

March 5, 2010



Illinois St. - 69
Indiana St. - 65

An interview with:



COACH JANKOVICH: Indiana State played tremendous out of the gate for the first ten or 15 minutes. That was not unexpected. We've seen them play outstanding over the last several years, but I was very, very impressed with the way they shot out at the first half.

But, because of that, I am just unbelievably proud of our guys. I think we were down ten or 11 points and not very many things were going right at that point, but just to fight our way back to tie it at the half I thought was just outstanding.

Then, tough out the second half, I couldn't have been more pleased. I thought they hit some unbelievable shots late that continued to make a game of it, despite our efforts. But just a lot of poise I thought by our guys. We never panicked and stuck with it and made a lot of tough plays down the stretch. It was a great win for us.

Q. Could you just talk about the end of the first half, you scored the last ten points, were you seeing on the bench that the team was struggling, and did you get it in your mind that you had to get everything going?

AUSTIN HILL: Yeah, and I seen the opportunity like Coach Jankovich was just saying, let the game come to you; I saw the chance and I just took it.

Q. Osiris, you struggled early, then in the second half you guys fell behind by three and you hit that three in the corner, does that get your juices going again?

OSIRIS ELDRIDGE: Yeah, I got it going, just trying to find my shot throughout the game. But I think what really got me going was defensive end when I started to get down and really guard. That was really my main focus coming to the game, try to do the best I could defensively and we got a couple stops. We got a couple breakaways. We got fast break off Austin, he got a basket, and I think that's what really got me going tonight.

Q. Austin, kind of a follow-up to the previous question. Talk about that run there before halftime, just how much you guys carried that momentum into the second half.

AUSTIN HILL: That was a big momentum shift for us. I mean, just on defensive side, we really picked it up on the defense and really tightened up at the end. I think that's what gave us the boost in the second half to go out and play harder.

Q. Osiris, could you talk about Lathan and how he just kind of went off and really kept them in the game?

OSIRIS ELDRIDGE: He was tremendous throughout the whole game. He hit some tough shots. He got to the basket. He's finishing strong. He's going to be a tough player in years to come with him only being a sophomore. Nothing I really can say.

I think we did a good job of slowing him

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down a little bit down the stretch. He hit some of those threes, getting into the lane, and stuff like that. He did do a good job tonight for them.

Q. The free throws down the stretch, were you guys getting a little tight there?

OSIRIS ELDRIDGE: Yeah, walking to that line. Usually I just walk up there and knock them down. But, I kind of started thinking a little bit too much and I missed the first front end. But, I made the second one, so I guess it's okay.

Q. Austin, same question.

AUSTIN HILL: Yeah, just going out there and just thinking too much instead of just going out there and focusing and knocking them down like we usually do.

Q. Osiris, Jackie is not in here, but it was 28-28 at half time, you were down 43-41 with 12 minutes left and Jackie just threw down the dunk to tie it up; it seems like you really took control after that dunk. What about that dunk really sparked you guys?

OSIRIS ELDRIDGE: I don't know. Jackie, from the day he stepped on campus at Illinois State, we have been seeing plays like that every day. That's just him. He's everywhere. He gives of that boost every game, and I think today he came up big. He got some big blocks, made some big free throws, and in the first half, he makes some big baskets. That's what we need, our young guys and Austin so everybody could step up because it's time where we need everybody.

Q. Austin, what's it feel like when you get on a roll like you did there at the end of the half, what does it feel like?

AUSTIN HILL: It feels pretty good. It feels real good. (Laughing).

Q. What are you experiencing? Do you feel like you can't miss at that point?

AUSTIN HILL: I mean, anything is possible. I was just seeing the shot. The defense really helped me out. I usually pick it up on my defense, my offense usually comes up.

Q. Osiris, can you talk about tomorrow and the challenge that's going to be?

OSIRIS ELDRIDGE: Well, we faced them in the past two times. January is behind us and get ready for Wichita and just try to approach the game like how we came into the game. Just go out and

just defend, defend and let the offense come. I think if we do that, then tomorrow will be a good day for us.

