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An interview with:

**COACH JANKOVICH
TONY LEWIS
AUSTIN HILL**

THE MODERATOR: Coach Jankovich, can you give us a statement on the game.

COACH JANKOVICH: Well, end of the year is always very difficult for a coach because it means you say goodbye to seniors. And it's been my experience when you like them the best is when they're seniors, because they just mature so much and they try so hard and they want it so badly.

It's always a tough pill to swallow when your season ends. I just really, really appreciate all that our seniors have done for us over their time here.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Tony, I think you were down by 10 there in the middle of the second half, and you kind of led the rally. Were you just kind of looking to be a little more offensive there?

TONY LEWIS: Not looking to be more offensive, but looking to be more aggressive and just give my team energy and get everybody into the game.

Q. When you look back on this game, is it going to be the turnovers that you maybe look at the most? You had 15 turnovers and they had 4. What kind of caused a lot of those turnovers, do you think?

AUSTIN HILL: I think down the stretch we just got too much in a rush instead of just calming down and just relaxing and letting the game just come to us instead of letting things flow. We were just looking to get the quick, easy bucket instead of

just letting it come to us, you know. That's just something that we've been working on all season.

TONY LEWIS: That's what we've been working on. I mean, we kind of rushed through things. But as we calmed down, we made plays. But, like you said, those turnovers hurt us. But that's what we were working on and we kind of rushed through those. No regrets, but it was just a good game.

Q. The last play you drew up, everything seemed like it worked perfectly, the long pass to Ekey and all that. Is that something you work a lot on in practice?

COACH JANKOVICH: Not a lot. We probably should more. Some years there's more to work on than others. You know, when you have a veteran team and things are going really well like some of the years past it seems like you have more time to do those kind of things. This year we don't do that that much, but I thought they executed perfect.

But you've heard me say this a million times, the goal of the game is to put yourself in a position where you don't have to rely on a last play. Either way, you want to be the team that's marching to the foul line. That is the goal of the game. Then of course you can also lose by missing free throws, but that's how you win games.

This year we've won enough close games, overtime games. We've lost some close games. That's the way it goes. If you play in enough close games, you win your share, you lose your share. You hit a lucky shot. You bank one in, you miss an easy one.

I never see it that way. I see the game having almost nothing to do with the last possession, honestly. I see the game that we played poorly for 28 minutes. From the offensive standpoint, God, I don't know. Maybe we're a little nervous or we looked like we were in mud at times a little bit.

Then really, I thought the last 12 minutes we really got into a rhythm. We started flowing.

We got our head up and attacked and really played tremendously, I thought. I really thought we were playing awfully well. Came back as we did, we were in great shape.

I thought a huge call, huge, huge, huge call for us was the charged block that went against Alex with about five minutes to go, I think. Five minutes, I think. That went against us. He picked up his fourth foul. He was playing tremendous defense as was our entire team. I really felt like we were locking them down and felt like we had a great chance.

We took him out, and then we weren't as strong at the point of attack, and they got a couple lay-ups and that's how they got back on top of us. We also had some shots that we'd normally hope to make and we did not.

But the story of the whole game was the turnovers. I'm really proud of this. I think our last four, if I'm not mistaken, in a row, we've held teams to under 40%. This is a team that we don't have a lot of great -- a lot of great things haven't happened.

Yet we're late in the year of a disappointing year, and guys are still just fighting their tails off to hold teams not even at home. Only one of those four games was a home game and we held four teams in a row under 40% shooting percentage. Again, tonight we held them to 39, must have given them six lay-ups off turnovers. Might have been 34 or something had we not done that.

To me the game was simple. We outrebounded them. We defended very well and we turned it over 11 more times than they did. And not only did we do that, but they were live ball turnovers and that's what got us.

You know, it's a little ironic. Though all coaches know it's not any secret. But for the last week and a half or so talking about the tournament, and all we've been talking about is we have to win the rebounds and we have to win the turnovers. That has to be done in a tournament. That's how you get sent home. We even did some extra things that way, and it just obviously didn't pay off.

I give Southern credit. I thought their pressure was very good. It wasn't at all lack of focus on our guys part. I thought the pressure was very good from them. They forced us into, not all 15, but they definitely forced us into a number of those. I didn't think we made very good reads. Our decisions were really poor the first half. We didn't see our counters very well.

But it's too late now. Sports, I learned a long time ago, you either feel really, really good or really, really bad. There's not a whole lot in between, so we get to feel really, really bad.

Q. Could you talk about Tony's effort?

COACH JANKOVICH: Oh, he's just amazing. That's why I say, you lose seniors. Who plays harder than Tony Lewis? Maybe Alex Rubin. Those two guys play as hard as you can play, really. I mean, that's why I feel so badly for a number of guys on this team like them who, and this is what I told them. Just because you lose, doesn't mean you're a loser at all.

We all feel that way. It's just the nature of our world, but it really isn't. How can you say that Tony Lewis or Alex Rubin is anything but a winner with the effort and character and courage that they show night-in and night-out, whether they play well or not.

That's what's rewarding to me. If you get a chance and you're lucky enough to coach guys like that that they put their whole heart and soul into what they do.

Q. How much as you go into the off-season and the young guys that are coming back will be having to rebuild some confidence with them? Have you seen some of that waiver from time to time?

COACH JANKOVICH: Yeah, for sure. Inexperience leads to that and lack of success leads to that. So certainly this group doesn't have the swagger our last three teams had for sure. It's a completely different feeling that way. We came into the season one of the least experienced teams in.

So you hope that maybe you can overcome that with a lot of things, but we were not able to. I'm quite sure their confidence is not going to be going into next year like everybody's was the last three years going into the next year.

But we have a lot of work to do. We have to get better. We have to have guys that want it very badly and are willing to put the work in because a lot of improvements, a lot of strides need to be made, and we understand that, and they understand that.

So after a short break, spring break, I guess I think is coming up, we need to get in a mindset that we've got to get a lot better in a lot of different ways.

We struggled to score all season. We struggled again tonight. We've played in the 50's all year long. That was apparent two months ago that was going to be a major issue. We just kept hoping we would get more offensive punch and that didn't happen, so we paid the price for it.

So I thought we were a pretty darn good defensive team here at the end of the year. Pretty good rebounding team, but not good enough offensively. Didn't put enough points on the board.

We will have to get back to more like the teams of the past. We're going to have to do that, and that doesn't happen by playing video games and laying around on the couch.

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