

March 14, 2013



Arizona – 79
Colorado – 69

An interview with:

COACH MILLER NICK JOHNSON SOLOMON HILL

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes?

Q. Solomon, I asked Nick a few minutes ago about the returning guys and the importance of winning this thing and crafting your own legacy as a program. Arizona hasn't won this thing since 2000 when they brought the tournament back. For you, personally, what would it mean to win tomorrow and cut down the net Saturday?

SOLOMON HILL: It would mean everything to me. Talking about being on a team that's been here in back-to-back championships twice and lost by close games, just telling the fellas, it's one game at a time.

We played great tonight. We had a couple of mishaps here and there, but all in all we got the W. But it would mean everything for me to really end with a win here and be able to cut down the nets and wear the hats and T-shirts. But it's all one game at a time.

Q. Nick, if you could just talk about the difference today compared to the first two games you individually had against Colorado?

NICK JOHNSON: Yeah, I felt that Coach made a good decision to switch me on to Spencer. I got to pick the ball up and move a little bit and get going. I think that led to good shots on the offensive end.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, an opening statement?

COACH MILLER: Well, we're obviously thrilled with the win. We beat an excellent basketball team. Our conference, when you get to a conference tournament, it's about the conference you're in. You think about Colorado being seeded 5th, it really shows the depth and quality of our conference from top to bottom.

If you watched the UCLA-Arizona State game, you saw the same thing. We all knew when we came to Vegas this tournament was going to be an incredible tournament, and I believe it's headed in that direction.

I couldn't be more proud of our team, because we need to play extremely hard to beat a team like Colorado. It seems like every time we get together with them, we play these very physical, tough games, and today was no different.

These two guys up here, Solomon and Nick, both played great games. You look at them. They were 11 for 20 combined from the field and played really hard, Solomon on his rebounding and Nick defensively I thought did the best he could. That's a hard match-up for any guard, and he did a great job.

So we're excited to move on, and know that tomorrow at 6:00, we're playing against a team that's beat us twice, and we'll have to play our best performance of the season to beat those guys.

Q. Can you talk about the play of Jordin Mayes?

COACH MILLER: Jordin gave us a spark. We talked before the game that in tournament play it's many times a guy who doesn't start who is the difference, who comes into the game and makes big plays. Jordin's confidence really started to come back around in LA. It was one of the few bright spots of that trip for us. But you could sense that he started to feel good about his shot and his offense. Then against ASU on Saturday and then here again today.

I think those of you who have followed us know that he has a career very, very high three-point percentage. He just got into a rut over

a couple of months and wasn't able to get himself out of it as quickly as he would have liked, and us as well.

Now's a great time for him to make shots and play the way he plays. By the way, Jordin is one of our best perimeter defenders, and even while he wasn't making shots, he really did a good job defensively. So today he combined both of those qualities; and, again, it's one of the many reasons we won the game.

Q. You briefly touched on the kind of games that you and Colorado seem to be playing every time you match-up. Can you elaborate a little bit further on where this match-up kind of ranks in the Pac-12 in the games that you've played?

COACH MILLER: I don't know in the Pac-12. I just know that we respect them a great deal. They're very well-coached. We have similarities in terms of our style. They take a lot of pride in their man-to-man defense; we do as well. They have some really talented players, and obviously, we do too. I think both teams play hard.

When you have those similarities and qualities, and then you play really, really hard and play to win, many times the game plays itself out like it did here today.

Q. You talked about the physicality of the game and Coach Boyle said the same thing. From the bench, and maybe Solomon can add this from being inside, but how exactly physical was it? It seemed that both teams really crashed on the offensive glass and bodies were flying all over the place. What was it like out there?

SOLOMON HILL: They're always an aggressive team. Talk about trying to keep André Roberson off the glass. In the second half he had two tip jams. When you have a guy like that, you don't want to get him going, so you have to hit him before he gets in the paint.

Xavier Johnson is another guy that hurt us at Colorado with the tips. Josh Scott is a guy that hurt us. So being able to hit those guys and get them off track to get to the rim is a big thing. They did the same thing to me in the second half. Spencer really tried to hit me before I could get the offensive rebound.

Every loose ball means everything in a game like that. It's a possession game, so you want to be able to scramble for it. And those guys want to protect their hoop, just like we want to do.

Q. They've made 17 threes against you in the regular season. Today four. Did you do anything schematically different?

COACH MILLER: We did. We were really much more aware of how they got them. In the first two games they use a ball screen, and so many teams when they use a ball screen, they tend to throw back the direction they started. Colorado loves to get into the middle and kick across, almost like you're coming full speed into the middle of the foul line area, draw help, make the next pass, and they really hurt us a lot there.

So tried to be even more aggressive on the ball screens and off the ball really worry more about our man and less about the help. Try to get more help around the basket from our big guys. And I thought Nick, as he can do, really stepped up and made the game hard.

It's not always that you pitch a shutout defensively as much as how much your effort level can make the other team or other player work to score. There is no question that his talent and effort level on defense, that alone, made the game harder for their guards, not that their guards didn't play well, but our effort level was where it needed to be to win. Many times our defense starts with Nick.

Q. You briefly touched on it, but if you could preview the UCLA match-up, what you guys are expecting tomorrow?

COACH MILLER: Well, we know UCLA's very good. Larry Drew has been a huge reason that we've lost both games. He has scored and also gotten his teammates easy baskets. I'm pretty sure we're not the only team that feels that way. But we have to be able to contain him. We have to be able to make sure that he doesn't control the game at the end of the clock, at the end of the game.

Obviously, UCLA has talented players. In terms of us being able to score on them, we have to be really unselfish, move, create great shots. I think that any time a team beats you twice, you really want to get that one win.

So we're going to give it our best shot. I think we have a team that's committed to trying to come up with a great game plan and execute it. Whether we do it or not, we'll see. But I know this: That everybody on our side of the fence is eager and knows that it's going to be a really, really hard

fought game, maybe even a harder fought game than the one we played tonight.

Q. It looked like in the last 35 seconds or so you liked that match-up and wanted to take it right to the basket there?

NICK JOHNSON: Yeah, I just tried to exploit my size on Booker. I mean, I got to the lane and finished the shot.

Q. Can you touch on the match-up with UCLA and what you remember emotionally from the last two?

SOLOMON HILL: I think we played a lot harder our second game at UCLA. But like Coach said, Larry Drew was really the pace setter for their team. He gets a lot of their guys easy shots. The twins were knocking down some huge shots. I think if you can try to, like he said, contain him and try to control the boards and get going on the offensive rebounding. I think it should be a pretty good game. But Larry Drew is the head runner for their team.

Q. I was curious what you thought about the atmosphere? Did it almost feel like a home game out there?

SOLOMON HILL: Yeah, it was very exciting. You talk about the Arizona tradition and the support base that we have. Felt kind of like a home game. You think about the tournament run we made playing in Anaheim and the same feeling that that gym brought. It's a chance for our fans to really come out and support us. We're not too far away from Tucson. It makes for a great atmosphere. Colorado did a great job of bringing their fan base out too, but our fans were a little bit louder tonight.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports