

Mountain West Men's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 12, 2025

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

Thomas & Mack Center

Wyoming Cowboys

Sundance Wicks

Cole Henry

Obi Agbim

Jordan Nesbitt

Postgame Press Conference

San José State 66 - Wyoming 61

COACH WICKS: It's really inconsequential when you sit up here and you know that your season is over with. That's the -- it's always the hardest part of anytime of year is you don't prepare for finality. I don't have speeches prepared for when you go in the locker room and you gotta talk to six guys who are going to be done with college basketball. You talk about Cole and Dontaie and Kobe, Cort, Touko, J Nes., guys that are going to be done with college basketball and they gotta go on with their life. So you don't prepare a speech for that.

The one thing that I think about a lot with this team and I've thought a ton about with this team is the value of one, just the value of one. One season that you have left, one possession, one rebound, one stop. You know, one more day to play with each other. The value of one, and we think we have so much time when you're a player. You think it's never going to end, the ride is never going to end, and then you get to this moment right now and you realize that that one is over, that one year is it. I got to ride one year with these guys up here, and I'm grateful for it. I'll always be grateful for these seniors that chose this team, that chose us at Wyoming because when we got the last job in the cycle. We were the last puppy at the bowl, and we had guys that chose to be Cowboys that rode for the brand, whether it was nine months, ten months or eight months, whatever that tenure was, they chose us, in a desperate time, in one of the hardest times of college basketball.

And so I know the value of one. I know the value of a commitment, of one commitment that these guys made to



us. And that's what it comes down to nowadays, is can you get a team to commit fully and wholly for one year at a time. And then can you turn that over again next year? And can you get it again next year? So what I think about this team, I think of the value of one. I want these guys to know that they're going to have maybe one opportunity to be a professional basketball player and they gotta make the most of it. They're going to have one opportunity, you know, in a lot of ways to be a good father and a good husband and a self-sufficient, productive citizen of society. They're going to have one, one chance. So I hope they understand the value of one. I know they've learned how to handle hard, because this year hasn't been easy.

This is the team that I call the horseshoes and hand grenades team. They were close, but close only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades. We played in 16 two-possession games, 16. Won seven, lost nine. We were close. One goal that we wanted to have is be the most competitive team on the schedule. We were extremely competitive in the majority of our games. And the thing that I wish I had more time with was the ability to foster a culture of connectedness for another year with these guys. I only get one. I don't get another year with a lot of these guys. And so for that, I'm grateful, but it's always a hard time.

But you have to be thankful for those that gave everything they could to the Cowboys, regardless of the outcome - --

Q. For Cole and Obi, probably hard to think about right, but how proud are you of that effort? You go down 22, you claw back, once again horseshoes, hand grenades, but you crawl back in this thing when you were dead in the water, and how much did Jordan really spark that there?

COLE HENRY: Yeah, at halftime we talked about leaving it all out there, coming into halftime, down 20, potentially your last half of your career, you come out with some fire, and J Nes. answered the call tonight. In the second half, he was the spark we needed. He came out with his hair on fire and played his ass off. And that's what he does. That's what he's shown to do all season. And just, you



know, we were close. Yep.

Q. Cole, I guess how frustrating -- obviously, a huge comeback in the second half. How frustrating was that start to get down 12 early and then get down 22? What was kind of going through your mind, just frustration wise?

COLE HENRY: Yeah, it was tough. I mean, 12-0, we called a timeout. That's not the way you want to start the conference tournament, right? But it seems like all season, we've had ups and downs and things that definitely we don't want to go our way several times. We got down 20. I figured we'd probably come back from this. We've done it several times. LMU, we were down the same amount and came back up ten; and we were able to fight in the second half, which is what I'm really proud of.

We got down early, but this team has shown all season we know how to fight. And we did that.

Q. Obi, obviously, you had a shot there at the end that was really close to tying it. What is that going to say about this year's group to stay in that fight, down 22, and fight for everything that you got there in the second half?

OBI AGBIM: I'm not here without any teammates, my coaches and all that. For them to trust me to take that shot and live or die by the make or miss, it means a lot to this team, and it shows a lot of grit that we have all together.

Playing in a game like this it's really intense, and I feel like in the second half, we all played with purpose, and we played with a chip on our shoulders. Unfortunately, I just missed that last shot. Putting me in a position like that sets my future up for a really big path.

Q. Two questions, you guys are obviously the foundation of the legend of Sundance, as I like to call it. What can people expect from Wyoming basketball in the future?

COLE HENRY: Wins. Sundance is the best coach I've ever played for. There was a reason why I committed there. I know when I answered the portal, I had some options that were really close to home, and he made me believe in myself, for real, when no one else did.

So what you can expect from Wyoming basketball is a lot of winning and a winning culture, because he pulled it out of us this year. He had 17 days to get this team together. He's up at 4:30 every day, first one in the gym, last to leave as the head coach, and he instills passion in players when they don't have any, like myself.

