

Postgame Quotes
Florida State 71, Colorado 53
March 22, 2021
NCAA Tournament Sweet 16
Indiana Farmers Coliseum

Colorado Head Coach Tad Boyle

TAD BOYLE: First of all, before we talk about this basketball game, I thought about this in the locker room before the game, how the events that took place in Boulder, Colorado, today -- and I don't have any details other than to know it was a tragic, tragic situation. It puts basketball in its proper place. And win or lose tonight, I just felt an emptiness in my stomach. Another senseless act of violence that we've experienced as a country, many, many times. And so it puts this game in perspective. It certainly puts losing in perspective. But even if we would have won this game and celebrated going to the Sweet 16, it would have put a damper on it. So my heart goes out to the families that were affected and those that lost their lives. Again, I don't know any details. I don't know how many or what the situation was. We got an alert on our phones about an hour or so before we came to the arena. I decided not to address it with our team because I wanted their -- but I know a lot of them saw it. They didn't have details, either. Anyway. With that being said, I'll take any questions about the basketball game.

Q. Following up, can you elaborate more on why you didn't want to talk about it? Did anyone talk about it?

TAD BOYLE: Well, I talked about it with a couple of my assistants and we felt like it was probably better left -- we didn't have any details. There wasn't anything really to talk about, and I talked about it after the game, again, in the perspective standpoint. But your team's mental mindset as they prepare for a game, it's sometimes fragile. I didn't want to complicate their minds too much because we had to go play the game. We weren't going to not play the game. So I decided to wait till after the game to address it with them, and I did.

Q. What were those conversations like? Obviously you guys are dealing with the loss of the game and the end of some college careers for guys and also I'm sure dealing with the emotions of not knowing what went on today back home.

TAD BOYLE: Yeah, it's, again, there's an emptiness in my stomach. I can't speak to our players and, you know, we'll find out more about what happened. I don't know if we'll ever know why it happened. But it just -- again, perspective is what it brings to our players and -- because basketball is just a part of our society, and sports are just a small part of our society. As our players go through their lives, they are going to understand that. Now, right now in that locker room, maybe they don't have that perspective. You know, we just lost the season we had, which was such a special season with such special young men in that locker room, seven unbelievable seniors, the most connected and one of the closest groups I've ever coached. We'll get through this and get through it together.

But right now my heart goes out to the Boulder community and more than just our basketball team. So the perspective that this will bring to their lives, you know, is something that we're going to have to talk about as we process this and we move through it over the coming days.

Q. Feels silly to be asking about basketball right now, to be honest. How much of a factor was Florida State's length?

TAD BOYLE: You can simulate certain things preparing for Florida State, but you cannot simulate their length. They are very long and very athletic. We knew they were going to pressure us. I did a bad job preparing our team for the pressure that was coming. We've faced pressure before, and we've faced switching defenses before and we've handled it better before. We didn't handle it very well tonight. I thought we got some open looks in the first half and we got to the rim, you know, in the first half a couple times. We just couldn't finish and we didn't take care of -- turned the ball over 19 times. 11 was our number on the board. We had to have 11 or fewer turnovers to give ourselves a chance to win this game. And you have to finish when you do get shots. And we didn't have a very good shooting night like we did the other night, and Florida State had a lot to do with that. They are a good team. They led the ACC in scoring, and they also led it in field goal percentage defense. So they are a good basketball team, and I didn't do a very good job tonight as a coach. This loss is on me. I don't blame the players one bit. Their coach didn't do a very good job tonight.

Q. What was the message at halftime?

TAD BOYLE: Yeah, getting Evan and McKinley, two of your best players, in foul trouble really hurt us. We went to the zone to try to slow them up, and we didn't execute that as well as we were capable. But, yeah, I feel like the message at halftime was, guys, we've turned it over 11 times, we're shooting 30-some percent and we're definitely down four. We're right here. We cut it to one. I thought McKinley got fouled on the drive and got technical foul, and I got technical foul. Had not gotten one of those all year. You have to stand up for your guys. Coming into this game, Florida State fouled a lot more than we fouled traditionally when you look at the bulk of their season and the bulk of our season. We get to the foul line 11 times, and they get 21 times, and some of those were late. We weren't good enough offensively tonight, and in the second half we weren't good enough defensively. The first half, we held them to 24 points. We'll take that all day long but second half our defense wasn't good enough. And our frustrations got to us a little bit. We played frustrated for much of the night and sped up much of the night.

