

March 21, 2013



Saint Louis – 64
New Mexico State – 44

An interview with:



THE MODERATOR: We are joined now by interim head coach Jim Crews and student-athletes Dwayne Evans, a junior forward, and Cody Ellis, a senior forward.

COACH CREWS: Well, I thought our defense was very, very good from the start. We had a little bit of lapse maybe to start the second half.

They certainly put a lot of pressure on us from rebounding, they're one of the top 20 rebounding teams in the country. They've got great desire and great length and quick off their feet, which is certainly difficult to defend. And we probably gave up more offensive rebounds tonight than we have all year.

With that being said, I thought we were good defensively. I thought that generated some offense for us, and kind of a typical -- these two guys played very, very well, but kind of a typical game for us, in terms of everybody contributed, guys got -- I know Dwayne got one or two buckets because someone was physically posting or ran the floor. Actually Cody had one, too, when he hit that big second jumper, because somebody was posting inside and gave him a pocket.

I was happy for Cory, that was great for a senior to play like Cory has tonight. And he opened up some things. He was good offensively and defensively. We're pleased. It's hard to win a

game. So we were able to get that done today and look forward to the challenge Saturday.

Q. Dwayne, talk about the importance, again, of this first win, knowing that last year you guys unfortunately had your season ended sooner than you would have liked.

DWAYNE EVANS: Yeah, coming into this game Coach talked a lot about just not being happy to be here, and we were here to win games. I think that was the difference in last year, because we weren't experienced. After getting here last year, I think we had different expectations this year.

Q. Dwayne, talk about the end of the first half, you kind of kept getting open from about the free throw line and the rhythm of getting into the offense and scoring.

DWAYNE EVANS: That's just where the gap was in the defense. They ran a zone and obviously had the big kid in the middle trying to clog things up, I was right outside of his reach and I never really adjusted. The shot was there, so I just kept taking it.

Q. Dwayne, just kind of picking up on that last question. A lot was made going into the game about how you guys would go against the big guy in the middle. How difficult was it for him to guard you and sort of find your pockets in the defense there?

DWAYNE EVANS: Well, I mean, to answer that, I don't think it was really just me. It was really all five guys just being in the right spots, opening up a bunch of things. Cody played well obviously down low and hitting shots on the wing and Cory came up huge for us. He had his work cut out because we have a lot of guys that can do a lot of different things.

Q. Cody, talk about how it was for you going up against their size, overall. I think there were some points you guys had to alter

or think about not taking because of their size.

CODY ELLIS: Oh, I mean, you know, you take the big 7-5 kid out of there and they're still a really tall team. Definitely one of the taller teams we faced even without him.

They did do a good job of contesting some of our shots, but I think our ball movement in the end got the best of them.

Q. Dwayne, 11 for 16 from the floor, big scoring night. Has to be like a dream come true on the NCAA stage. Tell me what you were thinking and what a great game you've had offensively. 11 out of 16 says something about you.

DWAYNE EVANS: Yeah, I was getting really open shots. And once you get rolling, shots just come very easy. Every shot that leaves your hand you expect to go in. It was fun playing out there today, it really was.

Q. Their coach was talking about Cody or -- either one of you can take this -- they were talking about their two sophomore point guards and your pressure on the ball really disrupted them. Was that kind of the key to your defensive performance, just your guards on the ball against less experienced players?

CODY ELLIS: That was definitely a part of it. Big, big thing about our defense is all five guys defending. And our guys did a great job of putting pressure on the ball. And our help side did a good job when they got in the lane and making them make a decision. And we got a couple of good turnovers off of that.

Q. Those of us here have never seen these teams in person, a lot of us came to watch the big guy from New Mexico State. How much of your game plan revolved around him and what would you say about your performance against him today?

COACH CREWS: I thought we were very good against him. When you start watching film, our assistants had seen film, and the first thing they said is don't just pay attention to him. Because human nature is, because he's such a big, young guy is you keep looking at him because you're amazed. Not at how big he is, but the things he's capable of doing and how he's improved. I have tremendous respect for that guy.

We wanted to tell our guys, hey, just be smart against them. It's not us against them.

They've got other guys, as Cody said, not only long, but they're very good and very quick. So it was going to be a team situation.

We didn't want the focus being on ways to manipulate his situation. We wanted to keep running our things and fall into whatever shots, posts, drive, offensive rebounds with that.

But human nature is -- and we made sure we showed the kids right away, just how big he is, because he just gets your attention. But we didn't want the attention to be totally on him, not even close.

Q. You talked a little about Cory there, but with his quickness, his ability under the basket, once you guys got space down there, a good place for Cory to be able to do stuff?

COACH CREWS: Yeah, the big kid really does a great job of disciplining himself and staying close to the bucket.

The only thing we mentioned is for the most part we wanted to play two against one against him, not one against one, because if you play one and one, he's so long, and he still blocked a bunch of shots. And he's disciplined with that. But if you can get him to move just a little bit up or a little bit to the side it opens things up underneath, we felt, at times.

And other guys got him the ball with that in terms of attracting him and being able to dish off to him for him to complete the play. But you've still got to be quick, because he still could get there. Cory was really quick off his feet today getting the ball in the bucket.

Q. I believe 28 wins now is a new school record. Given everything this team has gone through off the court, to be right back where you were last year in the round of 32, what does it say about this team?

COACH CREWS: Well, from my standpoint, which is different from most people's, because others enjoy watching them play and so forth. The fans have been great, they've supported these kids, because they play good basketball, supported these kids because of difficult situations.

But what's really pleased me is it's not what you do, it's what you are. And these guys, what they are has really grown and matured and been good leaders, and at their stage of life that's what you really want guys to be. And that's what's been rewarding from my standpoint.

Yeah, fantastic, we're in the NCAA, that's awesome. Win a championship, that's absolutely awesome. But the maturity and the development that these guys have had, and just who they are and becoming, that's pretty cool from my standpoint.

Q. The question was asked of the players, your ball pressure on their two sophomore guards, it seemed like that really kind of swung things in your favor because that also made it tough for them to get the ball down low. Is that where it all started?

COACH CREWS: The nature of the game, I think it always starts with the guards, both defensively and offensively. In terms of the pace offensively, if a guard comes in slow and throws a casual pass, then you've got problems in terms of rhythm and so forth.

Same thing from a defensive standpoint. The first line of defense, the other three guys see the backside of the guards. If they're given tremendous pressure, it not only helps you, but a motivational thing. It's the nature of how the game is built. And so that's key.

Our three guards that play at that position for the most part are quick guys and they've got good hands. It was good, they had a lot of deflections the first half, about at the 12-minute mark we only had one, and we mentioned that at the timeout and they picked it up and we got some good stuff generating from our defense through the offensive end. And that was good to see.

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