I thought I was done playing basketball. You know, I had a good career, my last school, but he instilled confidence in myself and my teammates to give it one last shot. So you can expect some really good seasons from him.

Q. If I could ask each of you, just give me one word to describe Sundance.

JORDAN NESBITT: Legend.

OBI AGBIM: Yeah, legend for sure.

COLE HENRY: Crazy. He's crazy, in a good way.

MODERATOR: Anything else for our student-athletes? Okay. We'll dismiss them at this time. We'll keep Coach a few more minutes.

Q. Coach, Jordan, I mean what can you say about his second half there? What do you think maybe got him going?

COACH WICKS: One of the things we talk about all the time in our program is how to become an everyday dude, and an everyday dude is someone who can lead themselves. And when Jordan came to us from Hampton, we found that like he didn't have the daily habits that he needed to be an everyday dude yet. So our entire process this year with Jordan was to be a guy who could be a consistent and accountable guy every single day.

And for me, I don't think I've been more proud than walking back at halftime -- I get goose bumps talking about this -- and hearing Jordan in the hallway talking about "chin up, chin up. Not done. Stay in the fight." And I've searched all year for guys to try to be able to have those moments, and he did it with conviction. That was the difference. It wasn't just flapping his gums. He was convicted in that he was going to have this resilient mindset that he wasn't going to go out like this.

And when a player can do that, when he can come out of his shell and finally have that moment for me that's where I knew he was going to be different the second half. And if you watched the raw emotion and the passion he plays with when he's in the moment and fully engaged and he's fully present, he's an animal. He's an animal. And that's the stuff that we saw, but you don't have enough time in nine months to get all the animal out that you want, to get all the habits rewired that you need to.

And I hope that for Jordan when he goes forward, that he's learned his lessons here about how to become an everyday dude, handle the hard and be that consistent,



accountable human being. And when he does that he's a dog, he's a JYD.

I mean, he'll go to any program and he'll just be the competitor that everybody wants him to be. And we needed the competitiveness, relentless competitiveness against a San José State team who has been ultra competitive against us for three games, and he was the guy that changed the narrative for us in the second half.

Q. And how damaging was it to lose Allen to four fouls right there early in the second half?

COACH WICKS: Yeah, you don't ever want -- Dontaie made a physical play for us. He set a clock screen. I don't know the call. I'm not going to sit there and question the call or not. But it's a play where if someone is getting pressure, we practice that clock screen. To me, that was one of the things that helped send a message for us in the second half that we were going to come out and be more physical. We were still be in the fight. But when you use Dontaie, you lose shooting. You lose the ability to stretch the basketball. You lose that length defensively.

But I'll say this. I mean, plus in the box score watching A.J. go in there and watching Abou go in there and having Scottie go in there and all be pluses in the box score to give us those winning plays, they did a great job. And that's -- two of those guys are younger guys that have the ability to continue to be foundational pieces going forward that were coming in and impacting the game.

And that's what you want. You need your other guys to step up in these games, a lot like DaiDai Hall did for San José. You need your other guys to step up, and it was unfortunate that Dontaie wasn't there, but I thought A.J. did a great job filling in, Matija did a good job, Abou did a good job just coming in and making winning plays.

Q. Sunny, like Cole said, you didn't even have a month to put this team and staff together. Simply, how excited are you for a real off season as the head coach of the Wyoming Cowboys?

COACH WICKS: We're so much further ahead of the game right now than we were last year, right, because you have a chance to see what's coming down the pipe. And I don't think you can ever be fully prepared because, as you all well know in this world, you're going to lose guys that you thought were going to stay, guys that you thought were going to go are going to stay, things are going to happen randomly throughout the course of the year. Someone is going to get another year of eligibility because that just seems to be what happens here for the last four years is somewhere out next year, we'll probably find out that

everybody has two more years to play. So we'll just backtrack everybody that was playing with us and bring them back to wipe.

You just don't know what's going to happen down the pipe here, but we're way more prepared now than we were a year ago, and you're seeing this thing evolve into front office sports. You're seeing college athletics become front office sports. Athletic departments are hiring entire front offices to manage their program. I mean, it's wild to think about and there's still some of us that are, you know, this could be anybody, but still some of us that are trying to do it the old way, antiquated a little bit trying to find a guy with some character and toughness and create a culture. It's two diametrically opposed belief systems here, one is transaction based and one is transformational based. And I would love for Wyoming to continue to be a transformational place where guys come in and become men, young men become grown men and they can go lead lives. I still believe in that ideology.

I won't be the last guy selling CDs up here, but I'm going to tell you there's still belief for me that you can create young men that are awesome humans, and you can have great culture still without it being transactional. I do believe in that.

Q. I think it's safe to say this is bigger. It's your home state. Did you learn anything about yourself this year that maybe you didn't know before as head coach?

