

Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday March 9, 2017

Kim Anderson Kevin Puryear Cullen VanLeer Miss. State

Missouri - 86, Auburn - 83

THE MODERATOR: We're going to ask Coach Anderson for some general thoughts on the game and take questions just for the two student-athletes. And then we'll excuse them back to the locker room, which is open now, by the way, and then we'll finish up with questions for Coach Anderson. Also, reminder that video is not permitted in this room. In you want video, you can secure it from the video distribution area over to my right.

Coach Anderson.

COACH KIM ANDERSON: Well, first of all, a tremendous basketball game. Just a great college basketball game. And I am, you know, really, really proud of our guys. We've had so many games, not maybe that came down to that, to a big shot at the end, but so many games that we needed a big shot at a certain time and we just didn't get it. We got it tonight, got two, three of them.

I'm really proud of this team. They continue to fight. They fought all year. And I thought we got some stops at the end that we needed, obviously, and then Kev, calling Frankie, made some big shots. Happy to be playing another day, happy to have another day to be the coach of Mizzou.

THE MODERATOR: Take the questions for Kevin or Cullen.

Q. Take us through two plays. First the rebound in regulation and obviously the shot and, I mean, I guess, actually I'll ask you which one was bigger.

KEVIN PURYEAR: You know, I'd say Frankie's was definitely big. Without Frankie's shot, we wouldn't have gotten the opportunity. You shot that, right? You shot that 3?



CULLEN VANLEER: Frankie shot it.

KEVIN PURYEAR: I'm sorry. Cullen shot the ball. And you know, I didn't get boxed out and the ball was just in the air, so I went up and grabbed it and turned to my left and Frankie was right there wide open. And it was kind of like I was having flashbacks because at Ole Miss, the same misses happened. I kicked it out to him, and, you know, he knocked down a big shot.

Q. KP, when is the last time you hit a game winner like that?

KEVIN PURYEAR: I can't even tell you. Fourth grade. Maybe Nationals, maybe.

Q. Cullen, I think you guys had a new season high in 3-pointers made this game. What was working for you guys behind the arc today?

CULLEN VANLEER: I mean, shots just were falling tonight. We came prepared like we do every other game. Had real good mental focus. We started off shooting the ball good and carried over throughout the whole entire game.

Q. For both of you guys, just the emotion of the last few minutes. I mean, Coach is hugging Terrence, and with five minutes left and 26 seconds left, looks like that's about it. What was the emotion like in the last 10, 15 minutes?

THE MODERATOR: Kevin, take that first.

KEVIN PURYEAR: Anybody knows anything can happen in March. We kept fighting, stuck with the game plan. Got some stops and key rebounds down the stretch. Hit some big shots.

I can honestly say our confidence and poise never wavered in this game. We just stuck with it, stuck with the process and, you know, down the stretch of the season, we've had games where those type of shots haven't fallen in. And today all of our hard work in the gym paid off, and we knocked down those big shots down the stretch.

THE MODERATOR: Same for Cullen.

CULLEN VANLEER: When Terrence came out with his fouls, I said we're not done yet. We don't need to be doing that. Then even with the time left, I was in the

bench still believing. We're here, we're still going to get it. Then we just kept staying the course, and all the hard work did pay off.

Q. For both you guys. What was the emotion like playing for Coach Anderson, knowing it could be his last game? Seemed like at times you guys were feisty, but you weren't necessarily channeling it. You got a technical, KP. Another flagrant. You were trying to find a way to harness the emotion. What happened in the second half and how much of playing for Coach Anderson was there tonight?

CULLEN VANLEER: I mean, yeah, from the get-go we've been -- since Monday we've been focusing, we've been -- we said we want this game bad for Coach A. We wanted to keep going. And like KP said earlier, it's March, anything can happen. We feel like we've been close in all of our games pretty much this season. So hopefully we can continue to stay focused and go day by day and game by game.

THE MODERATOR: Same question.

KEVIN PURYEAR: I think we did a better job of harnessing that aggression in the second half. We kind of, you know, Russ and myself, kind of talked amongst ourselves in the locker room saying of course it's an emotional game and the emotion is high and intensity is high. We forgot to play intense without all the antics and getting caught up in technicals and all that other stuff. I think we did a great job of staying poised and confident down the stretch.

Q. For either one of you, regardless of what happens later on this week, does a win like this, you know, help set you guys up down the future just in terms of like you say, KP, playing with your emotions in check and realizing to stay cool under pressure and when things get pretty tense?

