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An interview with:



THE MODERATOR: Questions for the Colorado student-athletes.

Q. Nate, as the point guard, how fine is the line between doing what you guys do in transition and maybe playing at a tempo that UNLV wants?

NATE TOMLINSON: Yeah, we have to be smart. That's a good question, but we're not going to hesitate at all. When we stop, we like to run, and we're not going to change our game at all. We're picking our spots when and where we want to be aggressive and just making the right decisions.

Q. Carlon, how much have they been kind of picking your brain in terms of the Runnin' Rebels with as much as you've seen them throughout your college career?

CARLON BROWN: Not much. It's a different coaching staff, different team. Philosophy's still the same. But we haven't really talked about it from our perspective and our angle. We're just going to still play our game, look to run, and look to get stops.

Q. Carlon, were you recruited by UNLV? Did you take a serious look at them before you went to Utah?

CARLON BROWN: Yeah, I was recruited by UNLV, and before I took my visit Kendall Wallace took the last scholarship. I probably would have ended up there, but that's old news.

Q. Jim Boylen used to say that fired you up to play better against the Rebels when you were at Utah. Was that the case?

CARLON BROWN: Not really. I didn't have a personal vendetta. I just wanted to play well against them or anybody, really.

Q. Nate, obviously, a lot has been made of how you guys and your coach specifically reacted last year, not getting in. You've seen him this week talk about the changes in him and how it was this time. I mean, you knew you were in, but just thinking back there, do you come here with a purpose?

NATE TOMLINSON: Yeah, you know, it was pretty tough last year getting snubbed. I have a picture on my wall of the photos of the guys that didn't get in, how disappointed we were on that Sunday last year. That drove me every day, and it's certainly driving me right now to prove some people wrong.

Q. Austin, with what you guys were able to do last week in Los Angeles, how do you recapture whatever intensity level you guys had there and transfer it now to this tournament?

AUSTIN DUFAULT: We just have to stay humble and stay hungry. This is just another step that we've taken now, and we have to make the most out of this opportunity. We can't be satisfied with what happened last week. That's all in the past. We just have to focus on this game and going out there and playing as hard as we can.

Q. Carlon, when you were going through your shooting slump a few weeks ago, what was going through your mind? Did you think it would ever end?

CARLON BROWN: Yeah, I knew it was going to end. The only thing that was going through my mind is getting to the point where it would end, just remaining confident in myself, staying focused, knowing that my teammates trust

in me to make plays and going out there and playing my game.

Q. Nate, I believe you guys are 8-1 in games decided by five points or less. That certainly goes beyond the luck of the draw. In your mind, what accounts for that? What do you guys do right in late game situations?

NATE TOMLINSON: I didn't know that. That's good. Our coaching staff, all year long we've time in score situations at the end of the practice or we're up two points or down two points with a couple of seconds to go. I don't think that's by any mistake. We practice it all year, so it makes sense.

Q. Out of curiosity, do you know Cameron Bairstow and Hugh Greenwood, from New Mexico, fellow Aussies?

NATE TOMLINSON: I do know Hugh very well.

Q. You played together?

NATE TOMLINSON: He's a little younger than me, but I played with him a little bit. He's kind of always been my little brother growing up, so, yeah.

Q. Carlon, could you talk about the transition offense? Both teams UNLV and Colorado like to get up and down the floor. Is there a faster team than you guys? Are they faster than you in your opinion when you see them?

CARLON BROWN: You can't tell how fast somebody is from film. But from my personal experience, they're pretty fast. But it's not a whole track team we're going against. It's still a basketball game. We have athletes just like they do.

So it should be a good game. We've just got to make the right read zone defense to stop that transition, and hopefully ours won't falter.

Q. Nate could you also answer that? What impresses you about UNLV, and what do you have to focus on?

NATE TOMLINSON: Transition defense, for sure. They get up something like 26 threes a game, which is unheard of against teams we've played. So we definitely have to defend the three-point line well and transition?

Q. Carlon, you've played in altitude both places now. When your name went up there, everyone took out that advantage from UNLV as an altitude league. If you are 8-1 in those close games, how much does it play to the fact that you tire people at the end? Can you see that?

CARLON BROWN: I can see it a little bit. But UNLV is used to playing here. They're used to playing in this environment as well. They know the gym. I don't expect them to get too tired. This is their game. One of us is going to win it. It just comes down to whoever gets the most stops or makes the most plays, like you were saying, during that five-minute stretch, depending on how close the game is.

Q. Nate, it appears that UNLV kind of thrives on turning other teams over. As the guy that's going to do the bulk of handling the ball, how important is ball security and taking care of every possession going to be in this game?

NATE TOMLINSON: It's very important. Not only taking care of the ball, but taking good shots. Bad shots are just as bad as bad turnovers. We've been pretty good at that lately. Our defense was really good in L.A. The turnovers were really good and shot selection.

So if we do the same things and get back in transition, we'll have no problem.

