



## MEN'S BASKETBALL POSTGAME CONFERENCE

K-State 61, Iowa State 55 | February 18, 2023

### HEAD COACH JEROME TANG

#### *Opening statement...*

"First of all, just want to thank the Lord for this opportunity. Man, blessed to do what I do and to work with these dudes. Life is never never easy, right? It's never smooth sailing or always an upward climb, you know the ups and downs. And in the summer, I told our staff let's find guys that we don't mind losing with and our guys have been great over the last few games. And you know when things didn't go our way and a lot of what didn't go our way really doesn't fall on their shoulders. It falls on me as the head coach and not giving them what they needed. And these last couple of days we did what we needed to do, gave rest and shortened our practices. You know that line in Miracle on Ice, 'Legs feed the wolves,' and that's what we didn't have the last few games, especially the Oklahoma game. I thought tonight we had legs because of how we prepared and actually more of what we didn't do, rather than what we did do. Second thing is our crowd was incredible, right? Like, I mean, I think y'all know this better than I do. But I think we lost a few Big 12 games in a row or something like that and maybe sprinkled in with a win here with the Florida and the TCU game. Sometimes you have fickle fans and they just show up when you're winning but man our students, I asked them to show up and they showed up and I couldn't be more proud of them and the energy that they gave us today propelled us to the win, because Iowa State did an incredible job. I don't think either one of us made shots tonight but our defense was there even when we were missing shots on both sides. And just another huge Big 12 game and this was a huge win for us as a team."

#### *On if he was pleased with the defensive intensity...*

"Yeah, you know, I didn't think at Texas Tech we played bad defense, for the most part, but we just turned it over a lot. And so it's hard to get stops when you get out in transition and outnumbered and so I thought our guys brought energy at Texas Tech. We just didn't have execution. And then at Oklahoma, we just didn't have legs. And so, we told them what we wanted to see it look like today and we gave them the rest that they needed so that they had legs and I thought our guys were locked in. I mean really, really gave us the chance to have a chance to win the game."

#### *On his message to the team at halftime...*

"It was just we've got to rebound the ball. They had more paint points than we did by like 10 and then we've got to make some shots. Like if we turn them over, we can get out and run and we'll get some good looks and we knew it was a 40 minute game. Nobody in the Big 12 really throws a knockout punch unless you're just not ready to play. We knew it was gonna be a 40 minute game and a grinder and our guys showed their maturity and their toughness."

#### *On staying together through this tough stretch of losses...*

"I mean, we worked really, really hard in the offseason and all of our goals are still ahead of us. Y'all and all our fans, everybody on the outside wants to win every game and then play like great, even when we win, 'Well so and so didn't play that well today, what do you think that was.' Shoot, we're just trying to win basketball games by one. If we win by one we're going to be really, really happy and some nights we're not gonna win and that's just part of being a competitor. The key is that you fight every night. And so it wasn't like we were just going to stop playing because things weren't going our way. You don't do that in life. These are life lessons more than basketball lessons that these guys are learning, that you've got to stay in it. Things aren't gonna go your way. And when you're a husband and you've got kids and you gotta get up and go to work, if you're sick, you still gotta get up and go to work. You don't get to stay at home and sleep and say I ain't feeling well, and those are the things that I hope that they're taking from this that's gonna help them. They're gonna get up and go to work and they're gonna come back home and when things are tough, they're not going to run, they're not going to stop, they're not going to quit. To me, that's the bigger lesson that I hope our guys are learning in all of this. And I mean, we've got a pretty good basketball team. We're gonna win a few more games and we're gonna be ready when the NCAA Tournament rolls around, and I don't know how it's gonna turn out but I know we're gonna compete."

### SENIOR GUARD MARKQUIS NOWELL

#### *On getting off to a good start in the second half...*

"It was very important because we know the first five minutes are important. And you know I told my guys we can't come out lackadaisical. We've got to come out with energy, and that's what we did."



*On the defensive performance...*

"It was a better defensive game. I felt like we played really good on the defensive side, keying in on certain guys. Rebounding, even though they got a lot of offensive rebounds we won the rebound battle by two. So credit my guys who were down there battling with [Osun] Osunniyi and the rest of the guys."

*On what Desi Sills brought today in the starting lineup...*

"He brings energy. He's been bringing energy since day one whether he was on a bench or now he's starting, so you get the same Desi. He's gonna come in, play hard, play like it's his last game. And today he gave us more space and gave us more driving lanes because he was out there. And you know he played well. You know that block was a big block. So you know, credit to him, that was a game changing play."

