are coming back next year, the seniors are leaving, but do you think that UNC basketball belongs here?

ELLIOTT LLOYD: Most definitely we belong here. Our teammates, we know what we got to do to get back here. We just got to stay focused and get the team to work hard in the off season and let the chips fall as they may.

THE MODERATOR: Okay, guys, thank you very much.

Questions for coach.

Q. B.J., you were pretty much taking your chances hoping they would have a bad shooting night.

COACH HILL: Yeah. They didn't. I thought the guys defensively followed the game plan, which was when it went inside, dig it out. Then our guards had to rotate on the pass out. And we had to play the percentages.

We got to give them credit. They hit good shots. They hit tough shots. They reverse the ball to the open guy to where we had to sprint, you know, across the court and try to challenge shots. That's what's worked for, you know, 17 games out of the last 21. It just didn't happen tonight.

Q. Coach, talk about James Rahon, what he was able to do when he did come in. He hit some pretty big shots at the end.

COACH HILL: I thought the shots he hit in the two threes that Kawhi hit at the beginning of the game were not a good sign for us.

You know, when Kawhi starts a game with two threes, those are shots we want him to take. But being the outstanding player he is on a big stage, he hit them.

Then to have a guy like James come off the bench and hit those shots, that is what you got to have for a program to make a deep run in this tournament.

And if they continue to shoot the ball like this and rebound like they did, they can go a long ways.

Q. Coach, Chris called Kawhi a lottery pick. Do you feel the same way?

COACH HILL: I don't know what a lottery pick looks like. I've spent most of my time at the ju-co level. I've been fortunate enough to coach some good players. But if he can shoot perimeter shots like that, he is definitely a pro. I mean, he's such a hard guard. He is so versatile. He is so strong. That is what's deceiving. You don't realize how strong that guy is. And when he can hit jump shots like that, it just makes him a complete player and one of those guys that is really hard to guard.

Q. Coach, how hard are these guys to play?

COACH HILL: Very hard when they shoot the ball well from the perimeter, because they've got such a good inside game. And when Billy's playing like that, I don't know, I think he had 13 rebounds. When he's pouring in buckets and rebounding, playing with the energy that he did today, they're really hard to guard.

And that inside/outside combination with how hard they push the ball in transition, and they

have so many guys that can bring the ball in transition, it puts so much pressure on your defense that it's just difficult to defend for 40 minutes.

Q. Devon was asked this question. How did the lack of free-throws change your game plan?

COACH HILL: We didn't really -- we just knew we weren't getting there. Again, that's all credit to them. They're longer. They're more athletic. They're stronger than teams we've faced in the Big Sky. And so it's harder to exploit holes in their defense.

You know, what's so hard to exploit against them is if you get them to make a mistake, which they're a very solid defensive team, and when you get them to make a mistake, if they make a mistake they have the length and athleticism to cover up for it in a hurry. And that equals blocked shot and all sorts of havoc at the rim.

And that's what starts to limit what you can do offensively and tends to push you outside more.

Q. Coach, can you kind of talk about what you told the guys at half-time down six and what you and the seniors discussed in the locker room after the loss.

COACH HILL: At half-time I thought we were in good shape. I didn't expect them to continue shooting it the way they did. I knew they'd made some shots that they don't normally make.

So I felt good where we were at in terms of having offense in front of us the second half and I thought we'd be a little bit more efficient. But, again, that goes to their credit. They cranked up their defense. They got aggressive when we hit some shots to start the second half, they cranked up their energy. We didn't respond real well.

Again, their defensive intensity took us out of our game plan a little bit. They pressured and determined what we were doing on offense. We talked about that, but it's a lot easier to talk about it in a game plan than execute it against those type of athletes out on the floor.

After the game, you know, I just told them I'm proud of them. You know, as a -- forget being a first-year coach, any coach would be so lucky to coach those seniors and the guys underneath them. They're tremendous kids. They got great

character. They built a program.

You know, where there was a Division II program just five years ago, those guys have built a championship level Division I program. And that's an amazing, amazing feat in that short of time. For one class to do what those guys have done to get to this stage is an unbelievable feat.

So I just told them to carry their heads high when they walk out. They're champions and they need to carry themselves like that.

THE MODERATOR: All right, coach, thank you very much. Coach thanks, guys.

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