

NCAA Men's Frozen Four Semifinal: St. Cloud State vs Minnesota State

Thursday, April 8, 2021

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

PPG Paints Arena

St. Cloud State Huskies

Joe Molenaar

Nolan Walker

Postgame Media Conference



St. Cloud State - 5, Minnesota State - 4

MODERATOR: We're joined by Nolan Walker and Joe Molenaar. Questions?

Q. Joe, Coach Larson said yesterday you were most likely going to be in the lineup, but when did you know for sure? And I guess what has the last week been like for you?

JOE MOLENAAR: It's been kind of crazy. When a guy like Easton goes down -- he's a guy who has mentored me all year, my roommate on the road. For the whole team it was tough. At first thinking he's such a big piece for our team, it's heartbreaking.

But then once this week starts and I'm practicing on the line with Will Hammer and Jared Cockrell, two seniors who have been really good to me about keeping me prepared for moments like this. I was excited to be in the lineup, give it a chance.

Q. Describe your goal on the game winner. Looked like you guys had a good shift there.

NOLAN WALKER: (Indiscernible) went to work, and I kind of found that soft spot up top, on the high tracks, as we call it. And Seamus, he made a great shot right on my stick. I was lucky enough that it went in.

Q. What was the message from opposing staff in between the second and third period?

NOLAN WALKER: If you were to tell us we were going into a tie game in the semifinals of the Frozen Four, we would take it. It wasn't a pretty game for us, I don't think.

We got up two goals and they kind of made a push in the second. I think the message was just to stick with it and play our game.

I think in the third period we played to our game and our identity and we got the job done.

JOE MOLENAAR: With this team we've been able to bounce back. I think as the team we were set on sticking to our game and the best outcome would be the outcome.

Q. Joe, describe your goal. Looked like you fought through a guy right in front of the net. And just describe what happened on the play.

JOE MOLENAAR: I can't remember if it was Hammer or Cockrell who made a play down low. But they got it up high to Spencer Meier, and Will got a nice tip on it and I found the soft spot and the puck bounced right on my stick. Probably one of the easier goals I've scored.

Q. Joe, you've battled through injuries, you're up for several games as a healthy scratch. Just describe the feeling of scoring in this game.

JOE MOLENAAR: Obviously it feels incredible. But I just think all year long it's been about doing whatever I can to help the team. Whether I'm in the lineup or not, just trying to have a positive impact every night. To get that goal tonight, it feels great.

Q. Describe the demeanor of your coach, Brett Larson. He's obviously been at this stage before. When things get challenging and tough and Mankato comes back to tie it -- and both times late in the game. What's he like on the bench? What were you able to take from how he handles these big moments.

NOLAN WALKER: Obviously he's been in a lot of situations like this. He has pretty calm demeanor on the bench. I mean obviously they made a push in the second. We stayed calm. Obviously we felt that. He just told us to stick with it.

We didn't really get to our game until the third period. His

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message was just to keep sticking with it and get to our game. We ended up doing that. I think that's what's special about this team. We never, whenever we get down in games we don't give up. We always find a way to bounce back and we did tonight.

JOE MOLENAAR: Just Walk said it best. He is a very calm coach. He keeps our team calm. If you watch our team all year, we've been down in a handful of games. Most of those I feel like we've come back and won. I think it starts with him.

Q. Nolan, last season you guys finish under .500. Now you guys are playing for the national championship. Just describe, I guess, the journey here for this team.

NOLAN WALKER: I'm speechless just from this game, it was such an incredible game. What a journey we've been on this year with COVID. It's been hard. Hasn't been easy. We made a lot of sacrifices, every one of these guys. I just want to say I'm so happy for this guy next to me to score his first goal, first career goal.

I think this team is so special. We never give up, like I said. And I don't really know how else to put it. We're so happy to be where we are right now.

Q. Joe, just talk a little bit about your preparation, because obviously it's been a while since you had played in a game. Obviously Easton goes down. How did you prepare, I guess, for this opportunity?

JOE MOLENAAR: When you're out of the lineup you always have to think you're next man up. When the opportunity came I'm just trying to do the best I can to help the team. And I guess, like, at this point in the year we just feel really fortunate to be here.

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