

March 20, 2014



North Dakota State - 80
Oklahoma - 75

An interview with:



THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and get started with an opening statement from coach and then take questions for the student-athletes.

COACH SAUL PHILLIPS: I might filibuster this one. Carlin Dupree just made the -- played the loudest two minutes in the history of the NCAA basketball tournament. I actually had gone to put Mike Felt in and then I remembered, no we better keep press break first, first things first. So, I thought Carlin go in there and pass and catch and get the ball to someone that was playing pretty well, like Lawrence here. No, Carlin just smashed all over this -- I'm telling you, that's a kid right there that had a lot of times this year where he had to DNP coaches decision, and yet when it was really, really important, he had never lost faith.

And I know another things, you know that this guy here, Kory Brown, the rest of his teammates, didn't let him mope, didn't let him pout. Pretty big. I also want to talk about this guy sitting right next to me, no, that's L.A., he had a rough one, to say the least, in our conference championship game. And I'll let Taylor talk about what he said to him before the game. But you know what, I forgive you for that game, L.A., He was pretty good tonight. He's my point guard, he's my point guard.

(Laughter.)

He's my point guard and he will be as long as I'm on this earth. I love him and he's a winner. And that's the biggest thing I can say about it. And some nights we need him to do things other than score. Tonight it was time to score a little bit, wasn't it?

LAWRENCE ALEXANDER: I love you too, Saul.

COACH SAUL PHILLIPS: Okay. You go ahead. I don't want to jump all over your time here.

THE MODERATOR: We'll get back to you in a minute. So don't go away. Open it up for questions to the student-athletes.

Q. Lawrence, talk about the possession at the end of regulation, what was going through your mind?

LAWRENCE ALEXANDER: Actually, the play was drawn up for Taylor. Supposed to be a quick iso, but coming out of the huddle I told him if you don't have anything I'll be right there in the right wing. And he just gave me the bounce pass and I took the shot.

TAYLOR BRAUN: And what did you say when it was in the air?

LAWRENCE ALEXANDER: Buckets.
(Laughter.)

COACH SAUL PHILLIPS: That's a lot of confidence there, big fellow.

TAYLOR BRAUN: I heard that.

Q. Taylor, talk about how this feels for you guys to not only come to the NCAA tournament, but to win this game tonight.

TAYLOR BRAUN: Honestly, I don't know what all the hype is about, like, how exciting the NCAA tournament is.

(Laughter.) Kidding. That was -- the whole experience was unbelievable. Just the atmosphere was a hundred times greater than I expected. Just the intensity, everything about the game was unbelievable.

We stuck together as a team and all

season long I've always been saying, if somebody's not playing well, that's no problem because someone else on the team is going to pick it up. Lawrence Alexander did that times 12 today. And I'm just very happy to be part of this team and just enjoying every moment of this.

Q. Carlin, you had probably maybe one, two of the biggest minutes ever in the NCAA tournament?

COACH SAUL PHILLIPS: In our history, let's not overstate things now.

(Laughter.) I'm excited too, though, I am.

Q. Could you just talk about what was going through your mind?

CARLIN DUPREE: Honestly, when I got it, I just waited for a little bit and I saw that it was clearing out and my first reaction was just to go like I've been doing in practice. I got the fouls, knocked down the free throws, so it was just a great experience for me.

Q. How about the layup?

CARLIN DUPREE: The layup, I mean honestly, I was supposed to make it. No, I'm just kidding. It was a big shot, obviously, for the team. I didn't want this to end for these guys, so I see how hard we worked and we stayed together as a team and I'm excited that we pulled it off.

Q. Talk about your experience going into the second half round of the tournament. Your thoughts going into the second round and how much confidence you have going into the second round now and if you prefer one point over the other between New Mexico State and the San Diego State?

MARSHALL BJORKLUND: Well, it's a fair ground, but we really don't -- I guess I don't know a whole lot about them personally, but I'm sure the coaches will draw up a great game plan. We'll work on that tomorrow. But, I guess as of right now I guess I don't really have a preference of who it would be, but either way we'll come out swinging like we did tonight on Saturday.

