



# 2007 State Farm Missouri Valley Conference Tournament Game Five Press Conference March 2 St. Louis, Mo.

## Creighton Head Coach Dana Altman and Student-Athlete Quotes

### Dana Altman

Opening Statement: Well, I thought we started the game a little tight, and not as focused as we should have been, but I thought after we got through that first ten minutes that we played much better, and you know, part of that was fatigue. Indiana State had a tough game last night. They started to tire us. We didn't play too badly. We made shots, we outrebounded them by 11. We did some things that will help us in the tournament.

**MEDIA:** Yeah, Dana. In the early beginning when it was a little bit of a scuffle, Isacc hit three 3s in the first half. Can you talk about the lift it gave you? Isacc, tell me about the three 3s you hit.

**ISACC MILES:** That was our main focus, making other plays for teammates. Last couple games I struggled with three-point percentage and this first game I was confident coming in, and trying to make plays and make big plays and that was the main focus.

**MEDIA:** Anthony, the 38 points is the lowest ever scored in a Missouri Valley tournament game. Can you talk about the defensive effort you guys put forth tonight?

**ANTHONY TOLLIVER:** Well, that was like one of our main focuses. It has been all year. You know, coach has been preaching defense and rebound defense and rebounding. That's what win these tournaments. I think everybody just bought into what he said. I know everybody wants to win this thing, so you know, we didn't shoot great for this game, but that defense, you know, and rebounding is what, you know, got us that big lead, so I mean, everybody just played pretty good defense. Everybody didn't make too many mistakes, talking a lot, helping out each other, coming back and getting the rebounds, so it was just a great team effort on defense.

**MEDIA:** Nate, can you talk about -- it looked like from the perimeter standpoint that you and Isacc and some of the others were just making it difficult for Indiana State to find any gaps in your defense from the perimeter. Can you talk about just what you were trying -- what you were able to do out there to accomplish that?

**NATE FUNK:** Well, you know, we played each other twice earlier this year and we know each other's tendencies so we focus on that, taking away their strengths and it worked out for us, and in previous games we gave them too many open looks. They hit some big 3s in previous games, and we just tried to limit that, you know, after we limited those easy looks and we didn't give up second-chance points and points on turnovers.

**MEDIA:** This is for Nate and Anthony. Just talk a little bit about obviously you guys got a chance to get out of that ballgame with 8 or 9 minutes left. What that can mean for the next day or 2.

**NATE FUNK:** It's even bigger that the guys that came in after us, you know, played hard and did their job, you know. If they don't do their job, we've got to go back in and fight it out for a few more minutes. That was -- that was a key thing to winning the game. It's nice to have a little bit more rest coming into tomorrow because, you know, it's even going to be a tougher game.

**ANTHONY TOLLIVER:** I was actually talking to Nate on the bench. It was kind of selfish side of me wanted to go back in and keep playing because, you know, I'm a player so I tried to get out there as much as possible. I don't like sitting on the 14 bench, but we talked about it. I knew that the best thing for us, you know, in the long run since we want to win it, you know, is to get that rest. It was great to get those guys out there, like Brice and Dusty and Bahe and those guys out there, a lot of playing time, and instill some confidence in them because this is long term. We still have two more games left, and we're going to need them down the stretch, too, so it was just great to get them in and like I said, get some confidence from them, too.

**MEDIA:** They tell me, I don't really know, but there was a lot of snow in Omaha in the last couple of days. How did this affect you guys, and what's it like to be out of it?

**NATE FUNK:** We got out of there before it even hit, but I looked up in the stands and there's a huge Creighton following out there. Now, I don't know how they got here or what, but you know, I understand that the snow's pretty bad, so that's a big credit to them for, you know, fighting through the snow and getting here.

**MEDIA:** Nate, could you sense you guys were a little bit tight in that first 10 minutes as Dana said?

**NATE FUNK:** Well, you know, in these tournaments, you know, it's not uncommon to come out a little tight and you're not going to hit the first couple shots like you want to. Things aren't going to go your way. You just have to battle through it. Indiana State had a tough win last night, and eventually we thought, you know, we could wear them down, and that's what happened, and we got in a little bit of a rhythm. Didn't give up too many easy baskets, and the rest is history.

**MEDIA:** Anthony, you had those three blocks early when things weren't going too well for you. Did you sense that that kind of helped turn things around a little bit for you guys?

**ANTHONY TOLLIVER:** Yeah, a little bit. I mean, I think it kind of gave us a little energy on the defensive end, you know. I knew that, you know, like we said, we came out in the first 10 minutes we were just kind of flat, you know, and that's usually what happens, you know. Whenever you've got a team that came out yesterday and had a game and got all that, you know, nervous energy out of them, and you know, they're just here to play. You know, that was our first game, so I knew that, you know, we were going to have to rely on the defense and I was just trying to make a couple plays. I got a chance to get a couple blocks. After that, you know, we started getting some shots down, you know, so it just kind of happened to be, you know, at the right time to get a couple blocks, get a couple stops. It just really helped out the defensive energy.

**MEDIA:** Isacc, you had two of those three-pointers in that stretch right before halftime. How important was that for you guys to maybe establish some control of the ballgame going into the locker room?

**ISACC MILES:** It gave us a big boost. It came at the right time. To me, I thought the first few shots I shot was a little off. It was a confidence boost for me to get my teammates to block up. All year long I got to hit shots, especially, I mean, we've got these two seniors who do a lot of scoring work. I needed open shots and they were open, so I had open shots and knocked them down.

**MEDIA:** Dana, just talking about that last stretch right before half, that 10-point run, just talk about how important that was going into the locker room.

**COACH DANA ALTMAN:** I thought it was really important. We were, you know, 22-18 there. We missed some free throws, and Anthony missed one inside where Nate drove the baseline and kicked it to him, and so we missed some shots and some plays that we should have made right there, and so I was a little concerned we were only up 2. And then, you know, Isacc hit the 3 in the open court. No one picked him up, you know, and he made another one in the corner deep. Those were a couple big shots, but I thought that 10-0 run there to end the half, you know, gave us a lot of energy and you know, for a team that played the night before, kind of took their energy. It was a big stretch there for us, I think.

**MEDIA:** Dana, another year of 20 wins. Could you talk about what that means, and was there a time earlier this year maybe before January if you wondered if you were going to get to 20 this year?

**COACH DANA ALTMAN:** Well, it's, you know, first of all, a compliment to a lot of players and great support from the administration, you know, to win 20 nine years in a row. It takes a lot of people, and we've had a lot of good players, but there were times this season, you know, to start the season. Josh Neid didn't come along like we hoped, Nathan got some kind of virus in November and December there, Ty Morrison got graves disease and decided to quit the team. We thought we had it put all back together and Josh breaks his finger. I think this team has done a good job of overcoming adversity and whatever hurdle was thrown in front of it, you know, trying to make an effort to overcome it, and you know, for that I'm pleased. And the reason we were able to do that is just, you know, Anthony Tolliver is a fine young man. I don't know if there's any area that he has a weakness in. He's a great student, he's wonderful in the community, he's got a personality that's really outgoing, and I think he kind of held our team together. Nathan's a strong player, and his work ethic is great, but he doesn't have the outgoing personality that Anthony does. I think Anthony Tolliver did a great job of keeping our team together. We had some disappointing losses, and they were able to, like I said, fight back through all the things that were thrown at them and find a win.

**MEDIA:** Dana, you said that 10-0 run maybe took a little of Indiana State's energy. Do you think your defense before that, it was 15-10, and Indiana State only scored one more field goal for the last 9 minutes of the game. Where do you think it started for you guys defensively?

**COACH DANA ALTMAN:** Well, I thought, you know, a couple of the early looks we gave them were just our lack of focus, and you know, again, the pressing, Illinois State pressed them last night so that was 40 tough minutes. We felt like if we pressed them and made them play in the open court that it would slow them down. I think that was a big part of it. Royce does a great job. His kids played really tough and hard-nosed basketball, but you know, we've got to play against a team like Illinois State that prefer them all night and we come out and make them handle it, it just wears on you. I think as the game went on, it wore them down. I think our defense was sharper after that. I thought we talked really well and switches were pretty good. We did a better job on picks on the ball. We fronted the post well, but some of it was their fatigue.

**MEDIA:** Dana, from your standpoint, how important was it to have those guys on the bench beside you for that last 8, 9 minutes.

**COACH DANA ALTMAN:** You know, I don't know. We've tried doing that before, resting some players, and it's backfired on us. We've had other games where guys have played 39. Ryan Sears and he got stronger and better as the tournament went on, so you know, every group's different. Every game is a unique experience, so you'd like to think that it might have helped us, but you know, who knows? It's really -- man, they probably got tired playing that many minutes, he won't be able to play tomorrow. You just never know.

**MEDIA:** How big do you think those blocks by Anthony were early on, those three to kind of --

**COACH DANA ALTMAN:** Anthony sets the tone defensively. Our guys make mistakes, and he cleans them up. I just wish we had somebody who helped with his mistakes. He looks bad sometimes, and we don't have anybody helping him. He did a nice job. They got the ball inside, and he changed a few, and he blocked a few. It definitely set a tone.

