

March 8, 2013



ILLINOIS STATE – 73
UNI – 65

AN INTERVIEW WITH:

**COACH BEN JACOBSON
JAKE KOCH
MARC SONNEN**

THE MODERATOR: We welcome head coach Ben Jacobson with Marc Sonnen and Jake Koch to the podium. We'll begin with a brief statement from Coach Jacobson, then take questions for the student-athletes and then return for questions with Coach.

COACH JACOBSON: Thanks. This game wasn't a lot different than our game on Saturday from the standpoint of with two and a half or three minutes left, it was a one-possession game. At our place on Saturday, they had a couple of open threes that didn't go in. Then we had the one at the top that Jake had that was really, really close to going in. That would have given us the lead.

I think in either case, the games could have flipped. And then the other aspect, Carmichael was in a little bit of foul trouble the other night. He was obviously more of a factor in this game.

At the same time, we were challenged heavily a couple of times in this game, early, to start the game, and then again in the second half. And like these guys have always done, they responded heavily and mightily and made sure we had a chance to win. Proud of them for that in this basketball game.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Marc Sonnen and Jake Koch.

Q. Marc, I don't expect you to take this well. Just kind of talk about the sting of having to take a bus ride home tomorrow.

MARC SONNEN: It hurts. When you put all your effort and everything into it, you know everything you got, like our team does every single

night we go out there, it hurts really bad. Give credit to them. They played a really good game.

But, hopefully we can keep playing and that's going to be determined later on. I thought we fought hard when we got challenged, like Coach was saying. I think guys responded well and stuck with it even when they were hitting a lot of shots and playing so well to begin the night.

I felt good about how our guys stuck with it. It hurts deep down, especially being last time ever playing down here. It's one of the -- it sucks, but you got to live with it and you got to move on. These are the type things in life, I think you respond to how you're going to go about it.

I think we got to keep staying positive with each other and keep staying together. Hopefully, we can keep playing together and finish out a good year on a good note.

Q. Marc, two things. What goes through your mind when you see Tyler Brown hit the shots he had right away? And how did you ride that out and get the 15-point lead to tied before the end of the half?

MARC SONNEN: He's a really good player. He can do so many things. He's going to hit tough shots, but you've got to keep your head up and keep staying with it no matter what. He's going to take a lot of shots. He hit some big-time shots for him.

You got to keep staying with it no matter what. You can't get down on yourself and you can't shy away from it. You have to rise up to the challenge. He stepped up and hit shots. I tried my best to stop him, but he obviously made big plays.

What was the second question?

Oh, you know, leadership and teamwork and I think staying together is a big thing. Somebody, when they went on the big run on the first half, a lot of teams can fall and say, "They're hitting shots; we give up."

I felt like we kept staying with it and using the leadership we have and focusing and being confident that we can keep cutting the lead and getting stops and stepping up. Guys were

stepping up and making shots and cutting into the lead. I thought we did a good job in the first half and the second half when they went on a little run too.

Q. Jake, Brown hit those big shots early, hit a couple late. You guys couldn't seem to get anything to fall late. How much is that just a difference in the game, them making a few shots and you missing a few?

THE MODERATOR: Jake, why don't you try that one?

JAKE KOCH: Like Coach Jake said, this is like the second time we played them at our place. Difference was they made shots. We couldn't capitalize. Couldn't get a stop.

Like Marc said, Brown's a good player. Could have done some things differently, me personally stepping out on ball screens, getting my hands up. He's a good player.

THE MODERATOR: Marc, any additional thoughts?

MARC SONNEN: Basically, what he said. He's such a good player and does so many good things, you have to keep staying with it. He did kind of the same thing in the first game. But big players make good plays and I thought he did a good job for their team and it's something you've got to keep staying with what we do as our defense.

He hit big-time shots. Sometimes there's not a lot you can do when a guy is hot. You've got to stay with it and keep doing what you've been doing all game.

THE MODERATOR: Perhaps one last question for our student-athletes. Gentlemen, thank you for your time and attention. Congratulations on your year to this point.

Questions for Coach Jacobson.

