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Arizona - 77
Memphis - 75

An interview with:



THE MODERATOR: We have with us the victorious Arizona Wildcats. Coach, an opening statement and then questions for the student-athletes.

COACH MILLER: We're very excited about advancing. As exciting as it is to be a part of the NCAA Tournament, it's a thousand fold more exciting to be able to advance. That was our goal when we came here.

The fact that we had a 5 seed allows you to maybe get the most opportunity to do that in our case. And I don't necessarily think we played our best game. I credit Memphis. They played extremely hard. They have a lot of very good young players. Their future is bright.

But we hung in there in a game where a lot of things went against us. Our resiliency, we stepped up at the end and made some big plays. Many times in this tournament that's what's required. It's not the style points that you get, but it's being able to finish the job and make big plays when they count the most, and obviously these three guys were responsible for several in the game.

Q. Wanted to ask if you could go through the play there where the ball comes off on the missed free throw and then ultimately blocking the shot?

DERRICK WILLIAMS: I knew there wasn't a lot of time left on the clock. They missed the free throw, and Will Coleman is a big guy. It took two people to box him out. So he got his hand. He tipped the ball to Wesley, the guy that I was next to. At one point he was wide open, so I knew he wasn't going to shot fake because there wasn't enough time on the clock.

So I just went up and tried to make a hard play on the ball like coach always tells us to do. And good thing it wasn't a foul.

Q. Did it feel like the Washington home game there at the end?

DERRICK WILLIAMS: Yeah, absolutely. The last two times we actually played Washington it came down to a couple of points. They're a great team. They push the ball just like Washington, so we had firsthand experience playing them tonight. You know, they're a confident team when they get up early on you.

When you shut them down early and throughout the game, they're not the same team. They don't have that swagger about them, and I think that's what happened during the game. We got the crowd out of it and we executed down the stretch.

Q. That big three that you hit, can you take us through that and how it unfolded and were you hoping to get the ball?

LAMONT JONES: Yeah, in that situation I'm always hoping that I get the ball. But Derrick set a screen, and they switched off. The big guy was on me, and the clock was winding down. In my head I just said I have to make that shot, and that was the shot that I took. God willing, it went down.

Q. You said good thing it wasn't a foul. Apparently Wesley Witherspoon thought he was fouled. Did you think there was contact there or what happened?

DERRICK WILLIAMS: Honestly, I haven't

seen the replay yet. I'll be looking at it tonight. We'll watch it on TV. But honestly with a second or two left on the shot clock, most refs don't call that type of foul, especially when you're trying to make a hard play on the ball.

Earlier in the game they might have called it a foul just because he did fall on the ground. But late in the game most refs don't call that, that's why I went up so hard to try to block it and save the game.

Q. Can you compare and contrast that to the block you made at the end of the Washington game? What is the situation like? How did it come about?

DERRICK WILLIAMS: It's very similar to the one I had in Washington. I was help-side. Just like the Washington game, they inbounded the ball to Jamelle's man, and he tried to float it over the top. I saw him. I knew he was going to fake just like tonight. And I went and tried to get at the top before the ball's coming down.

So that's basically what happened tonight. I was coming from the weak side, just trying to make a hard play on the ball.

Q. What did they do to kind of take you out of the game, out of the flow offensively for a lot of the second half?

DERRICK WILLIAMS: Same thing, like I said a couple days ago, I knew they were going to do it point they were going to try to take me out of the game just like Cal did. They ran a box and one. I've never seen a box and one on a big man before. So coach is like stay in the corner and let the game come to you.

So that's what I did tonight. They went a box and one, triangle and two. They had different types of defenses to get me out of the game. They even put a smaller guard on me at points in the game. That's where they started off. I was surprised by that because normally you don't go to that, so your big guys have fouls.

But they had different defenses to try to get me frustrated and get me out of the game. Luckily my teammates hit good shots, big-time shots at the end of the shot clock.

COACH MILLER: The reason why I brought Jordin here, just for everybody's knowledge is we played 35 games. The only game we've ever played MoMo and Jordin together was tonight. We had Kyle Fogg who had four fouls and is working his way back out of an injury, and Kevin Parrom fouled out.

One of the reasons that we won, and a big reason is that Jordin played a position that he's never played in 35 games. And MoMo and him together I would say probably played about six key minutes in the second half and he did a great job. Just throw him a bone there and ask him a question.

