
OKLAHOMA BASKETBALL

OKLAHOMA 97, UTSA 85 DECEMBER 4, 2017 • OKLAHOMA POSTGAME QUOTES

OKLAHOMA HEAD COACH LON KRUGER

Opening statement:

"Another good battle most of the way. They kept doing what they needed to stay within reach. There are things we've got to do a better job with. They had a great plan, and we've got to come out and do a little better for 40 minutes than we did tonight"

On the offensive movement:

"We had shots. They weren't quite as good of shots that we've been getting, but UTSA did a good job, and I think we didn't move the ball quite as well as we've done prior. We'll get back and watch some tape, and improve in all those areas. We've got to keep getting better."

On focus to get to the rim in the second half:

"Took a bunch of threes in the first half, and not all of them were bad shots at all, but you know when you're not making them then you've got to try and get inside a little bit. I thought we did that in the second half and made some plays."

On coming back strong on the boards in the second half:

"Rebounding is going to be a big key. They got a lot of loose balls and long rebounds in the first half, and we did a better job in the second half. We have to continue to work on that, but they whipped us on the boards in the first half for sure."

On being out-rebounded by a smaller team:

"It shouldn't happen. Their scrappiness showed through and they picked up some balls that they just worked hard to get to. We've got to get better at keeping that from happening."

On the effort level:

"You always feel like you want to play harder and do things better. That won't ever change. This group gave a consistently good effort, but we've got to work to keep doing that."

On Trae keeping everyone engaged in the game:

"It's very important. Trae (Young) has obviously got the ability to score which is great, but he also finds people, and is very creative off of penetration. I think we're getting more and more comfortable as receivers moving and locating where we need to be, and he's getting more and more comfortable finding them. Through six or seven games, it keeps getting better."

On coaching against UTSA head coach Steve Henson:

"He's done a great job with his team. We've been together one way or another since '86. He's a terrific guy, (and I'm) so happy to see Jamuni (McNeace) and Coach Henson's relationship. It's very, very special, and Jamuni appreciates that so much because he was really the first guy from a recruiting standpoint that thought he could be doing what he is doing. Happy to see that, and other guys as well have a great appreciation for coach Henson."

On if he likes where the team is at right now:

"You always want to be farther along of course, but if you'd said in July or August that we were where we're at we'd probably feel OK with that. Most importantly, I think this group understands we've got to get a lot better, do things better, and they want to."

Thoughts on the USC matchup:

"I've caught them just a couple of times live on television, but haven't studied them a lot. I know they're very skilled, very talented – their inside guys are very talented. They've got a ton of guys who are very good. I'm anxious to watch more on them and get back to preparation."

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FRESHMAN GUARD TRAE YOUNG

On the physicality:

"No, they did a lot of gambling. They won on a couple of those gambles. I have to be more secure with the ball and not be too loose with it. I can't be losing the ball like that."

On getting things going:

"My shots weren't falling early on. Honestly, my shots weren't falling all night. But, yeah that shot definitely got it going a little bit for me and everybody else. I just wanted to be in attack mode all night, during the game I wanted to stretch the lead out so I was just trying to be more aggressive."

On the open shots:

"We're getting a lot of open shots. There's going to be a game where we're not missing. We're just not making our shots right now, but that's fine. We're getting good shots and good open looks so eventually they're going to start falling."

On not getting down when the team's missing shots:

"It's tough. When you're open, I feel like it's a lot harder to make an open shot instead of when you're contested because you're not supposed to miss when you're open. It's definitely tough, we're struggling at times with that, we'll make a good play and get open, but a few possessions later we may not get a good shot. We'll get better and start doing the right things."

On if he's wanted to play at the Staples Center:

"I mean, yeah, it definitely is. I've been blessed enough to be able to play in the Bulls arena, the Brooklyn Nets arena, obviously Portland, and now L.A. It's going to be fun. That's a legendary place to play. I've only seen the outside and all the statues. It's crazy because I'm still a freshman and getting able to do all this so it's going to be fun. I can't wait for it."