Q. How about the free throws at the end?

COACH JANKOVICH: Well, I'll say this: I just survived the second-longest day of my life. The longest day seems to be last year, the first night playing the late game is absolute torture, and it was no different.

It felt like today was two days, and with all of the worrying and the respect that I have for Indiana State; and then we take control of the game, and they hit some amazing shots. Did they not hit some amazing shots late? When they are down ten or whatever to continue to make it a game, and force us to make pressure free throws. I could think about was how sad it would be if our seniors' careers end because we just can't drop a free throw.

But, we made just enough. It wasn't like we were going empty every time. We were making just enough to force an extra possession and time ran out, I think when it was 28 seconds, you could feel like, okay, enough time has gone off that we are in pretty decent shape but they forced us to have about six different in-bounds plays and keep changing that.

But I don't blame at all. First round is the toughest. First round, to me, everyone feels the most pressure. All that's on the line, I think that basket gets a lot smaller. I certainly understood that but I was very worried that, you know, the thought of going in the locker room and saying, if we only had made a couple of free throws in the last minute, we would still be playing.

So didn't work out that way, and just a great, great day for us. Great two days for us.

Q. Could you talk about Austin and the last two minutes that he had?

COACH JANKOVICH: He did. He changed the game. We were on oxygen, at best. We didn't have a lot going on at either end. I thought their confidence was so high, and we needed a lift. We needed something. And for him to come in and do that, what amazing courage; on this stage, with what's at stake, what amazing courage. So I take my hat off to him along with the rest of the team without question. I also say that we ask an awful lot of Osiris. We ask him, we start

him on Marshall, and you know we have got a forest fire over there with Lathan that we can't get put out.

So, one of the other things that maybe goes unnoticed is when we finally switched O over to Lathan despite the fact that he had 27 during the time when O was guarding him. He really cooled him off, and that was part of what allowed us to make a little run and get a cushion at just the right time.

So he didn't shoot great. I thought he shot some really ill-advised shots, which trust me, are not the first ones we've had in my time with him. In the first half, he was a little too excited and he got confused on which was the three point line that we are using. And so that didn't help him.

But, but, he's a great, great competitor, and down the stretch, you can just count on nothing but grit from him. And we have asked him -- it would be interesting if we could go back, it would take forever. But to go back over the three years that I've coached him and how many six-minutes-and-down he has had so much to do with the outcome, and having nothing to do with what shows up on the stats sheet; just because we put him on a key guy and he stemmed the tied and allowed us to get a cushion which allows us to shoot free throws at the end, as opposed to have to make a desperation shot or shots like they were in that position.

So I give him an awful lot of credit.

Q. Can you preview tomorrow's game for us?

COACH JANKOVICH: Absolutely. I didn't get to see very much of the Wichita game, but they have had a tremendous year. They certainly look like they played today like they played most of the year, very talented, very experienced team. They have a lot of different weapons. Not an easy match up in a lot of ways. Now I understand their big fella is really playing, so any time a seven-footer starts getting his game on, that's not good news, at all.

Another thing about Wichita is they are a team that -- every team you need to prepare for, but Wichita is a little tricky to prepare for. They have got some unique offensive things that they do so it will be a little bit of a challenge. It will test our memory from early in the year. We haven't played them in quite some time as to how we defended certain actions that they have.

So we need to get to bed tonight, but we'll have a short meeting tonight, not much time

tomorrow; that's the beauty of these tournaments, is as each game comes, less and less preparation goes into your opponent, and so we are going to need some to do well against them. It will be a great test for us.

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COACH McKENNA: Well, I think Illinois State showed that they are a good team and a real athletic team. They really capitalized on our turnovers. Again, I think we had 12 turnovers, which is a decent number for us, but they scored 20 points off those turnovers.

I think that number kind of -- that's what kind of turned it right before the half is they got their heads up, and we had done a great job of controlling tempo, changing our defenses and just keeping them off balance till that point.

Obviously Harry hurt his foot real early in the game and wasn't close to being the explosive athlete that he is. That hindered him and hurt us. He battled and he tried to give us what he could and he gave us what he could. He's a heck of a competitor. We got some really good seniors, Harry, Rashad and Josh, I'm proud of them for hanging in there and we gave Illinois State a run for their money.

