

March 14, 2013



UCLA – 80
Arizona State – 75

An interview with:

COACH HOWLAND SHABAZZ MUHAMMAD TRAVIS WEAR

THE MODERATOR: Coach, an opening statement, please?

COACH HOWLAND: It was a great win. Really proud of our team. We beat a very good team today. When you look at our conference, the Pac-12 and you think that's the 8th seeded team in our league, I think that says a lot about our conference. I give Arizona State a ton of credit. They had us down. They had us down 15 with 16 minutes to go. But these guys never quit. They never gave up. They never stopped believing in themselves and each other, and really found a way to battle back.

We came out great in the second half, cut it to three, and then they go back to 11. Then we battle back again after going down 15. So I'm really proud, because earlier in the season we had a couple of instances like that, and we didn't come back. And this team is very resilient. Has great leadership, and just really proud of their toughness.

Again, I can't say enough about Arizona State. I thought Bachynski, he always gives us problems. He's given us problems in every single game since his freshman year. He wouldn't even play a lot as a freshman.

I thought Jordan Adams did a fantastic job on Felix today. For Felix to only have seven points and four rebounds tells me that he was blocked out well and that he was defending well, because he is a great player that's going to make a lot of money.

Carson is just fantastic. Can't say enough about him. I thought Larry Drew, I look at his line,

8 for 10 from the field, 4 for 4 from three, 20 points, 4 assists, only two turnovers. We only had six turnovers today, and they only had five.

So that's a pretty well-played game when you're talking about two teams that have combined only had 11 turnovers. I was so happy that we won the battle of the boards today because that's been our Achilles heel. That's why, by the way, Larry's not here right now because he's icing his Achilles tendon, which is a little sore.

I thought Travis did a great job. You could see Travis had missed two weeks with the exception of 32 minutes of game playing with the Arizona game and Washington State. He didn't do anything, contact, and so he obviously made a big shot.

I thought Shabazz did a fantastic job taking the game over, especially scoring inside. I mean, we need to score inside, and he's our best player at going to the basket. And we made our foul shots, 15 for 17 is fantastic. And we had to play really, really well to beat a very good team and live for another day.

Q. Shabazz, you talk about your second half. After a slow start, you were able to pick it up in the second half?

SHABAZZ MUHAMMAD: Yeah, the first half, we had some good plays set for me, and I got some open looks. I mean, they didn't fall, but I was just trying to make sure I was rebounding the ball and playing hard. When you do that, you get good opportunities, and I started rebounding the ball and the ball started really coming to me in the second half.

COACH HOWLAND: He had foul trouble in the first half too. We were kind of taking -- and I really rolled the dice to play him in the last minute in that last possession of the first half for him to get the rebound and put it back was a huge play for us.

Q. What happened at the end of the game there on the Arizona State bench?

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SHABAZZ MUHAMMAD: Yeah, I mean, I just got a hard foul, and I don't know if he kicked the ball; I don't know what. Just tried to stay composed and knowing it's a tough loss for them. They were up the whole game.

Like I said, we are getting ready for tomorrow, so that's one thing that we have to forget about.

Q. Did he kick you?

SHABAZZ MUHAMMAD: Yeah, he did kick me, but it's something that, I mean, he's a competitor, and he's mad they lost. So, I mean, that's what it is.

Q. Can you just talk about coming back home and playing here at the MGM? It almost looked like it was going to end one and done, and you get to keep on going?

SHABAZZ MUHAMMAD: Yeah, we're very fortunate. I just thought in the first half I thought we played hard, but in the second half we really turned it up, and it really had good Karma for us. We just went down and really rebounded the ball.

I think we outrebounded them, and then Travis had that big shot. We were just all really composed and that's what happens when you're composed and relaxed.

Q. What was the difference on the boards? It's been a while since you've outrebounded someone. Was it motivation? Effort?

COACH HOWLAND: I thought we blocked out. I thought Travis, in particular, and David were excellent in that respect, because they're the ones that are kind of isolated inside. They're playing four guards out on the perimeter, and only one big inside. And Bachynski's going to make a lot of money playing basketball. He's done next year after his senior year. He's really a hard match-up.

I did notice looking at the stats here, we had five guys in double figures. That always pleases me. When we have five guys in double figures, chances are we're going to win the game. So it was a really good balance today. Again, led by Larry. Larry was absolutely incredible today. He's playing really good basketball for us.

Q. Ben, what did you think about those uniforms?

COACH HOWLAND: Our players love them. Shabazz was just talking about how nice they fit. They're so light.

Q. How nice they fit?

COACH HOWLAND: They're really light, and they're very light.

Q. How about how they look?

COACH HOWLAND: You know what, I'm 55, but I'm hip. I'm cool, you know? But we're going back to our UCLA traditional jersey tomorrow. I like some of the jersey changes. I was telling Shabazz and Trav out in the hall way before we came in here, the one we wear for the SC game, the blue one, I really like that.

Adidas is unbelievably great to us. Adidas is a great partner for UCLA. They're incredible supportive. They take care of all of our teams and do a fantastic job. So this is a marketing thing for them, and we're happy to help them in any way we can.

Q. Obviously, you don't know your opponent yet, but I've got to pose the hypothetical if you face Arizona or Colorado, take us through what you'll see in those matches?

COACH HOWLAND: When you get to this time of year, there is no easy game. Colorado is fantastic. They're in their 20s in the RPI. Arizona is 13 in the RPI. They're both very good teams and we know we have our hands full. We're just really pleased to be playing another day and finding a way to come back and win that tough game over Arizona State.

So we're excited about the opportunity. We know it's going to be a tough game either way. It's hard.

Q. Dunking on the seven-footer, walk me through that, and have you ever done anything like that before?

SHABAZZ MUHAMMAD: Yeah, not this season, but in high school I think I've done it. Just knowing I got the break and I knew he was going to jump. So I just tried to get a good position on him and went up and got the dunk on him.

COACH HOWLAND: Kind of fired his teammates up as I remember.

SHABAZZ MUHAMMAD: Yeah.

Q. How important is it to win a game with the scrappiness this team showed today?

COACH HOWLAND: It's very important. We're hoping to get a good situation in the next tournament. And you're playing -- we're playing right now like it's the NCAA Tournament. If you lose, you're done.

We were on a flight home tonight if we lose this game, so you've got to have sense of urgency over possession. We made a few mental break downs where we left Gilling. I mean, Gilling played great. Gilling has five threes today. They were 6 for 17, and we were really fortunate. We had a three-point lead and left him to help on a drive, which is what Carson wanted, and he had a wide open three right in front of their bench that he missed. He had one wide open. I think his last two threes he missed, and they were both great looks. So we appreciate the good fortune and are very thankful.

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