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Mississippi State beats No. 19 Texas A&M 69-60

November 18, 2011 | Jim O'Connell, AP Basketball Writer

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Billy Kennedy is glad to be on the bench again. He wasn't too thrilled, though, with No. 19 Texas A&M's 69-60 loss to Mississippi State on Thursday night in the semifinals of the 2K Sports Classic benefiting Coaches vs. Cancer.

Kennedy, hired as Texas A&M coach in May, was diagnosed with early stage Parkinson's disease this summer and wasn't with the Aggies for preseason practice and the first game of the season. He was back for Sunday's win against Southern University and then made the trip to New York.

"I'm thankful to be here. It's God's blessing," the 47-year-old Kennedy said. "I didn't know I would be here. I didn't know a week ago. I feel bad I haven't been able to help the team as much as I would like to. Hopefully we'll all get better and see some wins instead of a loss."

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Kennedy's plight has made quite an impression on Mississippi State coach Rick Stansbury.

"I've known Billy all my life," Stansbury said in his postgame news conference. "This seems real important doesn't it, talking into this microphone? At the end of the day this isn't important at all. We have to look at how precious life and health is. We all take it for granted way too much. He's a tremendous coach and 47 is way too young to be fighting things he's fighting right now."

The Bulldogs hit 10 of their 13 shots from the field in taking a 22-point lead and they hung on for the victory.

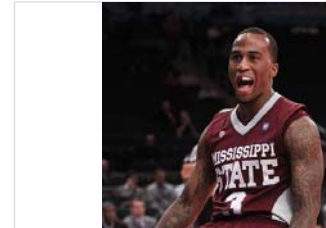
"That was a little bit of fool's gold, making five 3s like that," Stansbury said. "Texas A&M is a good basketball team and I knew we weren't going to maintain that kind of shooting. But I did like our defense, we were pushing them out and we controlled the flow at both ends."

The Bulldogs (3-1) will play the winner of the late game between No. 15 Arizona and St. John's in Friday night's championship game at Madison Square Garden.

Dee Bost had 20 points for Mississippi State and although the senior guard didn't score in the huge first-half run, he hit a big 3-pointer with 3:16 to play.

"Dee Bost was hard for us to contain," Kennedy said. "He's not just a good player, he's a good four-year player."

Naji Hibbert's drive with 3:37 to play brought Texas A&M (2-1) within 60-52. Bost hit the 3-pointer 19 seconds later that started the Bulldogs' 9-4 run and got them back in control of the game.



Mississippi States Dee Bost (3) reacts after dunking the ball during the... (AP Photo/Frank Franklin II)



Brian Bryant had 12 points for the Bulldogs and freshman Rodney Hood added 10, his third double-figure effort in as many games.

Elston Turner had 13 points for Texas A&M and David Loubeau added 11.

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