**MEDIA:** Dana, your team set a record tonight for allowing the fewest points ever here in a tournament game. Was this the best defensive game your team has played all year?

**COACH DANA ALTMAN:** It's hard to say, you know. Again, I thought we played pretty good defensively, not as sharp offensively as I wanted. We started the second half and turned it over, silly turnovers, and good teams don't do that. I'm a little concerned about that, but you know, I like the effort, and again, I think we caught a team that was a little tired because of back-to-back games and the way those games were played, full court pressure and so forth. I think it just took its toll.

**MEDIA:** Coach Altman, I don't know if you know, but apparently this was Royce's final game at Indiana State. The local newspapers said that he's not going to get his contract renewed. First of all, did you know that going into this game?

**COACH DANA ALTMAN:** Our radio man mentioned it to me, you know, when we were doing our pregame you know, and I don't know if any of that's true. All I know is Royce has been in the league with me for a long time, and there's not a coach in

our league that I have more respect for and I think does a better job than Royce, and you know, whatever -- whatever they choose to do is their decision, but they'll have a hard time finding a better coach and a better man than Royce Waltman.

## Indiana State Head Coach Royce Waltman and Student-Athlete Quotes

### Royce Waltman

**Opening Statement:** I don't know if there's a lot to say. They were just too good for us tonight, and in particular, their switching defense frustrated us and we got a couple looks we couldn't make. They were just a little too tough, especially at the defensive end.

**MEDIA:** Gabe, can you talk about what Royce was referring to, the switching defense? Can you talk about it from your perspective?

**GABE MOORE:** The defense did a pretty good job. When they switched, they switched hard, and they made an effort to just keep us in front of them. They made us take some shots we couldn't hit. You've got to give them a lot of credit. They came to play, and you see what happened.

**MEDIA:** It seemed like they kept missing three-pointers and then Isacc Miles hit that 3 to tie it at 15. Was that kind of the turning point of the game to either of you?

**TRENT WURTZ:** Well, the turning point was when we were down. Somehow we were -- we were within 2 or 4 points, and then they carried it over in the second half and we were down 12 coming into the second half, and we just never got anything rolling. There was no momentum for us offensively, and we couldn't stop them in the second half, so I don't know. That particular play, I don't really know. It seemed like that happened quite often not only by Miles but other members of their team, everybody.

**MEDIA:** Trent, how much of it do you think was Creighton's defense? How much do you think it was you guys' reaction to Creighton's defense?

**TRENT WURTZ:** Well, Creighton's defense and how we react to it, obviously they don't want us to react very well, and that's what they did. They took us out of our comfort zone, and we never took them out of their comfort zone. It's a simple game.

**MEDIA:** Gabe, obviously this has been a tough day, but there are rumors going around that this may be coach's last game at Indiana State. If you would, address whether or not that played into how you all came out, whether your spirits were down, etc.

**GABE MOORE:** No. We came into this tournament. Coach talk to us and we left that back in Terre Haute. We came here to win this tournament and we're not going to worry about what happened with Coach at the end of the season. If he was going to leave, we was going to try to send him out with a good note. I wanted to do that as much as probably everybody in the locker room, and we just couldn't do it, but it wasn't the fact of coming down to this tournament. We talked about winning games and coming down and winning this tournament, and we couldn't do it.

**MEDIA:** Trent, the final game of your career. What will you think about when you look back at your career at Indiana State?

**TRENT WURTZ:** The relationships I made with my coaches, my teammates. It's a family. I mean, if there's -- if there's anything -- in whatever predicament I'm lined up in in five years, five or ten years, if anybody needs any help from me, that's

how close we are in this program. I mean, regardless, anybody needs my help, I'll be there for them. Likewise, I'd expect the same out of my teammates and coaching staff. We're going to stay in touch, you know. There's events like this, basketball games, sports, athletics, I don't like using the statements a means to an end. My dad said that once in a while but I never really bought into it because you're always living in the now, but when you see down the road, you know, the things that life takes you on journeys, it's all about who you meet along the way that shapes your experiences and influences you and makes you a better person.

**MEDIA:** What was making Creighton's defense effective from where you saw it? I mean, what were they doing to kind of neutralize you.

**COACH ROYCE WALTMAN:** I think we've already said this. They were switching. All the screens, you're not going to get an open shot off the screen, and they switch and stay underneath you and try to force you to take outside shots. Somebody asked me before the game the keys to the game. I said one thing, they're set up to make you, to control penetration, but we've got get it to the basket anyway, and we were unable to do that. Later we went to using the bigger guys, the screeners, because they don't switch that, and I think that could have been effective but we were in such a deep hole, we lost probably any ability to get anything done at that end.

