

# Big East Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 11, 2021

New York, New York, USA

Madison Square Garden

**Creighton Bluejays**

**Coach Greg McDermott**

Postgame Media Conference



Creighton - 87, Butler - 56

COACH MCDERMOTT: I'm just really, really proud of our guys. Their preparation was really great. They were obviously really connected tonight on both ends of the floor -- sharing the basketball with 22 assists, and trying to disrupt what Butler was trying to do offensively and get stops out in transition which we thought was really critical.

It's a special group of guys. They've had a lot of success in the last two years in this league. I really wanted them to enjoy tonight and enjoy March. March was taken away from them except for half a basketball in the Garden last year for us. So the fact that they got this opportunity to get back there tonight and advance, I couldn't be more proud.

**Q. (Indiscernible) struggled to find consistent rhythm in the second half of the season. What do you feel he did so well tonight to get in the rhythm and stay in that in the second half?**

COACH MCDERMOTT: He slowed himself down a little. Really made some nice plays with the basketball for his teammates -- four assists in 12 minutes whatever he played. Made a couple of nice plays when he got into the paint for himself.

But he's just taking his time. And he does have the ability to impact the game. And I thought besides what he did on offense, I thought when D.J. went down, when they hit heads, I thought he came in and provided some defensive spark as well.

So the bench was critical tonight. It helped us extend the lead in the first half. And in the second half, but to outscore their bench 34-10 for us to be able to not log huge minutes for some of our starters was really good for us.

**Q. Your guys looked like they were having fun. Were you worried at all that they may not be able to enjoy it,**

with what you guys have been through last week, the pandemic, being cooped up in a hotel? Just a weird set of circumstances. I wonder what you thought about going in?

COACH MCDERMOTT: We've had a lot of conversations obviously over the course of the last 10 days especially in New York more one-on-one with me, just continuing to kind of work through this process.

But the message I left all of them with is you have to enjoy this. Life's too short. And you've got a great opportunity in front of you. And I want -- we're at our best when we're hooting and hollering and smiling and laughing. That's when this team functions the best.

And I think you saw a lot of that tonight, both how the bench reacted when the starters were on the floor. And then you saw how our starters reacted once some of our walk-ons were on the floor at the end of the game, when they were making plays and hustle plays.

We've built this program on culture. And to have good culture you have to have good people. And I have good people. And that's why we've been able to get ourselves through a very difficult situation.

**Q. Great start, obviously 23-7, do you think the things that you were just talking about is why you guys were able to jump out to that good start? Was it tied into that or was it more basketball related?**

COACH MCDERMOTT: Obviously we played really good basketball. And we were able to establish some pace Saturday in that game against Butler. We thought that was really critical again tonight, especially with them playing an overtime game yesterday, to try to really turn up that heat and get out in transition and make some things happen. And that starts on the defensive end. You've got to get stops first. And I thought our guys were able to do that.

**Q. You've had a long, close relationship with Steve Merfeld. I wondered if you noticed the player's reaction when Andrew hit that shot? They mobbed him. What that moment was like?**

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COACH MCDERMOTT: Well, finally Merfeld made a critical basket at a big time. Good to see. No, a really proud moment for a really special family. Merf has been with me from day one at Creighton for 11 years. And I've watched Andrew grow up. And obviously their family is really close to ours.

So to have that happen is pretty cool. And to see the way his teammates supported him and then I think how the team and the coaching staff was so happy for Steve when that happened as well. So that group of guys has meant a ton to our program and they get us ready every night. It was really fun to see several of those guys go out and make an impact tonight on this floor. It's something they'll never forget.

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