Q. You and McKinley have been through a whole lot the last four years. When he comes off the floor with a little over a minute left, that was a pretty cool hug the two of you had. Did you say anything, or did you just want to let him know how much you appreciated him?

TAD BOYLE: I told him I loved him, because I do. The kid's special. What he's been through to get to the University of Colorado and what he's given to the program the last four years -- the players is supposed to be crying, not the coach, but there were tears in my eyes like there are now. And he's a special young man, and all of our seniors are special. I'm telling you, all seven of our seniors are special, not just McKinley. He's given so much to this program from the time he stepped on campus, and I really, really appreciate him and he knows that and I told him that.

Q. What has McKinley Wright meant to your program over the course of his career?

TAD BOYLE: No. 1, he's given everything he's gotten, and I could count on one hand, how many bad practices he's had. He's an everyday guy that competes hard. He prepares himself in the off-season. He has gotten his teammates better. So McKinley has not just made his own game better from his freshman year to his senior year and improved every single year, but he's made his teammates better. He's challenged his teammates. I always say the biggest compliment you can give your best player is if he's a great teammate. You can say that about McKinley Wright. He's helped us in recruiting. He's hosted a lot of guys on visits. He's just done so much. At our basketball camp in the summer, interacting with young people in our community and kids come to our camp and look up to him; there's a lot of kids that think you have to be tall to play basketball, and you know, McKinley is a six-foot guard and he's got the heart of a lion. I could sit here and talk for two hours about what he's done, but those are some of the things he's done for our program and he means a lot and he's going to be sorely, sorely missed.

Q. What example has this senior class set for your program, especially the young guys who get to start in an NCAA Tournament, and you have another good class in 2021 coming in. How bright is the future of your program at Colorado?

TAD BOYLE: I think it's very bright. It's extremely bright. The young players that are in this program and the guys -- I think the example that those guys set is they got better every single year. And they took some lumps as freshmen and sophomores, but Schwartz got better and became a thousand-point scorer in this tournament for us. We are going to have four thousand-point scorers in that class when it's done. So the example they set this year was a very high bar, and the leadership that they showed through tough times. This team lost back-to-back games one time all year. And it wasn't because we were ready to play Oregon after losing. We just didn't make any shots that night much like we didn't tonight. But they have given us so much. If our young guys can learn one thing from this class, it's constant improvement and leadership. That's what it's going to take as this program moves forward. We'll add a piece or two to the mix. We have a good class coming in next year, but the bar has been set pretty high, and we didn't get to the Sweet 16 this year, but we're going to get there. We're going to get there. And hopefully beyond. That's something that I'm committed to as long as I'm the coach at Colorado.

Q. Going back to the events at Boulder, you said the guys got alerts. Was it weighing on them?

TAD BOYLE: I really don't. We have a focused, focused group. They have to answer that. I do know as I sat in the locker room before the game started, I thought win or lose, this gives the game of basketball perspective. It gives the NCAA Tournament perspective, and I'm so thankful we are playing this tournament and I'm so thankful our players got a chance to play this year. This group got 32 games of basketball in. I'm so thankful for that because they

love the game and they have sacrificed and committed themselves so hard. So I knew when this game was over it was going to be all about perspective, win or lose. And we lost, and it's important our players have perspective. I don't think it was weighing on their minds, but again, I could be totally wrong and off base on that. The one thing I'm not going to do is sit here and make excuses for the way we played. I'm going to take responsibility for it. Again, my heart goes out to everybody that was affected by the events in Boulder today, and we're going to work through this as a community. Safe a place as I've ever felt and lived in my life. So if it can happen, it can happen there, it can happen anywhere. But we've got to figure out a way to stop this stuff. I don't know the answer, but we've just got to figure out a way.