**MEDIA:** Coach, the same thing I asked Gabe obviously. I don't know if it's obvious to you, but the newspaper back in Terre Haute was reporting that tonight was your final game and your contract wasn't going to be renewed. First of all, would you like to comment on the accuracy of that report?

**COACH ROYCE WALTMAN:** Well, I would say it's very accurate.

**MEDIA:** When did you find out?

**COACH ROYCE WALTMAN:** Well, don't take this as a bitter comment because I'm not one bit bitter, but the administration handled this with the deft touch of a 20-mule team. They said it at a Board of Trustees meeting which is obviously going to leak out, but yet said they didn't want it announced until after the tournament, so it just left us with every man, woman, and child in Terre Haute knowing I'm fired, but it's not official. So I found out a week ago, but it still hasn't been made official by whoever's going to make that statement.

**MEDIA:** Did you players know it?

**COACH ROYCE WALTMAN:** You know, when it got so common around, that's not something I want to saddle the players with and have it as a distraction. I'm been around long enough to know it isn't necessarily going to break their hearts even if I am fired. It just got to be such knowledge, I had to talk them about it and tell them it had nothing to do with how I felt about coming down to this tournament. I think that was said to the players and they knew how that was. I thought we came down here in really good spirits, played well last night. Just couldn't solve the riddle of Creighton tonight. I don't think that had any bearing on how we played, you know.

**MEDIA:** What kind of bearing did it have on you during the course of the week?

**COACH ROYCE WALTMAN:** Oh, you know, I try to be really honest in these deals. Oh, a great deal of sadness and melancholy. For 42 years the last thing I thought about before I went to bed is my team, and the first thing I thought about when I got up in the morning is my team, and that will be hard not -- not thinking that way, and so yeah, I just felt really sad. That doesn't mean that the firing wasn't justified or anything like that at all. I just hate not to have a team because it's been the thing that I've enjoyed most.

**MEDIA:** Will you retire, or do you want to continue coaching?

**COACH ROYCE WALTMAN:** I can't get a head coaching job. You gotta understand. If you get fired for cheating, you can get hired right back again. If you get fired for losing, it's like you've got leprosy, so young coaches need to bear that in mind. Cheating and not graduating players will not get you in trouble, but boy, that damn losing. So I'd like to stay in basketball, but I'm realistic. You know, I don't want to go back to high school and coach a team, and that's about the only job I could get. I'm certain for the right guy I could be an assistant, a scout. I'm not ready to retire. Spoonhour gave me some advice. He said -- when he knew I was fired, he said one, get up and get out of the house. Don't stay around there. He said whatever

job you get, Royce, the key thing is make sure it requires an office because if not, your wife is going to have you doing all that crap that you've never done. All I'm saying, I'm looking for a job with an office.

**MEDIA:** Coach, you told me earlier this week that these tournaments are all about your players coming down and believing that they can win. Given everything –

**COACH ROYCE WALTMAN:** Did I say that?

**MEDIA:** Yeah.

**COACH ROYCE WALTMAN:** Okay. All right.

**MEDIA:** Given everything that's gone on, it's got to make you pretty proud to know that your team did come here and get a win and fought in two games.

**COACH ROYCE WALTMAN:** Yeah. I am proud of that. I've been around long enough to know that's what kids always do, you know. They just are tremendously resilient. They're tremendously idealistic. No matter how the season is going, they feel they can go down there and win, and that's what they should do. These kids of ours were no exception.

**MEDIA:** Royce, can you just talk about the -- the success you did have at Indiana State and the tournament you brought it back to and the way you kind of turned the program back to prominence when a lot of people thought after Larry Bird, then it was going to be nothing, some of the success and the good times you had?

**COACH ROYCE WALTMAN:** It's ironic, you know. We had 12 wins. Before I came to Terre Haute, that would have been cause for a ticker tape parade through town, but that's the way it goes. You have success, and you build expectations. I'm very proud of what we did so quickly in the first game there. We got back into the tournament, but we failed. I mean, we were in a position now to really build upon that, and we didn't, and there's no one to blame for that except myself, and that's what -- of all the things that bothers me, it's the acceptance of failing, but yeah. I'm really -- I'll have great memories of some of those teams and particularly some of those kids like Menser and Green. They call me all the time. They try to act like they don't care about me, and Nate Green will call from Italy and his greeting will be something like are you going to make it, old man, or not, but I have strong ties with those guys. We had some great teams, and then we made some recruiting errors and some mistakes and we found ourselves in a position where we didn't build as we should have, and I'm embarrassed by that.