KEVIN PURYEAR: For sure. Poise is extremely important, especially for winning big games. And, you know, in our close games, I kind of feel like down the stretch, we're kind of had, you know, lot of our composure a little bit. And I think today we all banded together and united. These are my brothers. And I spend almost every day with them. And I love them more than anything, and I love Coach A more than anything. And our whole staff, you know. And we just fought for each other.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you. We'll excuse you back to the locker room. You can return. We will continue on with Coach Anderson. If you have a question for Coach, raise your hand and we'll get a floor mike to you.

Q. Kim, you don't strike me as a guy who would,

you know, motivate your team with your last game or anything. Did you talk to them much about it, or did any of them say anything to you about the possibility before the game?

COACH KIM ANDERSON: You know, we obviously talked about it last week when I told them, but other than that, we really -- we really haven't. We really haven't discussed it. You know, it was pretty much business as usual on Monday. And, you know, we came here Monday night. But these guys have been that way all year. I mean, you know, we just -- they prepared well almost every game. And, you know, for me it's great, it's great to see them have success and to make those shots at the end that, you know, like I said, we missed maybe not game winning shots, but we've missed important shots down the stretch and tonight we made some.

Q. Kim, what was that moment like with Terrence when he fouled out? The game was in a different place at that point than it was when it ended. What were your thoughts and that embrace like?

COACH KIM ANDERSON: I mean, it was just -- you know, it was a lot of emotion in all this. I mean, you know, these guys have been good and, you know, just told me he loved me and, you know, bunch of these guys have been that way.

So, if I would have said, hey, Coach, we still got some game left, because we hugged there for quite awhile. I said, "Hell, I thought you wanted to hug longer."

Special moment.

Q. Obviously the look that Frankie got, almost identical play to Mississippi. First of all, the symmetry there with that being the day you were told you wouldn't be back. Did it cross your mind when that play happens, are you having flashbacks that Mississippi game when he hits the shot? How good was it to see Frankie come through in a moment like that?

COACH KIM ANDERSON: I wasn't having any flashbacks. I was just -- I was really happy that he made it, because he had an open look at Mississippi and didn't get it down and he's worked so hard, he's gotten so much better as a player. You know, he's become a more complete player. And so it's great to see him knock it down.

Q. Kim, I'm sure you've had some pretty fun runs at Central Missouri and even here, but how much fun was tonight given the circumstances?

COACH KIM ANDERSON: You know, it was fun. The game was fun. If we would have lost the game, I would have said the game was fun. I mean, I'm going to have fun, you know, and these guys have been pretty loose.

You know, they really have. They've worked hard the last couple of days, but they've been loose, too. And, you know, I look at these stats and I see how many 3-point shots we shot tonight, wow. At least we made some, because we certainly had some times this year where we had 16 for 34 was like 4 for 34.

So you know, I think our guys just stepped up and they wanted to play longer and they were able -- they beat a good team now. This is a good team. Auburn is a good basketball team. We did a much better job defensively tonight than we did four, five days ago.

Q. Kim, you called a timeout before the last possession. Were you tempted at all to let them play it out? What did you draw up?

COACH KIM ANDERSON: I was. I was tempted and -- you know, setting something up always gives the defense a chance to do something, too. But we drew up a play, actually to rope KP down to the post and have Cullen pop up, and obviously it didn't work, which most of them don't. Mostly players that get things done.

And we were fortunate to get a good look. The ball bounced our way and KP knocked it down.

Q. Kim, you sort of got that moment after the game, the band is playing, the crowd is cheering, you're pumping your fist as you run off the floor. What did that mean to you?

COACH KIM ANDERSON: Well, I don't know. Are you from Columbia? It's been a tough three years, and so sometimes we all get caught up in the emotion of the moment. But I was just happy that these guys could win a game like this, because I've been really lucky this year. Obviously I've been unlucky at the end, but I was lucky to coach a group like this.

You know, we didn't win enough games for me to keep my job, but they never -- they were great. And so, you know, I think sometimes I get -- I'm a pretty competitive guy, and sometimes you get caught up in it. I got a little caught up in it at the end. I probably had some words I probably shouldn't have, but what are they going to do to me? (Laughter.)

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

COACH KIM ANDERSON: Thank you. Thank y'all. Have a good evening. See you tomorrow.