Q. Jordin, can you talk a little about your contribution this is evening?

JORDIN MAYES: Well, coming down to the end I knew I had big free throws to make. Knowing that I struggled a lot this year on free throws I just wanted to have the confidence to know that when I was going to come to the line and it was coming down, I was going to hit them.

Q. When you're playing a Memphis team, in the first half they built a ten-point lead. In the second half they had a 13-0 run on you guys. Talk about weathering their storms and just maintaining?

LAMONT JONES: We've been in that situation before. We work on those situations in practice and we just have to have confidence, and we had a lot of confidence tonight in each other as a team and the coaching staff to get us back in the game. We just took it minute by minute, war by war. We made our fight back, and at the end of the first half we were up three. And we just came together, kept coming together as the game went on. Whether they were up or we were up, we just kept coming together closer and closer as a team. That's what helped us pull it out tonight.

Q. Each of you guys, if you could comment on facing Texas in the next round, and Derrick, you facing Tristan Thompson? Have you seen them much this year?

DERRICK WILLIAMS: Obviously, I've seen them this year. They've been on ESPN a lot this season. I know a couple of the players on their team. They have a great team. They're well-coached. They have good post players in Tristan, Gary, they have great post players and down low they have good guards as well. They're just a well-rounded team.

They have shooters in Jordan Hamilton, too. I know firsthand because I've been on his team since ninth, tenth grade. I've seen what he can do. Any night he can go for 30.

So if we come out tonight how we did, on

Sunday it could be a long night for us. They're a great team, and that's the reason why they were Top 5 at one point in the season. If we don't come to play, just like I said, it could be a long night. But I don't plan on that happening.

Q. It looked like your guards were pretty gassed when it was hard on the help-side defense and you weren't getting people over. It looked like your guards were really suffering out there trying to keep up with all the minutes they had to play?

COACH MILLER: Well, we were in foul trouble in our guard position. Kyle Fogg was in foul trouble. He had three fouls in the first half, and then we have Kevin Parrom with three fouls in the first half. That hasn't happened to us all season. That's why I made mention to Jordin. We had to put our best players out there and abandon ship, so to speak. And Jordin and MoMo playing together for that period of time helped us survive and move to the next round.

But Memphis has a pace and a way they play. We had some turnovers that really allowed them to get out in transition. I'd give our guys a lot of credit, because there were several moments in that game where if we didn't have resiliency on our side, we could have easily folded and lost and gone home. Part of why we were able to move forward here ask get to the second round is our conference.

Pac-10 had so many good teams and it's a round Robin conference. We've been in that same situation at Washington State. We've been in that same situation playing Washington at home. We were fortunate to have this type of experience in Los Angeles in the Pac-10 Tournament where we played three games in three days, including an overtime thriller that we lost on the last play of the game, like we won on the last play of the game here.

To me this team really relied on our conference, the different styles. It was more about being a tough-minded and sticking together team as opposed to how well we played. Because like Derrick had mentioned, first eight minutes of the game stage took us a little bit. We had some turnovers and didn't look right. But I'm really proud of our guys to be able to get through that period and leave with the victory.

Q. Just your thoughts on that last possession, fouling up three in the last seconds?



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COACH MILLER: Well, I'm the same guy that was in this tournament, it seems like 20 years ago, but for our staff it seems like a week ago where we lost to Greg Oden's Ohio State team in a similar play, second round of the tournament, up three, missed a free throw, he let the record reflected not to foul, and Ron Lewis hit about a 25-footer at the buzzer.

Like all coaches, when you take that medicine, so to speak, we're going to lose a different way the next time. And we almost did here tonight where we fouled, great strategy. Well, we gave up a second shot on the missed free throw, which that's part of the consequences of fouling, and Derrick made a big block.

I'm not sure what's right, what's wrong. But when we get in that situation, we elect to foul, and we play the percentages from there. To me, I'd rather lose the other way than letting the guy hit that three to put it in overtime, and that's what we did here tonight.

Q. Can you speak to Derrick's ability to make the big play when you need it? They neutralized him for a large portion of the second half. He hits the three, and then the block at the end is something you've seen numerous times this year?

COACH MILLER: Memphis did a good job of changing defenses. I think it's hard in the NCAA Tournament to play a box and one or triangle and two. There is a reason why teams are at this level. But some of the open shots that we had when they elected to play the box and one, we didn't make.

So from that perspective, I like the shot that's we took. I thought at times we had poise against it. But when they elected to do that, he didn't shoot, and we had some great shot that's we didn't make.

But as often times is the case with a great player, the final stat sheet reads Derrick Williams, 22 points and 10 rebounds. He did what he was supposed to, and at the end of the day he was our team's best offensive player.

He amazes me with his three-point shooting. I know Steve Kerr did our game. Derrick's threatening to break his record. It would be the greatest upset in NCAA history if Derrick breaks Steve Kerr's record, and I say that only because Derrick is such a gamer.

If we got in the gym and those two guys shot it out, I'd put all money on Steve Kerr. But in

the game -- and Derrick hit a big one here tonight -- in the moment he's such a gamer. It's as if he's playing in his backyard. He has a way of making big plays and finishing the other team off, and he did it here again tonight.

Q. Could you just talk about MoMo's overall game, and coming up with those clutch shots again? Also, I think a little under 3:00, I think someone was at the free-throw line and you pulled a little piece of paper out of your pocket, looked at it, and put it back. I was wondering if that was a play.

COACH MILLER: I was probably confused and I needed help to figure out what play we were going to run. But MoMo is the ultimate player that has great belief in himself. He's that player that can kind of take a licking and just keep on going. Believes in himself.

I go back to our Pac-10 season. We're in a triple overtime thriller at Cal, and MoMo hit two or three shots that if I was on the other end you'd be just like wow. And if any one of those shots didn't go in, we wouldn't be there winning. And tonight he didn't have a great game going at that point, but it's his sense of belief in himself.

The bigger the moment, he's that guy that will step up and take the big shot. A lot of times that's contagious to his teammates, and he hit a big one tonight. I believe at that shot they were in a box and one, so he had an open look and he made it.

Q. Is it possible that the Pac-10 Player of the Year is a little under known nationally?

COACH MILLER: I don't think so. I look at Derrick as an All-American, whether it's first team or second team. I know those teams aren't out right now. But I'm here to tell you that I'm the right guy to talk to about the Pac-10, because I've only been in the Pac-10 for two years. Comparing a year ago to this year, there is no comparison.

We had four of our ten teams in postseason. I don't know if Washington's won yet, but I know UCLA advanced, Arizona's advanced. Players like Klay Thompson at Washington State and Derrick Williams. We have some of the best players in college basketball in our conference.

Derrick's been on CBS, I believe, the last three times the last two weeks, and every time he's been on it, he's played well. He'll continue to get the accolades because with winning comes recognition. The greatest compliment that I can

pay Derrick is that his team has won 28 games, and he's a big reason.

But the other reason his team has won 28 games is his humility, his easy-going style. When you have a player like him who is such a great kid, it just makes life easy for the coaching staff. And that's who he is.

Q. My second question is against box and one and triangle and two, are there still times where you say we've got to work harder and try to get him the ball? During the stretch, were you thinking that? It was about an 11-minute stretch he didn't score. I'm not sure he got many touches?

COACH MILLER: Yep, you can. Keep in mind Derrick's a forward, a front court player. Why is it most coaches aren't going to play a front court player with a box and one? Because you're going to really give the other four players some wide open shots. A couple that we got, we didn't make, and that's all part of it.

But if I had to do it all over again, I would employ the same strategy, and I would tell you that the percentages would be in our favor of some of those shots going down.

By the way, some did go down that changed the game. Jamelle Horne's three-point shot in the left corner. MoMo's shot at the top of the key. And that's six points right there on two possession that we got against it.

Q. Talk about your perspective on the final play, the final block?

COACH MILLER: My own experience playing and coaching is that the more aggressive you are on the last final play, the better chances of being successful. On offense, it's drive to the basket and take the ball strong, go hard after an offensive rebound to get yourself a chance at the second shot. So many times second shots beat teams at the end of the game.

On defense, make hard plays on the ball, be aggressive, because it's just hard on officials to make a call that's going to determine the outcome of the game when you see guys playing hard.

I thought it was a great block. Great blocks at the end, the averages over 34 games, there are a couple calls that I wish went different for us, there are a couple calls I'm grateful that we got. But it's about finishing the game, and I thought Derrick did a tremendous job of seeing it,

blocking it, and helping us win the game.

If we keep in mind, if he didn't make that block, we fouled up three, and that ball would have gone in potentially to tie the game. It's not full proof either way to either foul or allow them to shoot the three. So that's what we elected to and we're fortunate to advance.

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