

NCAA 2015 Basketball Championship

Second/Third Rounds - Columbus, Ohio

Friday, March 20

Oklahoma 69 - Albany 60

Albany



**2015 BASKETBALL
CHAMPIONSHIP**

DIVISION I MEN'S

SECOND/THIRD ROUNDS

COLUMBUS, OHIO

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY, HOST



THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement from Coach Brown.

COACH BROWN: I'm proud of my basketball team. I thought we did a really good job competing against one of the best teams in the country. I felt coming in there was a chance we were going to be overmatched physically and athletically, especially in the front court. But, again, I thought we hung around. We hung around. And I would have liked to have had the opportunity to see what happened if Cousins missed that shot. We would have had the ball in our hands and off to the races. But you've got to credit Oklahoma. Very well coached team and they're a team that I know a lot of people expected to go deep in this tournament. So great year for my players. And we're just sad it had to end.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the players.

Q. You guys kind of hugged in the final second or so. You guys came into this program together. What was that moment like for you?

SAM ROWLEY: It was special. This whole season has been special in good and bad ways. Obviously coming in with Pete we've got a bit of a special relationship. Not to keep using the word special. But we've been through a lot this year. We've become a lot closer for it. So it's a shame obviously that the season had to end. We've accomplished a lot. I think we've accomplished more off the court than on the court. These are guys that I'll be friends with forever. And Pete is just -- he's my best friend. So it's as simple as that. It was a special moment for me.

PETER HOOLEY: I think I just want to tell him how proud I was of him, just the way he's grown over the last four years. And he's ended up being not only one of the best to play for Albany but one of the best guys to ever be around. He was always there whenever I fell down he picked me back up. It would be nice to get another one for him. But he's going to go on to bigger and better things. Just to let him know how proud I was.

Q. Peter, talk about out there, especially in the second half. You guys got close a couple of times, just couldn't get over the hump. Just how

frustrating was that?

PETER HOOLEY: It's very frustrating. I think especially with these kind of games, when you're playing such a big school you have to make sure that as you're making your little run, when you get within six or seven, just one more shot will help. As Coach said, if we got within three or four, maybe the game would have swung different. Maybe they would have got nervous or something. We always just hung around and we kept preaching to the guys, hang around and we'll be okay. Cousins doesn't hit that shot, we get lucky on some of the missed shots we had, and we might be in a different position right now. We just had to stay the course and a couple more makes down the end and we might have been okay.

Q. Sam, you knew they had size but was it as physical down low as you expected or even more than you expected?

SAM ROWLEY: It was exactly what we expected. We knew they were not just physical. They were tough and they were pretty skilled. So we were battling down there for the whole game. You saw Mike get five fouls. It was tough in that respect. And they did a tremendous job of just being a presence down there. And that hurt us during the game. And they were bigger, they were stronger and I thought in the first half they were tougher. Second half I thought we played well. I thought we managed to sort of limit them. But that was one of the differences in the game for sure.

Q. Peter, usual, season just ended a couple of minutes ago but can you put it in perspective what you've been through, or is that going to take time?

PETER HOOLEY: I think just the fact that we can still call ourselves champions, I think I wanted this team to win our conference more than anything. I think they deserved it, the way they battled through adversity. Especially when I went home. The way they came together as a group is something I never could say thank you enough for, the way they embraced me when I came back. And I'll tell you, it was one of the toughest years for me, obviously. And I think the guys can attest it was tough for them, too. That's how close we were. I think as soon as we stepped on the court preseason this group just jelled together more so than I've ever been a part of. One through 15 we love each other and obviously this guy next to me I love more than I tell most people. But I'll tell you what, this group

I couldn't be more proud of them. Even though the season is over, I think a lot of these guys are going to be ready and hungry to come back for more.

Q. Sam, the last three years you guys have come pretty close to the big teams, what do you think you guys would have needed to get over the hump?

SAM ROWLEY: I think especially in the first half, it just came down to sort of 50/50 balls, toughness plays that we weren't getting. And every time we seemed to get close, it seemed like they made a shot to hold us back a little bit. So I thought we played well today. I thought we gave it our all. But to beat these teams you need to play nearly a perfect game, and unfortunately we didn't do that tonight, nor did we do it the last year or the year before.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Questions for Coach.

Q. Coach, you talked a couple times this year about how you don't like playing zone but you kind of maybe had to play some zone against them tonight. It did seem to give them some trouble. What was working with that 3-2?

COACH BROWN: You know, you have to pick and choose your poison I guess. And playing man-to-man, you know, that's how we play at Albany. And they were just getting the ball inside too easy to Thomas. We tried to double once or twice. They made us pay. So the zone forced them to stand a little bit. It was a little difficult to get the ball inside to their big guys. The concern with the zone is when a shot goes up, we have to rebound the ball. That's the biggest issue. We were overmatched physically and athletically, especially in the front court. Sam is as good as any player they have in the front court, but he's giving up four inches and 40 to 50 pounds on those guys. And whoever was playing the 5 spot for us was going to be undersized. And over a 40-minute game, that really wears on you. And we can't simulate that in a practice setting, we really can't. So let's face it, Oklahoma is the better basketball team. We only needed to be the better basketball team for one night. We weren't tonight. So the better team won tonight. And they have a chance to go deep in this tournament. I wish we would have shot the ball probably a little bit better. I think the result might have been a little different. I thought we got some good looks. And I think our guys were amazed and I think they thought I was crazy because I kept telling them: Let it fly. Let it fly. I told Sam if you get an open 3 shoot it. He was thinking, where has this coach been the past four years? But all kidding aside, what's so tough is I'm not going to be able to coach that kid anymore. There's not a finer representative of our conference, of our university and our program, than Sam Rowley. Peter Hooley is not far behind, and I'm

very fortunate I get to coach kids like that. I said it the other day, I can listen to those two guys talk all day, all night. So you've got a proud coach right here. And somebody asked me how I'm going to replace Sam. Let Sam graduate first. Let me be around him until at least May. I'll continue to become a smarter coach and smarter man just hanging around Sam. But like I said proud of the group. We led this conference from the opening day until the end. We were fortunate enough to be able to host games and the conference tournament. We ended up winning our league, which is a good league. The America East Conference is a good league with some good coaches and some up and coming programs. It's been a really good year and a fun ride.

Q. Could you talk about the adjustments you guys had to make with Mike in foul trouble and Greig playing more than he has lately?

COACH BROWN: Yeah, I mean, it's hard. I could sit there and let Mike sit on the bench deep into the second half. But we gotta find a way to win that game. So we gotta go with the guys that got us here. And I told Mike when we started the second half, if you fouled out, five minutes in, you foul out. I can't have you out there playing passive. We had to win this game. We had to ride the horses. And that's really what it was. Mike fouled out. Greig had to play extended minutes. We thought about going small, maybe playing Dallas at the 4. But we gotta rebound the ball. We've got to have some big bodies up there, Thomas and Spangler are big.

Q. TaShawn Thomas had such a big game for them, 35 inside. Talk about what he did to you?

COACH BROWN: He's a terrific player. If I'm not mistaken, he was a first-team all conference player at Houston last year. If I'm not mistaken he was their leading scorer, leading rebounder. He's terrific. When you have the player of the year in your league in Hield, who was tremendous in the Big 12, arguably the best league in the country. And then you transfer like Thomas, who if he stayed in Houston would have been up for player of the year in that league. Then you got guys like and Spangler and Cousins and Woodard. They've got some big problems. They're talented, well coached. And it would not surprise me if they make a deep run in this tournament.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.