**Redshirt junior forward Freddie Gillespie**

*On being selected for the NCAA Tournament …*

“It’s huge. Just to see it all come together after last year, seeing how that season worked out and being able to put in the work in the summertime and all the extra work pay off is amazing. It’s something I’ve dreamed about, something I’ve imagined. Living it out now, it’s just something I really thank God for. I remember praying to get to a moment like this.”

*On the Big 12 Championship game vs. Iowa State …*

“If I had to point out one primary thing that held us back, it was definitely the defensive part. I think they just happened to click that day, and when teams are clicking, you’ve got to play harder and really grind out defense. It’s something that’s been addressed, we all recognize it, so it’s something we’re going to improve on.”

**Redshirt senior guard Makai Mason**

*On earning an NCAA Tournament bid …*

“Just to be back on the stage is going to be really fun, especially with this team. We’ve been doubted from the beginning, so just to put it together after all that, it’ll be even more special to be there again. It’s a pretty amazing feeling to have it all culminate to the moment that we just had, and seeing our name go up there. This team has been doubted all year with the injuries and everything. It really shows the true character of this team, to fight every game throughout the season and continuing to get better.”

*Advice he wishes he would’ve received heading into his first NCAA tournament …*

“Every possession matters so much, especially at this time of year. It all adds up in the end, it’s not the last shot that’s going to make the difference, it’s every little play that builds up to it. Not letting the media attention get the best of you. Once you step into the arena, there’s media following you wherever you go. So just to handle that well and be ready for that.”

*When it’s one and done, is it a different type of pressure? …*

“If you stay locked in and know that you’re going to have to have great teamwork to get the end result that you want, that’s what you’ve got to stay focused on.”

**Senior guard King McClure**

*On being selected to the NCAA Tournament …*

“It’s a moment you dream of as a kid and it feels good to be back after last year. We’re ready.

Syracuse is a great team, a great school. They have a lot of history in their program, but at the end of the day, it’s just basketball. They put their shoes on just like we do. Last year motivated us a lot. That feeling that we felt, the same day, watching the selection show and not seeing our name called made us not want to experience that again. I think the leaders did a great job of getting the younger guys and new guys acclimated and telling them what we had to do to keep last year from happening again. They stuck with it and made sure it didn’t happen again, so I’m proud of them.”

*On earning an NCAA Tournament berth after being projected to finish ninth in the Big 12 …*

“I never doubted us. I figured we would get there. After we lost to Texas Southern and SFA, a lot of people doubted us, but I never did. I said we were going to make a run. I have a lot of faith in my teammates and I believe in them. One thing about this team is that we have a lot of guys who step up, who like the big moments, like Jared Butler, Devonte Bandoo. They come to play every game. Seeing what they are capable of and what they can do makes me really inspired and motivated. It makes me want to believe in them even more. They’re ready when their name is called and they step up. That’s why I believe in them.”

*Advice he wishes he would’ve received heading into his first NCAA tournament …*

“It’s really a one game season at this point. If you lose you go home. Stay in the moment, stay locked in, don’t look too far ahead.”

*On Jared Butler …*

“Jared Butler is a gamer. He steps on the court and gets buckets. He’s really talented. I didn’t know he was going to be that good, but he’s like a little brother. One thing about him is he listens. He doesn’t think he’s too good to ask for advice or come to me if he needs something. He’s always open to advice, so I always talk to him. He’s matured a lot in decision making and shot taking. I’m excited to see where this journey is going to take him.”

**Head Coach Scott Drew**

*Opening statement …*

“Any time you’re playing this time of year, you’re excited. Whenever you play a team with a Hall of Fame coach and a national brand, you don’t have to worry about exciting your guys. It makes it really easy, now you can just focus on the X’s and O’s part of things. As a coach, you always think you can win every game. The Big 12 Tournament will really help to prepare us for the NCAA tournament because it’s run the exact same way. I think our guys can know what’s coming and be much more prepared for it.

The team really maximized the ability as far as playing for one another and really bought into serving one another and caring more about the team than themselves. Individually, talent-wise, people had us picked 9th or 10th for a reason, I really think the guys competed hard. As a whole, one thing we usually did is compete. As a coach, you always can hang your hat and go to bed at night knowing that as long as a guy’s played hard, that’s half the battle. Seeing their excitement and joy of being able to know they’re playing in March, that’s what all that hard work is for. Now they have the chance to play a part of the best spectacle in sports.

*On missing the NCAA Tournament last year …*

Last year, being one of the first four out wasn’t very much fun. It’s great to know where you’re going, who you’re playing, and most of all, to see the excitement on the guys’ faces and to know that all their hard work was worth it to achieve a goal like this. Our fans have been outstanding all year long, win or lose, they really appreciated the guys’ efforts. As a coach I really appreciate that.

*On overcoming injuries throughout the year …*

The fact that we know what we have going into it makes this a lot easier for us as a coaching staff and team to know what kind of roles you’re looking at. The good thing is, all along [Makai] knew once we got to this point in the season, he was all in. With Makai, the bigger the game, the better he plays. I know he’ll be more than excited to play, and it’ll be great to have him.

*On the four-game losing streak …*

“I don’t necessarily think we’ve been playing terrible. I think in each game, there’s been areas where we didn’t do enough to win, but there’s no sense of falling apart. There’s more urgency because none of us want to be one game and out or end the season on a losing streak. After a six-game winning streak, I think we’ve tapered off defensively. The tournament is always a breath of fresh air, because you’re not coming down the court where they’re calling out your plays for you.”

*On King McClure getting back to full strength …*

“Each game, each practice, each day since he’s been back, gives him to chance to get back to where he was at. It just takes a little time. The more you do something, the more you get a rhythm and a routine. Each year you have different routines and different adjustments, so I think we’ll stay true to what we’ve done that has worked for this team.”

*On Jared Butler …*

“I think Jared has had to step up and take on a bigger role and because of that, it’s put him in a much better position to be successful. Coming from a program that played elite talent and is used to winning and used to being coached, it’s made it easier for his adjustment. There’s always ups and downs, there’s different challenges each and every year. At this end of the season, hopefully you have this feeling of knowing you’re going to postseason. Each time you get rewarded with an NCAA tournament berth, you want to advance and win and stay in it because of how fun it is.”