Q. Carlon, considering you almost ended up at UNLV, how ironic do you find it that you're going to face that team in the first round of the tournament? Can you talk about the confidence your team's playing with here at the end of the season after four wins in four days last week?

CARLON BROWN: Well, for me, this whole Colorado experience has been pretty ironic seeing that I played my former team in Utah, and got to play against a lot of the California schools. But as far as UNLV is concerned, it's just another one of those coincidental match-ups where I get to play against another team I've already played against.

As far as our team's confidence is concerned, we're very confident. We know we have a lot of momentum going into tomorrow, and we're just looking to win a game.

Q. Nate and Austin, obviously before now Colorado was not a huge name in college basketball, but you're there. What did you see there? Why did you make the decision to go there?

NATE TOMLINSON: Being from Australia, you don't get to watch too many college basketball games. It's mostly the ACC and Big 12. I knew about Colorado, not too much. Lucky I knew an assistant coach there that knew my father pretty well. They recruited me from Australia and when I went to prep school. I liked the place. Met a couple of the guys. I didn't really know too much about the history, to be honest.

I saw a vision when I got there. I met Austin and other guys there. We won nine games our first year, and every year we've gotten better. So I think that's a tribute to the guys that are there, and the guys that have been through the program and the coaching staff.

AUSTIN DUFAULT: Yeah, just looking at the program as I was recruiting by them, initially I just had a good opportunity to play, so that was one of the main reasons I chose to go there. The other reason was just the vision that they had for building the program. It was kind of at a low point and there were a lot of quality guys that were already there like Cory Higgins and guys like that.

I came in with Nate, and we just had a vision of building a good program there the right way kind of from the ground up. I think this year has culminated in that.

Q. Austin, when Carlon was struggling what were your teammates or his teammates, like yourself, telling him? What were you doing to console him or pump him up?

AUSTIN DUFAULT: Just telling him to keep shooting. He's a great player. Everybody goes through slumps every once in a while. To be honest, the way Carlon approached every day and every game, I didn't really know he was in a slump. He still had his confidence. He still played tough defensively. We just wanted to keep giving him confidence and letting him know we've got your back. Keep shooting the ball. Those are good shots for you.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach Boyle.

Q. Tad, how has your team responded in terms of their legs, and how are they feeling after last week's journey through all those games?

COACH BOYLE: Well, I think our legs are fine. We've got a couple guys that have little bumps and bruises. Our practices haven't been very good, to be frank. But this time of year, as a coach, you sometimes have to brush that off. But I think health-wise, we're fine. We've given them enough time off.

As a coach this time of year, you never know if you're doing too much or too little. I think with the way our team performed in L.A., we feel pretty good about what we've done. I really rely on these three seniors you guys just talked to in terms of asking them how they're feeling and if we're doing a little bit too much. But our legs will be fine.

Q. Has it been exactly what you thought or is there any day you look back and say that commodities thing would have been cool?

COACH BOYLE: No, I've never -- I've been one of those guys where you make a decision in your life, and I don't look back saying I wish I would have done that or would have done that. I've been blessed. You've got to be lucky in this business, and I have been. I've been around good people. I've worked for great head coaches when I was an assistant, and I worked for great administrations along the way. So no regrets. Absolutely. Still watch the Money Channel from now and again though.

Q. Is there a team that you've played this season that maybe is similar to what you're seeing with UNLV? And how would you say the similarities are?

COACH BOYLE: That's a great question. I don't think there's one team, but as I look in our league in the Pac-12, I see a team with Oregon State's athleticism and size from the back court to the front court. I see a team with Oregon's ability to shoot the ball from a lot of different spots on the floor. So it's kind of a combination between Oregon and Oregon State.

UNLV is a tremendously talented group. They've got a great back court. Bellfield and Marshall I think are two really good guards. And the Moser kid is obviously special. I think Massamba in the middle is a very, very good player, and they have Stanback on the wing, and a good bench that comes in.

So I would say a combination between Oregon State and Oregon. But I think they're more

skilled than maybe Oregon State is, but they've got their athleticism, and they're probably more athletic than Oregon is. But they shoot the three-ball like Oregon does. Two pretty tough things to deal with.

Q. You've talked a lot about your team being satisfied or not being satisfied with what they accomplished last week. Do you get the feeling that that is sinking in?

COACH BOYLE: I do. I've got a lot of confidence in our group. We've got a mature group of guys. We've got three seniors, again, who this is their first opportunity and it's going to be their last opportunity to play in this tournament. I think, again, when you look back at what we've just been through last week, I think it really has galvanized our team and brought them together and given them a sense of accomplishment.

But I don't feel like we have that we're just satisfied to be here type of mentality. So I trust our guys. I do. I've trusted them all year. I've got a lot of faith in them.

Again, the thing we talk about all the time is giving unbelievable effort, and playing with unbelievable energy and passion for 40 minutes, and I expect us to do that.

Q. Last year there was some feeling that it was easy for people on that selection committee to sit in there and look at all these numbers, vote or whatever to not put a Colorado in there because it's not like you're not putting North Carolina in the field. How important do you think tradition and becoming a basketball school is in the big picture when you're recruiting, getting little breaks, things like that?

COACH BOYLE: In terms of what happened last year, you've got to ask the committee that. I don't know what the answer is in terms of what they think. In terms of what I think, we have some work to do to get some respect on the national level. The reason we were so disappointed last year was we felt like we had a team that could do that and a very explosive team with what's turned out to be two NBA players on it, one lottery pick, and we got left out. The kids responded and went to the Final Four of the NIT, and lost a heartbreaker to Alabama in the semis, but we've used that as inspiration.

We haven't cried about it. We cried about it at the time. We tried to talk about the injustice. But at the end of the day, nobody really cares after

those first couple days. Life moves on for everybody.

Last year's snub still hurts today. Probably hurts more today than it did last year at this time. I'm probably more proud of this team for accomplishing what they accomplished because I realize how hard it is to get here, and how many good teams there are that aren't in this tournament.

We've got work to do though on a national scale in terms of respectability. We've got an opportunity tomorrow night to start on that journey.

Q. You've got a group of guys that have never been here before, and this becomes a very grand stage above and beyond what you guys saw last week in Los Angeles. Do you have to manage that with these guys about stepping up even another notch in competition?

COACH BOYLE: No, I don't think we do. I think what we have to talk about is eliminating distractions. It may be a bigger stage, certainly nationally. But in terms of what we're here to do and how we want to approach UNLV, it's no different than how we wanted to approach Utah when we were getting ready to play them in the first round of the Pac-12 tournament last week at this time.

Yeah, it's bigger. The lights are brighter and all that. But in terms of our preparation, nothing changes other than talking to our guys about eliminating distractions. Put those phones away. Get some rest. Don't worry about all the tweets and all that stuff that kids do today, and just focus in on the task at hand.

Again, it goes back to trust. I trust our guys, and I believe that we'll be ready to handle that.

Q. Coach, by my count, you're 8-1 in games decided by five points or less. The players were surprised by that, so maybe I need to check my math. But in any way, you guys have been successful in close games. What accounts for that?

COACH BOYLE: I think you have to go to our practices. During the season we've done a lot of time and score situations at the end, so I think our players are familiar with those situations and they have confidence.

The other thing is this team is committed

on the defensive end. The only way you can win close games, and we've won our fair share of them this year. You look at the Oregon game and the Pac-12 tournament. You look at the Arizona game at home. You look at the Arizona game and the championship on Saturday. We won those with defensive stops.

So our commitment to defense and our guys' belief in each other when, hey, we've got to get a stop in this situation, whether it's to win the game or to get back in the game late, they've risen to those challenges and those occasions.

So it's a combination of that, and we've made some shots. We haven't had any buzzer beaters, so we haven't had any of those. But we've had a commitment on the defensive end that's allowed us to really play well down the stretch.

Q. As Pac-12 tournament champions and the only team in your conference seeded into the second round, do you feel like you're carrying the banner for your conference?

COACH BOYLE: Yeah, both us and Cal are. There are only two of us in this tournament. We both have a responsibility to our league and to the other Pac-12 teams to represent well. We want to do that. We talked a lot last week about playing for somebody other than yourself, and we were talking about our fans back in Boulder, our alumni base, our students that weren't able to come out and see us in L.A.

Now you can add to that the other ten Pac-12 teams that aren't in this field, we're playing for them. So, yeah, there is some responsibility that goes with that, but we want to represent this conference well, and we have to.

Q. On that note right there about the Pac-12 not being viewed nationally as being a conference that deserves more than two teams. Since you've got a stage here to talk to the nation, make a case for what you saw in that league this season, and why you think it was quality basketball?

COACH BOYLE: I think a couple things. So many times your league is judged against other leagues based on November and December, and those games that take place then. In all actuality, I guess that's the only way you can compare apples to oranges when it comes to the non-conference because whenever everybody gets into league play, you're beating up on each other.

All I can tell you is coming from the Big 12, which is a heck of a league, and coming into the Pac-12, which is a heck of a league, the difference in respect factor is huge. The difference in talent and ability and quality of play is small. So somewhere there is disconnect. We have to do a better job of closing that gap between perception and reality.

You look at Washington in our league. You look at Oregon State, they're as talented as anybody. They beat a Texas team that's in this tournament in non-conference, but we get no respect for that. We don't have enough quality wins in the non-conference to warrant us sitting up here and making a case that can't be disputed.

But I can tell you, the players in this league and coaches in this league are as good as any in the country in terms of the other BCS leagues. It's our job to go out and prove that.

Whether we do it here in the tournament or whether we do it next year as we move forward into our non-league portions of our schedule, it's something we have to do.

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