Q. Speaking of swinging, you two look like you were in a boxing match. Give me a sense of the physicalness out there.

MARSHALL BJORKLUND: I guess down low it was almost like a bar fight, I guess.

COACH SAUL PHILLIPS: So you hear. So you hear.

(Laughter.)

MARSHALL BJORKLUND: Spangler was a great -- he's a good player, very physical, we knew that coming in. So, yeah, just the whole game the refs were kind of letting us play and so we kind of played like that to our favor and we have dealt with games like that all year. So, the whole way through, man, it was physical.

Q. Carlin, when you're going into the game, your coach said that usually guys in that situation just give the ball off and let somebody else do it. What was different about you in that regard? Is that just the way you're wired or what?

CARLIN DUPREE: Yeah, it is. But, I mean I just waited and I saw an opportunity to go and I just went. That's my first reaction. A coach always talks about attacking the press and that's what I did.

Q. L.A., I think that Coach Phillips had indicated that Taylor said something to you before the game. What did he say to you?

LAWRENCE ALEXANDER: Obviously, at this moment I cannot remember. Do you remember what you said, Taylor.

COACH SAUL PHILLIPS: It was obviously, very inspiring.

TAYLOR BRAUN: It wasn't before the game, it was when we were on our way down here. I just said, you said something about, or L.A. said something about he didn't even need to come down here because he played so bad in Sioux Falls. I said you played bad down there, but you're going to step up here today and you did.

LAWRENCE ALEXANDER: That's what he said?

(Laughter.)

COACH SAUL PHILLIPS: I concur.

Q. Who wants to take this question? What was bigger, you guys tonight or the football team against Kansas State in the season opener?

CARLIN DUPREE: Man, next question.

(Laughter.)

COACH SAUL PHILLIPS: Can't win on that one.

TAYLOR BRAUN: Let us enjoy this moment.

(Laughter.)

Q. For any of the players, if you thought these days were kind of crazy, any idea what's coming you up for these next two days? Your thoughts on that?

TAYLOR BRAUN: Man, everybody on this team is just extremely excited right now. We're just trying to soak in every moment of this. This doesn't come around to anybody every year or anything like that. We put a lot of hard work in to get here and we're just trying to enjoy this and soak up every moment that we can. And whatever happens Saturday, we're going to go out there and play hard and whatever happens, happens.

MARSHALL BJORKLUND: Yeah, obviously tonight it's kind of cool to see the whole arena kind of behind us. Just having that Bison Nation behind us, it's pretty nuts and I guess I can't imagine what Saturday is going to be like, the atmosphere.

LAWRENCE ALEXANDER: It's going to be fun. We'll come out and give our best fight. We're not going to go down without a fight. We'll give our best punch and whatever happens, happens.

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll excuse you to the locker room and take questions for coach.

Q. You guys are, basically, all but dominating and I look up and there's a minute and a half couple minutes left and all of a sudden Oklahoma is ahead by four points. And I'm thinking what just happened. Is that just the nature of this tournament, is it the nature of sport, the nature of basketball?

COACH SAUL PHILLIPS: All of the above, and it's Lon Kruger sitting on the other bench. He found some ways to keep them in the game.

When you're operating on all cylinder's, everybody is a good coach. When you really, really are needed is when things are kind of breaking loose on you. And it's harder to be them than us in this situation, it is. It's harder to be a 5 than a 12. I was at Wisconsin as operations guy. I've been on the other side of it. It's hard.

If we lose, everybody would have been disappointed back home for a night, and then they would have talked about how great of a season we had. Tell you one thing right now, do not sleep on this Oklahoma program in the next couple years, because with the youth that they have, the talent

that they have, Lon's going to have this thing cranked up pretty good, sooner than later.

He did something tonight, how about this, you talk about good coaching, I hadn't even thought of this. 39 seconds left in the first half, we score, the clock runs, he tells his guy not to inbound until there's 35 seconds to go and I'm thinking to myself, we're in trouble because I never even thought of doing something like that. I got to put that in the play book. I learned something from Lon tonight. But, all respect for the kids, their program, pretty special night for a group of young guys that I'm extremely fond of.

