

NCAA Men's Frozen Four Finals: St. Cloud State vs Massachusetts

Saturday, April 10, 2021

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

PPG Paints Arena

Massachusetts Minutemen Coach Greg Carvel

Postgame Media Conference



Massachusetts - 5, St. Cloud State - 0

MODERATOR: We're joined by Coach Carvel. Your thoughts on winning the national title.

COACH CARVEL: Very happy for our kids. They've earned this. We pushed them really hard for the last four years, this senior class, especially.

It was a little emotional for me because someone said that these kids -- we're like parents; they're like our kids. And I think good parents hold their kids to high standards and support them in a way that they feel cared for. And it's how we try to coach.

Q. I saw you say on TV that you told your guys to soak it in those last three minutes. You had an opportunity yourself, something a coach doesn't get very often, a chance to know you're going to win at that point and absorb the moment around you. What did you take in from that and what was it like watching your guys experience that?

COACH CARVEL: You don't get that opportunity too often. I'm sorry. You don't get that opportunity very often in a championship situation. I was told by some people today to try to enjoy the moment and soak it in. And I just said that to the kids. The game was obviously over. And I wanted to say something to them before things got crazy.

And I wanted them to come in tight and look each other in the eyes and try to remember the moment, because honestly it will be the best moment of their life. And I just wanted them to hear that from me and hear my gratitude for all they've done. That's basically it.

Q. They're always big but special teams in that second period played such a role in changing the complexion

of the game. Just some comments on how the special teams went, especially in that second.

COACH CARVEL: Yeah, the special teams played a big role this weekend. Scored a power play goal each night which was a big factor. We had to kill more penalties I believe than we got power plays.

So I thought special teams were outstanding. Our first power play was pretty ugly. But the second one, I think we only had two. Second one was great. Guys were moving the puck around really well. And I thought we had a couple of good bids to score.

But our penalty kill had to be good because we took three or four penalties tonight which is a lot more than we've had in a long time. But we tried to be a really good defensive team and really good team on special teams, and we were both tonight. And that was the difference in the game.

Q. What was the vision five years ago when you took the job and how were you able to pull it off so quickly? What was kind of the big thing for you? Because I know it was a similar blueprint you had at St. Lawrence. How did you do it so quickly at UMass?

COACH CARVEL: I got lucky with the people I surrounded myself with, starting with Mark Randall, our sports psychologist and an old friend. And he really helped me build a culture. And all of us hockey coaches, we know the game but you gotta know how to build a culture.

He really held my hand through St. Lawrence and then at UMass. And then my two assistant coaches were outstanding. Ben and Jared. And then right down the line from equipment manager to strength coach, to athletic trainer and hockey ops -- just all people who understand the importance of high standards, just quality people and high standards. It's really what it is. It's who you surround yourself with what you accept from them.

And it's what you see from our players. They understand, they kind of laugh because there's a minute left in the game I'm still yelling at them for being out of position.

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And I tell them, right until the end, and they understand that. And I think that's why we're a good team is because we're disciplined and understand the importance of it.

And Jared and Ben have brought in some great players. To think that Cale Makar, Mario Ferraro, John Leonard and Mitchell Chaffee were supposed to be on this team -- and I understand every school loses good players to the NHL -- but Jared and Ben brought in great players but great, good quality people. And, again, it's people and culture. That's why we were able to turn the program around.

Q. And I know you came into your position here at UMass with a vision and you had a goal and a very clearly defined path to that goal. But this isn't the end. What is next? I know you don't want to win just one national championship.

COACH CARVEL: We say this all the time: It's easy to go from the bottom to the middle and even close to the top. It's really hard to get to the top and then even harder to sustain it. So we'll have our work cut out for us.

And we had that hunger after losing two years ago, and now the challenge is to maintain it. Everybody will be gunning for us. And that's great. I like that challenge. We just gotta continue to bring in character kids like Colin Felix and Marc Del Gaizo and kids that you want to be in a foxhole with because they're just great competitors. And we've got a lot of kids like that, and it's important that we keep bringing in kids like that.

Q. What was going through your head? Was there a person or moment like when you held the trophy up high for everybody to see, what was going through your head at that moment?

COACH CARVEL: To be honest, a couple things. Obviously my family. And then the people who, when you win your first national championship, you really want to think about the people that laid the foundation and yesterday was a bit emotional because red Jen was one of those people. And I loved red. And he was a big part. He worked with two, when UMass had some really good teams. When I lifted that trophy I thought of people like that and former players.

And I also think about how important it is for our university to have a championship like this. And all the great people at the University of Massachusetts and one of them was my father-in-law, who was a philosophy professor for 35 years at UMass. He passed away two weeks ago. And he was a great supporter of mine.

And it's just people like that that this trickles down to a lot

of people. And I'm just happy that obviously happy for the people in the program right now. But so many people that this will trickle down through that they can take pride in it.

And talk about my vision, and my vision was never to win a national championship. My vision was to build a program that great pride could be taken in.

And I feel like we won this the right way. We didn't take shortcuts. We didn't cheat the game at all. We did it absolutely the right way. And for the last four years we've gotten better and better every year.

And I'm very, very grateful for the people who laid the ground work so we could get to where we are. And that was emotional for me right after the game.

And also have great pride in what we've accomplished.

Q. Filip Lindberg spoke about the disappointment and the nervousness on Thursday and being so excited to play and just the elation with a victory. What can you say about how Filip handled the difficulty of this week and how he came through for you tonight?

COACH CARVEL: I told this story plenty of times. Filip came to me the end of last year told me he needed to play more. I got really angry. And I said, be better. You need to be a lot better if you want to play every game.

And he did. And he did it because he got mentally tougher. That's all he needed. He had all the tools. But he needed to get mentally tougher. And this week is a great example of it.

To have to miss a semifinal, to not be able to skate most days, come in and get absolutely railroaded a couple minutes into the game, and he hurt his ankle on that play. But he was so good this year because of his mental toughness. That was the problem in the past.

He was very inconsistent and to me it was because he was mentally he would get, whatever, anxious. But he dealt with that. And he found a way to fight through it. And, boy, was he good.

The one thing that we haven't lost a game -- we didn't lose a game since the middle of January. I don't know if that was 13, 14, 15 games in a row. And/or that over that span he may have only let in 10 or 12 goals.

And he's been -- he was outstanding. I said this plenty of times, I think he's the unwritten story of college hockey this year.

Q. I know you kind of touched on it a little bit, but that's a lot -- I think any way the year is a lot to go through this year, is a lot to go through but for you and this program the past few weeks have been really difficult. And I remember yesterday you just found out before you came and talked to us. So for you what's that like for the roller coaster of emotions been like and how are you feeling right now?

COACH CARVEL: I tell you what, I'm completely spent. The whole COVID has been tough on everybody. It's been demanding, and you run on adrenaline through these times. And we have all gone through it. We've all had a rough time with it.

And I shouldn't be complaining. We just won a national championship. But it's been a grind. Even winning every night and winning championships. It's tough to maintain that. And again I'm extremely proud of our kids. They were so consistent all year. All year. Every day. And that's why they're champions.

They do everything right all the time. Everything we ask of them. And but they haven't seen their parents in eight months. And I think hopefully they all get to go home on Monday and see family and finish out school the right way.

But I know I'm going to go hide out for a few weeks here and reset.

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