Q. Can you describe when the injury occurred and what effect it had on him?

HARRY MARSHALL: It happened early in the first half I think before the second media

timeout. It's the same thing that happened four weeks ago. I just stepped on somebody's foot. I think I re-stress fractured or however you want to say it. Just affected my quickness, like Coach said, my explosiveness. I just wanted to give it all, give my teammates a burst to see me out there and let them know that I was out there fighting with them.

Q. Dwyane, can you describe the last five minutes or so of the first half? You played good defense on Illinois State, they were under 20 percent from the field, as Kevin mentioned, a couple turnovers got them rolling; can you express your disappointment in the fact they were able to get back in it and get their momentum back?

WAYNE LATHAN: I felt like we were sticking to the scouting report the whole time. Everybody was doing what we were supposed to be doing. Everybody was playing like we were supposed to be playing. But we just let a couple mistakes just compound into more of them. With a good team like that, you have too many mistakes and too many turnovers, you give them a chance to get a run in and they are going to do that. They are going to make a good run just like we would if it was the other way around.

Q. Dwyane, did you feel like Illinois State played a little bit off the momentum they had in the first half and translated to their defense in the second half and maybe forced you guys into some shots that were maybe a little rushed or in a hurry?

WAYNE LATHAN: I give them a lot of credit. They played a good game. I feel like we hurt ourselves just as much as they did with the turnovers and some of the missed assignments and missed block outs. They are still a good team,

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but I felt like we just slipped up a couple of times that we shouldn't have.

Q. What was the key to the fast start you guys had tonight?

COACH McKENNA: Well, I think our plan was to guard their ball screens a little different. We had guarded them a certain way the previous two times, and we had been working on some other things. Then we zoned some and just tried to really keep them off balance and I thought we did a good job of that.

Coach Cunningham and all of our coaches just kind of put together something that we thought would be effective, and it was. Not having Harry at full strength really hinders our team. Our ball handling isn't nearly as good. But, you look at what Harry did guarding, in my opinion, one of the best players in our league and holding them for 10-for-39 for three games, that's pretty darned good. If he's not an all defensive player, or if not the best defensive player in our league, leading scorer in our league -- to me, he's a top player in this league, no question. He proved it all year long. It's just too bad that he got hurt tonight.

Not to take anything away from Illinois State; I would have liked to have seen what Harry could do at full strength for this whole game. But that's just part of kind of what we've dealt with all year, tough injuries that we try to overcome and like I said, our guys battle and I'm proud of their effort.

Q. Seemed like the momentum Illinois State took into the half time was translated into their defensive side in the second half; did you see that from your perspective?

COACH McKENNA: We still didn't create enough offense from our defense like they did. I mean 12 turnovers that we had led to 20 points. Their 11 offensive rebounds was 15 points. Last time those two stats were 44 points.

We did a better job and cut it down, but that's still a big number. We talked about cutting the number in half. We weren't able to do that. The turnovers led to direct points. When we had a lot of momentum, we had a lot of stuff going. We had a lot of things going, when it was 28-16, we had them back on their heels at both ends.

Defensively, I thought -- heck, we held them to 35 percent. We fouled a little bit too much there. We did foul at the end probably four or five times because we had to try and stay in the game,

but we still fouled a little bit too much and just made a few mistakes here and there that cost us.

Q. You walk away from this one knowing that the season probably will continue in some fashion. What's your take on that, and do you know to what extent Harry might be able to play if you guys do go on?

COACH McKENNA: I would like to say we are going to play again and we are going to pursue any kind of tournament we can. We want to play. Our guys want to play. I've talked to Ron about wanting to play. He's in agreement with that. I think we are a tournament-worthy team. I think we showed that tonight.

Obviously, you know, Harry will get checked out when we get back. I was worried about hurting Harry worse. I didn't want him to hurt himself. I didn't want him to feel like he had to give us something when he really couldn't. You know, it's a fine line between knowing what's inside of that young man and having it hurt him even more or hurt our team. You know, we'll have the docs check him out when we get back and hopefully for Harry's sake he has some more games left in him.

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