Q. Can you talk about going into that possession where L.A. tied the game, was that how you drew it up and then walk us through that play?

COACH SAUL PHILLIPS: I think that sums up Taylor Braun better than anything too. It was a dribble iso for Taylor. He didn't have it, he stayed patient and where it says on the play by play, it says made three by Lawrence Alexander, right under that it says assist by Taylor Braun.

And they played a lot of games together, but for L.A. to knock that thing down at that particular moment, he hit a game winner his Freshman year at Oakland university in Michigan. And I've always kind of felt like I could trust him when it really came down to it. One time, I was kidding him about having to stare down a late free throw, and he looked at me and goes, pressure bursts pipes. That's all he said and walked away. I don't know what it meant to this day, but God bless him.

Q. Talk about how big a win this is for the school, the state, whatever.

COACH SAUL PHILLIPS: I'm saying this before the game I told our guys this, I just want to keep coaching this team. I don't want to have to say good-bye to this locker room. I'm looking forward to the pregame meal tomorrow, I'm looking forward to -- not pregame we better not play tomorrow, we're not ready. I'm looking forward to the pregame meal on Saturday. I'm looking forward to the moments that maybe you guys don't see, because I have an appreciation for this group of guys. Carlin Dupree and Marshall Bjorklund have nothing in common, but they are brothers and I can't wait until some day Marshall drags Travon out to the pig farm. I want that on You Tube, that

would be classic. I want to keep playing. You guys decide that, you got to have something to do tonight. I worked too hard tonight, I got no more decisions to make I'm done. You guys figure out how big it is. I know it's very gratifying and I know that for guys like Lawrence and Carlin and everybody on this team, couldn't have happened to a more fitting group of guys, because they have done what it takes to be exactly where we are right now, year round.

Q. Did you give Dupree any instructions at all when you sent him in?

COACH SAUL PHILLIPS: He knows that we have a very simple press break. I said, press break. I did not tell him to run down as quick as he can and hurry up a shot or draw a foul, but Carlin, when Carlin plays basketball, somebody's band is going to be playing, okay? Sometimes it's yours, sometimes it's theirs, but somebody's is going to be playing. Tonight it was ours.

Q. Could you talk about the depth of your team to have Braun kind of limited and have Dupree step up like he did, and big minutes from Kading. Talk about your team.

COACH SAUL PHILLIPS: I know this: I never questioned what Carlin's long-term role would be in this program. He's going to be a good player for us. He's quick, I mean really quick, very good handles.

He missed out on summer school this year for a myriad of reasons. I didn't have an extra three months to work with him. So he's behind that way. Early on in practice he dives for a ball and Taylor Braun dives for a ball, he hyper extends his elbow and misses a big chunk of preseason. When he comes back, we're going through a grind, we're traveling all over and we don't have a lot of practice dates. And I kept looking at him saying, we'll get our legs underneath us, you'll get in there. And every once in awhile I would throw him in and he would do something great. Other times it would be the quick horn and back out.

But I never have doubted -- and you can ask him this -- I have never doubted what he would be for our program eventually. Let's just say that the pay back came a little quicker than I thought tonight.

Q. It seemed that your guards were able to get to the rim quite a bit and had success on that end. Was that something, going into the game, that you expected that

L.A. and Kory would be able to get to the rim like they did?

COACH SAUL PHILLIPS: We knew that L.A. and Taylor would both have to be able to get to the rim and Kory doing it on the baseline as well. But we knew that the way that they were going to play us they were going to deny the guards up top and it's hard if you're just standing, you got to get inside that. Now that takes -- we have played a bunch of games in a row where we played being packed defenses. And those, you drive in there like that, the raid comes, you get in trouble. We knew the raid wouldn't be there. We really emphasized that in practice. You're going to have your chance to get into the paint and there's not going to be a raid there as you drive.

L.A. definitely took advantage of it and at times Taylor really took advantage of it. And that opened up things for some other people. It wasn't the prettiest offensively tonight, but it was enough to get it done. And we played against the second place team from the Big-12, so I guess I didn't expect a masterpiece.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you.

COACH SAUL PHILLIPS: Thank you.

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