Q. Jake, just how much was it kind of spending so much gas playing from behind the whole game? You didn't have enough there at the end?

COACH JACOBSON: I was worried about that toward the end of the first half, maybe three-quarters of the way through the first half. When we had the lead, did we have the lead at half? One?

Yeah, when he had the lead at half and came out and scored early in the second half, I thought we'd be okay. But through the first three quarters of the first half, I was very concerned

about having to play Marc the entire time, having to play some guys with two fouls, just having to keep our most experienced guys on the floor and our best scoring unit on the floor because we were behind.

I felt like that might catch up to us, but early in the second half, we scored a couple times. I thought we'd be okay from that point on.

When we got down ten in the second half, I didn't feel like that was necessarily a factor that we had to fight back. That's the reason we got down ten again, I guess.

Q. Ben, Tyler came out and hit four threes in the first five minutes and you quieted him down. And in the second half, he had two big shots. Did you think your defense was doing okay, his hitting big shots? How did you view that?

COACH JACOBSON: The one he made in front of our bench was a long ways out. That one, that's okay. And the one, the one he shot opposite our bench seemed to be a long ways out as well. And that one, okay. The other two, I don't know that we guarded him well enough. And I don't think they were the first two and the second two. I don't know the order of them.

Two of the four he made, I thought, were okay. Two of them we didn't defend quite well enough. From that point on, he didn't score a lot the last ten minutes of the first half and didn't score much the first 15 minutes of the second half.

Give him credit for the two he made at the end. They were difficult shots, heavily contested, especially the second of the two, the 15-footer over Seth. That was a tough shot.

So give him credit for making those two.

Q. I'm sure you're expecting to play some more basketball this year. What are your thoughts on the next week to ten days?

COACH JACOBSON: I think the performance the guys have put in, Carson, gets us either in the NIT or an awfully serious look at it as we go through the next week. I think everybody would agree with that.

I think finishing by ourselves in third in the ninth-best league in the country with wins over the two teams that are first and second, a win over St. Mary's, who's looking like an NCAA Tournament team, other than our loss at Southern Illinois, we have no losses -- we have one the

whole year, a road game. That's really outside of the top 100 by much. Illinois State, maybe outside the top 100. Evansville at 100.

That nonconference strength of schedule is inside the top 15. We did what we were supposed to do from a scheduling standpoint. We're 7-3 in our last ten, playing really good basketball. My feeling is that we'll get an invite to the NIT or serious consideration, as they're making those decisions over the next week.

If that doesn't happen, then we'll look at one of the other two tournaments.

THE MODERATOR: Perhaps one final question for Coach Jacobson?

Q. You won this tournament in '09 and '10. The last three years, going home one and done. Do you think it's a difference in the quality of the teams or the fine line between winning and losing down here?

COACH JACOBSON: I didn't catch the first part. Okay. Yeah, I think the fine line certainly comes into play. Like I said, the game tonight, there were some differences throughout the game. But the bottom line is at the end, they missed the two open threes. Tonight, Jake missed the one at the top and if that was at our place, maybe a different ending. If Jake's goes in tonight, maybe a different ending. Maybe not. I think more that fine line.

Now, two years ago, after Luke got hurt, we weren't experienced enough up front to -- you always think you're going to win when you come down here. We certainly thought we were. Looking back on it without Luke, that was going to be hard. So that was an injury, I think, that hurt us two years ago.

Last year, Deon and Seth being freshmen, and those two guys didn't play their best last year. That hurt us. I think some different reasons with this year, last year and two years ago. Tonight, we were healthy and experienced team, and we got beat by a team that played a little better than we did.

So I think it's more the fine line. If you finish in the -- if you're playing Friday, if you finish in the top six, it's a pretty fine line with games, especially with the 4-5 and the 3-6 games. Got to make the right plays. They got to some loose balls in the first half, got some offensive rebounds. And they made a couple plays at the end.

It's a very thin line. They deserve credit for winning the game tonight. They got to the right side of the thin line.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you so much. Appreciate your attention. Congratulations on your year.

COACH JACOBSON: Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports