

**March 22, 2014**



San Diego State – 63  
North Dakota State – 44

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: Does it have to be exactly two minutes?

THE MODERATOR: No.

COACH SAUL PHILLIPS: Okay. Before I even comment on the game, I'm saying goodbye to a group of Seniors that have elevated our program to heights once unimaginable and you know what? We didn't have it tonight. We couldn't figure it out. We couldn't get the mystery solved.

But, there's a -- San Diego State's done that to a lot of people. We lost to a great team. My group leaves here champions. And I'll miss coaching them as a group, desperately.

As far as the game goes, their length bothered us. There's no question about that. They are an excellent defensive team. We tried looking at it from a couple different angles. Defensively I thought we got off to a bad start on Thames, he got going early. We missed some switches, we did some things that were uncharacteristic for us. I would have loved to have trapped him. I didn't know what we would run him down with, to be honest with you. That kid had a couple moves where, well, put it this way, we don't have anybody that can simulate it in practice. Open it up to questions.

THE MODERATOR: Take questions for the student-athletes.

**Q. Taylor, their defense, what Saul said, what was it like from your chair?**

TAYLOR BRAUN: They're a good defensive team, but I don't know, to be honest, that wasn't overwhelming. For me personally, I felt like I missed a bunch of shots that I normally knock down and that was kind of the same story for me personally on Thursday. So, that's disappointing for me, just being on this stage and not being able to perform like I know I'm capable of, yeah. For us Seniors, it's time to go to the real world now, so it's not how you want to go out, I guess.

**Q. Taylor and Marshall, I know it's probably not easy to talk about now, but give us a sense of the memories you'll take away from this experience in Spokane and your career at North Dakota State.**

MARSHALL BJORKLUND: I think the biggest memory, I think this is probably the weirdest team in the entire nation. Pretty messed up guys, but I wouldn't have it any other way. I think that's what makes us good. So, just playing with this same group that we played with this year all year, it's going to be something I'll never forget.

TAYLOR BRAUN: I'm just thankful for the opportunity. We made history for our school. We have never done this before, that's something that I'll always remember that I had a part in that.

It's hard to talk about right now.

**Q. Kory, what can you take away from this group of Seniors and what have you learned from them?**

KORY BROWN: Everything. Everything I do up to now, everything I'll ever do, because of these two next to me, because of the Seniors. I mean, my first real practice or working out over the summer I had to guard this guy right here next to me. You know how tough that was? I had to chase Mike around off screens, I had to learn how

to work with Marshall, I never really had a big man to playoff of. Guys like Tray taught me how to finish. Everything I do from here on out, I've been doing is because of the Seniors.

**Q. Kory, what was it like chasing Thames around out there?**

KORY BROWN: Just chasing another basketball player out there. I let him hit a couple shots that were way too easy that I shouldn't have, doubled down on that I did in the post. But, it's a standard that I can look forward to now. It's something I know that there's something out there that I need to work on. I can improve on my defense a lot more. I knew I already could have, but I have a lot more to push for now.

**Q. Marshall, were you getting in position like you thought you might or wanted to or were they pushing you out a little farther? How were they playing you?**

MARSHALL BJORKLUND: They were being pretty physical down there. They had some guys with some length, but I guess there's a few times that they would push me out a little ways, but it seemed like for most of our guys we were getting some looks on the block, especially in the second half.

**Q. For Taylor, you made your first shot and then you missed a whole bunch. You guys shoot such a high percentage, how hard is that and frustrating does it become as a team just to compound on itself and you start missing easy ones too?**

TAYLOR BRAUN: It was extremely frustrating. Like I said, especially this being our last game, I wasn't really satisfied with how I played on Thursday either. You don't want to go out like this. I'm 2-14 in my last college game? I mean, I don't know, there were shots I'm extremely comfortable taking and I normally hit at a high percentage, so I don't know what to say, I just couldn't -- I don't know. I just didn't play well this weekend.

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

**Q. You touched on it. He's their biggest -- the majority of their offensive option, what was the plan going into that you couldn't simulate?**

COACH SAUL PHILLIPS: Well, that's a great question and it probably looked like there wasn't one.

We wanted to press up with our bigs as much as we could, string them along, and really have Kory chasing him out. But, Kory went wrong side on a couple screens early and I'm telling you, Kory is a lock down defender for those that cover us, it would look a little different to you if -- I honestly don't know with our personnel, unless I would have switched and gone small and taken Marshall out of the game, maybe, you could trap a little bit, but how are you going to do that to Marshall Bjorklund? How are you going to score without him in there? It just would have changed the game too much.

So, you say all right we'll settle had and get stops. And in all fairness, at least four of them were just blown communications by us. That kid -- I really don't take that the wrong way, the kid was awesome. In fact, we're a good defensive team. That kid did it to our best defensive player and he did it to entire team that was looking at him. We really, really, really helped off. I mean we were -- our help side was great. But it's one thing if you double in the post, it's another thing, it's hard to dribble, to double a guy with ball in hand so well.

With the personnel we had, we went to do that that's a losing proposition, we're going to foul him, he goes to the line, it's easier. You're just digging in trying to get stops. But my assistant brought it up to me and it is my call, so if I screwed that up, I screwed it up. I probably did. Let's put it this way: He was accountable for half their points, so would I do something different? Yeah, because this one didn't work.

**Q. Did you see anything in Taylor's play where his shots were just going against a bigger team than he's used to?**

COACH SAUL PHILLIPS: Yeah, I saw. How you simulate that if you're us? Have Fred Newell tape 8 foot 2x4's to his arms? They're long. You saw it. He went up for shots that he normally -- and he had to lean just a little bit more, you know what? He'll learn to play against length like that because he's going to get a chance to. But it's really, really hard when you get a chance only so often to do it.

They did an unbelievable job on him. And I know he's disappointed in himself, he's got nothing to be ashamed of, that kid, we're not even

close to this point. He's one of the best players in school history. He's one of the best players in Mid Major college basketball. He's not the first person to struggle to score against San Diego State.

**Q. What memories will you take from not only this season but this week?**

COACH SAUL PHILLIPS: It's only the greatest professional week of my life. I got to watch a group of guys that deserved it, who wanted it so bad, and made it a priority in their life and did everything I asked them to do. This season? Wow. Let's just say this: It's why I do what I do. And I lose six guys out that door, Charles Barkley can make fun of me now, it's fine.

Hey, I love these guys. Absolutely love them. Love them. I hope that comes close to answering it.

**Q. With the big weekend that you guys had, we have seen other Mid Majors like a Gonzaga or Creighton back in the day win a game in the tournament and then build a Top-25 program with that. With what you've done this weekend and the new arena, is that something that is in the near future for Bison basketball?**

COACH SAUL PHILLIPS: I expect great things out of this program in the future. It's hard to think about the future at this exact moment. I expect great things out of this program.

We're going to build, we're going to get better, we're going to have better facilities, we're going to work harder. I'm not Taylor, I won't guarantee we'll be back here, but I think if we do what we did with this group, we have got a pretty good template to give it an effort.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you.

COACH SAUL PHILLIPS: Thanks everyone.

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