COACH WICKS: I'm reinforced that I'm still maniacal, crazy as Cole calls it in a good way. There's so much passion I have. The thing for me with Wyoming is that I have so much -- I believe brown and gold. I have so much belief in the state and who we are and what we're about, that I gotta continue to stay level headed in that and not let that brown and gold blood boil over and not just be so frothing at the mouth because I want it so bad for everybody else that doesn't understand it.

And to me, that's where I'll grow as a coach, is keep a little bit more level-headed demeanor in the idea that this is a long race. This is a long race. And you're going to get the guys in there that bleed that brown and gold with you for a certain amount of time.

And I mean I really believe this about culture. It doesn't take four years to build culture, but it does take belief and a relentless amount of consistency showing up every single day and knowing what you're fighting for.

And then as a coach, you know, we're going to look back at all of our games that were one to two possessions and it's a lot like I said my first year at Missouri Western where we



lost six games by two possessions or less. I'm going to sit there as a coach and say, all right, where could you have done a better job managing the game or creating shots. Could it have happened? Did we have the capability? Did our players have the awareness or recognition to maybe go make a play? Or could I have put them in a better situation?

You gotta objectively evaluate yourself. You gotta objectively evaluate your staff, and you gotta always make hard decisions in the off season to make sure that you continually move yourself and your program forward. Those are the things that have to happen.

Q. So we saw glimpses of what we saw in year one, glimpses of greatness in building a program. What can the brown and gold expect in year two of the Sundance Wicks coach narrative?

COACH WICKS: Well, one thing for sure -- and this is my college coach, Don Meyer, instilled this in me -- is the value of a possession. Going forward, we had too many wasted possessions this year. Lopsided assisted turnover ratio.

And then to me, I didn't see enough blood. Okay. I didn't see enough blood on the floor. I didn't see enough skinned knees. I didn't see enough loose balls. I didn't see enough charges taken. I didn't see any broken noses. I didn't see any blood flying around. Fight club taught us you can swallow a pint of blood before you get sick. Fight club taught us that.

For me, I want to see more of that gritty competitive nature where you just look up and that's -- you talk about legends. Legends are made because they see the guy walk up and they're like, oh my gosh, what happened right there? How did that happen? And you're sitting there and he checks back into the game and he's got two things up his nose and he's got scratches on his face, his head is taped up, and you're sitting there like, that guy's a real guy. That's a cowboy-tough dude. And like going forward, like, that's what you're going to see. You're going to see some of that relentlessly competitive stuff that kind of mirrors who I am.

And at first, you're going to be like, wow, that's a little wild, but then you're going to be like, this is what we expect. It's how we gotta be different. We have to be different that way. The value of possession and the understanding that we're going to be extremely gritty, competitive competency, competitive resilience and competitive character. It always starts with competitiveness for us.

So that's what people are going to see, and they're going to laugh right now, but come back here next year, two

years from now, you're going to be like that Wyoming team is vastly different than year one team. I'm extremely grateful for the year one team, but we didn't have enough time to get into the point of what that really feels like.

Q. Sunny, you mentioned, obviously, the two-possession games all year. A lot of these guys won't be back next year, but do you feel like they kind of set the standard for this program and what they did at halftime tonight being able to fight back like they did?

COACH WICKS: In life you just gotta be able to compete all the time. Gotta wake up every single day -- talk about 4:30 am. I know I have to change my entire lifestyle around my kids. My wife gets up earlier than I do. You think I'm crazy? She's crazier than me. And you'll never know that, because she's a stone-cold killer by looking at her face. Shows no emotion. She'd be great in Vegas, got a great poker face. But she's up every single day kicking butt.

And to me, what they're going to lay the foundation of is how to be competitive and be in every game. Then you gotta be competitive and you gotta go finish the job. I think the thing that we lacked a little bit more -- I'm just going to continue to harp on this -- two things really important to me, ultra competitive and ultra connected. Want to be the most competitive team on the schedule, and I want to be the most connected team.

And I thought we got to the point of being a competitive team on the schedule all the time. I think we lacked in the connection. And that falls on me as a leader. I have to do a better job of making sure our team is ultra connected so that in those moments, we don't flinch. We don't break, and that is the standard going forward.

And so we can lose these games. We can't learn these lessons. We can't lose these lessons that we're learning throughout this process. But for me, the lesson is continually doubling down on being the most connected team on the schedule. I got a thing on my desk right here. You walk into my office and it says, team attitude, team attitude. If you always have a team attitude, you're always a team player. To me, that goes a long ways to have that team attitude. It's always about the team and how can we serve each other, how can we stay connected.

And that's going to be the driving factor for us as a staff going into the off season. I know we're relentlessly competitive, but we need to be insanely connected.

MODERATOR: Okay. Thank you for your time, Coach.



