



MOUNTAINEER BASKETBALL

[WVUSPORTS.COM](#)

PO BOX 877 // MORGANTOWN, WV 26507-0877 // 304.293.2821 PHONE

West Virginia vs. Kansas State March 4, 2023 Postgame Quotes

West Virginia head coach Bob Huggins

On responding to being down 8-0 early in the game

(The timeout) was just setting them up. It seemed like they came out with a little more energy than we did. We took some bad shots. We got it turned, and that's the important thing.

On the offensive improvement into the game

That was pretty much the focus at halftime - stop turning the ball over. I think the majority of their points in the first half came off of our turnovers or our turnovers led to their scoring in the first half.

On the team's growth from the last time they faced Kansas State

We're a lot better, and they're a lot better. You go through this league, you better get better. We've gotten a lot better. Our older guys have really stepped up. I just sat in there with our boosters. It's new and different for everybody. You can get guys out of the portal. You can get junior college guys like we went and got (senior forward) Jimmy Bell (Jr.). You can take transfers, and you can take freshmen. To put all of those guys together, I wanted to take at least a freshman that could grow with us, and he has. This is different. It's a whole lot different than what any of us have been used to.

On the seniors' leadership this season

(Fifth-year senior guard Kedrian Johnson) Keddy has been fantastic. (Fifth-year senior forward) Emmitt (Matthews Jr.) took a step back a little bit, having left and come back. Then he became a little bit more comfortable. He's a great leader. (Fifth-year senior guard) Erik (Stevenson) is going to lead whether it's the right thing or not. He is that guy. Those guys have been terrific, and they've gotten better and better and better. I think they've been forced to grow because of the things that we continue to put on their backs, and really, you don't have any choice. You're not going to do that with freshmen. This is the culmination of being able to put things together.

On what Erik Stevenson has done in the past five games

Erik struggled to make shots for a while, and Erik has a bad foot as well. I think guys started depending more on him, and he felt that they were depending more on him. I think you play a little looser. He does not have a problem playing loose the way it is. Those other guys have been great encouragement to him, as well as him to them. I think they've helped Erik more than anyone else has. Just those guys saying, 'Hey man, we're depending on you,' that goes a long way.

On how his patience was tested this year

I never think about those things. What I think about is the change that's happened in our game. You just don't go out and recruit guys now. You have to almost recruit them in layers. Then the hard part is getting those layers to come together and to understand not just who they are playing with, but understand what I'm trying to get them to do and what our staff is trying to get them to do. Now that's harder, particularly when you're bringing in portal guys who have played. Like Erik, this is his fourth or fifth school. He has gone through a basketball culture at each school, and I think it's only natural that sometimes there are some things that pop in his head, and I'm like where did that come from. Obviously, he has been through a lot. He has been through a lot basketball-wise and

terminology and execution of different things. What do you do? Do you curl screens? Do you slip screens? Do you reject screens? What am I supposed to do in this situation? He has really grown. I think it's made him a better player.

Kansas State Head Coach Jerome Tang

Opening Statement

First of all, I want to give credit to West Virginia, especially those seniors. It's always tough on Senior Night because some guys try to do too much and some guys try not to do too much. Early, we were able to jump on them, but they settled down and played like how seniors on senior night are supposed to play. Credit to them and what they were able to do, especially in the second half. We couldn't guard them. They were really good, so credit to (West Virginia) coach (Bob) Huggins and those guys. I'm thankful for my team and the conference record we've been able to compile. We knew this would be tough, especially without (senior guard) Desi (Sills) today, but I was very proud of our effort. I'm looking forward to the Big 12 Tournament.

On the impact of Desi Sills not playing

Defensively, ball-handling, being able to run certain things. Last few games or so, we had gotten into a really good rotation of subbing and things that we thought we'd be effective with both on the offensive end, and this just changed everything. It was a good learning experience, though. Some things happened out there that haven't happened during the last five games that are things we can address and be ready and more prepared for the next time. He'll be back for the Big 12 Tournament.

On the difficulty in defending WVU's scorers

First of all, they turned us over 20 times and out in transition, there's no defense for transition. Live ball turnovers — there's not any defense for that. In their home wins, they've made 23 free throws, and tonight they made 22. There's no defense at the free-throw line. When (West Virginia fifth-year senior guard Erik) Stevenson decides he's going to rise up over the top of you and drill shots the way he was, it makes it hard.

On using this game as preparation for the Big 12 Tournament

I know we (both) wanted to win the game. (For WVU) not only because it's senior night, but because people are saying they're on the bubble. That's everybody outside of the Big 12 who says there's a Big 12 team on the bubble, because any team in our league is an NCAA Tournament team and can win games in the NCAA Tournament. There's nothing like it. This is my 20th year in this league. It's never been this good from top to bottom. Unfortunately, we beat each other up. I'm not positive, but I think they had the top strength-of-schedule, non-conference wise. Pittsburgh is tied for first in the ACC, and they beat them by 30. Alabama lost at OU by 30. We just have really good teams in our league. They had motivation for what they wanted to do today. I always tell the team, where we want to go, we call that place the fire. Everybody wants the trophy and the confetti to fall, but you have to think, what does it look like 20 minutes before the trophy ceremony and the confetti falls. That's a place of fire. It's chaotic. The crowd is going crazy. You have to try and communicate. It's a tough situation to be in, and you have to be able to be calm in those tough situations. It was great because we hadn't been on the road in a minute, so now we have some things we can go back and work on. They can learn a bit better about what it means to be in that place of fire.