#### **SENIOR FORWARD KEYONTAE JOHNSON**

*On what teams are throwing at him ...*

"A lot of teams now are loading up when I try to drive and they bring two on me so it's leaving the opposite side of the court open which I was trying to throw it today. Just trust in my teammates to knock down shots. Just trying to take what the defense giving."

*On focusing on going 1-0...*

"He told us not to get complacent and just think that we already made the tournament and that we still have to win a lot of games coming up. So our main focus, we came up with two L's, big ones to start off a win streak back home. We took care of business today and now our next focus is coming in tomorrow and practicing and just getting ready for our next game against Baylor at home."

#### **SENIOR FORWARD ISMAEL MASSOUD**

*On being productive even when the shots aren't falling...*

"When I'm coming in the game, after sitting down you watch, you see what the game was missing and stuff like that. Whether it's making shots or not making shots like I was today, I just tried to do whatever it took to help my team win and make the guys here jobs easier. So whatever that was, I'll just try to do."

*On the emotions in the halftime locker room...*

"It's never good to be down at halftime especially at home, but that's why it's two halves. That first half we had to take what we could and learn from it and we felt like we were playing good defense but they were having too many points in the paint and they're getting second chance opportunities. Credit to Quis [Markquis Nowell], he kind of challenged some of the big guys and stuff like that and just said you know, we've got to do better job rebounding and do our job, everyone got to do their job and not worried about doing other people's job and you know, if everyone locks in on that, on this team, I feel like the sky's the limit. So that's just what we tried to do."

#### **IOWA STATE HEAD COACH T.J. OTZELBERGER**

*On offense in the second half...*

"I would say more than offensively was the fact that we came out of the locker room in the second half, allowing them to get confidence, get back into the game. I felt like our defense in the first half was the reason we scored. And I felt like our defense in the second half was the reason we didn't score. So you know, we're the type of team that we know when we are stringing stops, our guys have more confidence that usually gets us better ball movement, gets us into the paint, and we weren't as intentional defensively so I feel like that just kind of throws our game off balance. I know that you can just look at the offense again and credit to them for the job they did defensively, pushing us out a little bit more. But it's, you know, them doing that job also plays into the fact that they're scoring the ball more. Especially early in the half and as a result they're feeling good and we're not and they're stretching us out more."

*On their shooting...*

"Yeah I mean, look, they are taking some challenged shots and I think more than anything, we've got to finish the plays at the rim for sure. It felt like there's a lot of plays out there that we needed to get to the foul line or finish. But I mean, those are guys that have led us in scoring all year and opportunities. So those are the guys that are, you know, we're encouraging to take those opportunities. So I believe that over time it'll work itself out for us and for the most part it has and we're going to continue to put the ball and the shots in those guys' hands and put our trust in them."



*On how K-State's defense pushed out their offense...*

"I mean, Jazz [Aljaz Kunc] played terrific last game. He had a great first half scoring wise tonight and so he's kind of had it going, so I'm sure he was a focus in halftime. You know what they talked about taking away threes as best as they can and trying to make sure they're disrupted. So it's not something we haven't seen before, where teams kind of try to come after us a little bit more and we've got to just, like I said, as much there's things on offense that are going to be challenges at times. But when we're getting stops you know, I feel like our confidence and our ball movement offensively works so guys know how important that is. So you know credit to them for putting that focus on trying to make it harder on Jazz [Kunc] and at the same time I feel pretty good. If we're defending the same way we did in the first half, we got the opportunities we needed."

*On playing without Caleb Grill...*

"Yeah, I think it throws our balance of equilibrium off a little bit that we built over the course of the season. When our team is playing our best you usually look at the box score 12, 12, 14, 8 and you know, now it's a little more challenging in that way, other guys stepping up is going to be important. So at the end of the day, we've got to do what's right for Caleb, first and foremost, to make sure that he plays when he's healthy and can play the way he needs to play. If he can't, we have no choice but to adjust and regroup and do what we can."

#### **SENIOR FORWARD ALJAZ KUNC**

*On frustrations in the second half...*

"Well, obviously it's frustrating, especially because the first half that we put together. But basketball is two halves, forty minutes, and we got to make sure that when we come out of the locker room for the second half we bring the same energy we do for the start of the game, but it's a quick turnaround to get back home and another game on Tuesday."

