

Texas Tech Postgame Quotes
Texas Tech vs. North Texas – November 15, 2016

HEAD COACH CHRIS BEARD

Opening Statement ...

“I’m happy for our players to get the win tonight. North Texas had our complete attention and respect. It was a really scary game of preparation because I think they had some really good players. Equally, they have a really good coach. I just want to recognize Tony Benford, one of the all-time Texas Tech greats. He played for Coach (Gerald) Myers and won two championships here. It made me really proud to be a Red Raider when the crowd recognized him before the game and showed him a sign of respect. Coach Benford is somebody that I have a lot of respect for. As a young coach, he went out of his way to be nice to me. I think he might have been an assistant at New Mexico when I was a young junior college coach. He’s just a first class guy. So, I know Red Raiders support Red Raiders. I think Coach Benford is the kind of guy, player and person that we want in our program.”

On switching from man defense to zone defense ...

“We’re a team that wants to play different ways throughout the season. We did a good job tonight changing some things up. Also, North Texas alternated between defenses. For the most part, I thought we recognized that. We had a couple of what I call sloppy possessions. For the most part, it was a good game for us early because we had to recognize early what was going on out there possession to possession.”

On having to work to score points during tonight’s game ...

“We tell the guys all the time there are different ways to win games. Your defense has to be there on a night when shots are not falling. I think tonight might be one of the classic examples of my career. We didn’t really shoot it very well from two, we didn’t really shoot it very well from three and we really struggled from the free throw line. But, we find ourselves at a double digit lead at halftime in a game that was in control because of our defense. So, certainly when we get in to conference play, we’re going to have to execute on both ends of the court.”

On Devon Thomas stepping up with Keenan Evans in foul trouble ...

“Devon is somebody we’re really counting on. I think with all the players that were here during the coaching transition, Devon was a guy that earned our respect very quickly with the way he works. He’s never in a bad mood. I’ve never seen Devon in a bad mood and that really just bleeds into our locker room and our team. So, personally I’m really pulling for him. Tonight, the impressive thing was he had a three assists and no turnover night. That’s exactly what we need from Devon. We need him to run the team when Keenan’s [Evans] not in there. I look for us to play both those guards [Devon and Keenan] a lot this year. I thought Devon and Niem [Stevenson] played some valuable minutes tonight when Keenan was in foul trouble. It’s a team sport. Guys have to step up for Norensen [Odiase] being out with an injury, guys had to step up tonight with Keenan being in foul trouble. As far as our depth goes, that’s how our team’s going to go this year.”

On the team’s amount of steals tonight ...

“I thought at times we played patient defense. We had a real emphasis not to foul. North Texas is a very aggressive team. They’re going to force the action. So, it was a balance between being aggressive to stop them but also being intelligent and not fouling. I think because we didn’t foul, some of the possessions became mid-to-late clock, and that’s where the steal opportunities happened.”

On Aaron Ross' performance ...

“With Ross, he has such a diverse game. He can do many things. Like, in our zone offense, I’m comfortable with him on the perimeter or inside. Defensively, he can guard four positions. My thing with Ross is you know, how good do you want to be? Are you okay with being a good player on a good team? Are you ready to take that next step and enter the all-conference type of conversation? He shows glimpses. Our team in a lot of ways is going to go like Aaron Ross goes. I’ve said it before, and I really mean this – to me, he’s shown great loyalty to Texas Tech. Five years, he’s played for four different coaches. I really pull for him. I think as his intensity goes so does his game. When he hits those little spurts in the game where he looks like he’s getting lazy, I’d appreciate the crowd just standing up and yelling ‘Ross’ or something. I can use all the help I can get coaching this guy, but I really like Ross as a person. I’ve enjoyed coaching him, but we really need him to find the next gear. I’m confident he will.”

On the team's defensive adjustments at half ...

“Just a couple simple adjustments. One of them had to do with the fastbreak defense. One of them had to do with post defense. But, more than anything, just stick to the game plan. Again, I think North Texas missed a lot of open shots tonight so we benefited from that. But, give our players credit too, because I thought they were dialed in and locked in mentally. They defended well for most of the game. From where I was sitting, we guarded probably 34 out of 40 minutes about as well as we can.”

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FORWARD JUSTIN GRAY

On how the defense fueled the offense ...

“Just being very aggressive. Trying to make no mental mistakes on the defensive end and trying to go out for the full 30 seconds. I think we pretty much did that by stopping their penetration in the half court – forcing them to take bad shots or make mental mistakes and convert on the offensive end.”

On cutting the team’s turnovers from game one to game two ...

“Coach Beard – just being very aggressive. Just telling us not to make those mental mistakes. Like Zach [Smith] said, make plays when they’re there. If they’re not, don’t try to force it – just keep moving the ball and keep running the motion. Eventually, the defense will get tired, and we just have to convert.”

On the team developing chemistry ...

“We always practice and work on our chemistry – throughout the week and before every game. Just doing repetition on certain transition plays. I think every game, and every single practice that we’ve had, our chemistry has gotten a lot stronger.”

On the team’s substitution patterns ...

“I think I’ve settled in. I personally like it. It allows guys to be fresh pretty much throughout the whole entire game and tire the other team out as much as possible. I don’t think you really ever get as tired if you are staying in for eight straight minutes. The constant subbing, I think, is very helpful for our team.”

FORWARD ZACH SMITH

On being more aggressive on offense ...

“Yes definitely. Being more aggressive, but also being patient and understanding when a play is there and when it isn’t.”

On focusing more on rebounding in the second half ...

“Coach Beard’s focus is always rebounding and always crashing glass. But his focus also was getting stops and transitions.”

On his double-double ...

“The coaches have been pushing me all week and all offseason to rebound, crash the glass every time, and it worked out for me tonight.”

On the team’s substitution patterns ...

“I agree with Justin [Gray] when he says it keeps us fresh on the court, and it keeps us from getting too tired. It also works well for our team because we have a lot of depth.”

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HEAD COACH TONY BENFORD

Opening Statement ...

“First of all, I want to give Coach Beard and his team credit. I knew coming in it was going to be a tough challenge. I think that they are an NCAA Tournament team – well coached and well balanced. With their depth, they can wear you down. They turned us over a lot early, and I knew that was one of the keys coming into this game that we have to take care of the basketball. Obviously, we didn’t do a great job. They had 24 points off of our 16 turnovers. Their defense had a lot to do with that. Their matchups created problems for us with (Anthony) Livingston and (Aaron) Ross. They really spread the floor and are really good with their motion. We really didn’t do a good job tonight, but a lot of credit goes to those guys with their defensive effort that they had to night. I think that they will really have a great season in the Big 12.”

On his team switching defenses ...

“I wanted to mix it up and play both zone and man. We changed it up, and we played a three-two (zone) into a two-three (zone). When we had our big kid in the game, we would play some man. We tried to keep them off guard. I thought we did a good job of that in the first half, but we could not score. At the end of the day, you have to score points. We did not score enough early on. Once we turned the ball over, they scored 17 points off of us in the first half.”