On if he's surprised with his play so far this season:

"To be honest, I'm not surprised. I feel like I put in so much work that I expected all of this to happen. The hard work I put in and the preparation, and my teammates around me being so good and helping me. But there's going to be some nights where I'm not going to put up the numbers I'm putting up right now, but that's okay. I'm still a freshman and I'm going to have nights like that. I'm excited about where I'm at right now and where my team's at right now, but we have a long way to go."

JUNIOR GUARD CHRISTIAN JAMES

On UTSA Coach Steve Henson having some insight on the Sooners:

"I guess you could say that, a little bit. Coach Kruger did a great job getting the game plan together, and we're just falling back on our teammates. Coach preaches moving the ball and making the right play, so I felt like we did that tonight. We got a lot of open looks."

On having inside guys that can score:

"It's a big help. Going inside and letting them do what they do helps create and helps us shoot from the outside. It helps everybody."

JUNIOR GUARD JAMUNI MCNEACE

On the second half:

"I started listening to (UTSA) Coach Henson, he was talking a little smack. I had to start playing a little tougher, they came out tough in the first half. We just tried to match that at the start of the second half."

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UTSA HEAD COACH STEVE HENSON

Opening statement:

"Oklahoma's got a really good team. These guys are scoring a ton of points – we knew that coming in. Our guys were excited about playing. That was our message to them, to our guys. We come into practice every day ready to get better, approach shootaround the right way, we'll have a chance to be a good team and we played a great team tonight and weren't quite ready to knock off the Sooners. I like the way they're pushing the ball, making good plays. They've got a lot of young players and they're going to keep getting better. I really appreciate Coach Kruger scheduling a big game for our guys. It was our fifth game in nine days, which wasn't ideal on our end of the scheduling part, but it was fun for our guys and fun to see so many people getting back here, former players, friends and family. A fun night with the exception of a result."

On coaching against his old team:

"It was a little awkward right when the game started but once it gets going, the emotions get involved and you just lock in on your team and coach. But, yeah, it was a little different standing on the other end looking down at Coach (Kruger) and Shep (director of operations Mike Shepherd) and all those other coaches, and we've been around for a long time."

On freshman guards Keaton Wallace and Jhivvan Jackson:

"Our two freshman guards have had the ability to put up big numbers. Keaton Wallace was named Conference USA Freshman of the Week for the second time today. He didn't have his best shooting night, but you can just tell when he's putting up the ball he's capable of putting up big numbers. They've kind of been going back and forth, one night Keaton (Wallace) has the big night, the next night, Jhivvan (Jackson) has a big night. We've got a lot of really, really good players, but there's not a lot of guys who can go get big numbers like they can, and they've been scorers their entire careers, and we're putting them in position to make plays – they don't have to be scoring the basketball – but to make plays. A lot of the stuff we're running goes through them and other guys have to feed off of that. Both those kids are going to have terrific careers for us."

On freshman guard Trae Young:

"The entire game plan, really, when you come in, we told our guys, 'They have a lot of really good players. Look on their stat sheet and they've got guys shooting 75 percent,' but it starts with how are you going to defend Trae (Young) when he has the ball in his hands. At times, I liked some of the things we did, at times he blew by us and he didn't shoot the three the way he's capable of, but otherwise, he did what he normally does – scored points and set other people up. Sometimes we sent two defenders at him and he just picked us apart for layups. He's a handful. He's a handful in the open court and he's too quick to really trap aggressively in our opinion, anyway, and you can't leave him out there one-on-one, either. Terrific player, he's been doing a lot of good things. He's been getting better, I think, when you watch film, he's steadily improving and a lot of good players around him that are starting to figure out where to find their spots."

On his bond with Sooners' junior center Jamuni McNeace:

"I've known Jamuni (McNeace) a long time, obviously, recruiting him coming out of high school. Everyone knows his potential. He's such a talented, natural player. He's made steady, very, very steady progress his whole career. We knew when he came here that he'd be a guy that initially might have some ups and downs, but he's gotten stronger, he's gotten better. It's all about his mindset. If he falls in love with the game and decides he wants to be a dominant player, I don't think there's any question he can be that ... It was great seeing him. He's a great kid."
