

NCAA Men's Frozen Four: Minnesota State vs Minnesota

Thursday, April 7, 2022

Boston, Massachusetts, USA

TD Garden

Minnesota Gophers

Bob Motzko

Bryce Brodzinski

Matthew Knies

Semifinal Postgame Media Conference

Minnesota State 5, Minnesota 1

THE MODERATOR: We will start with some opening thoughts from coach. Bob?

BOB MOTZKO: Well, I mean, first, Mankato, you got to give them an enormous amount of credit. For big chunks of the game they kicked our butt. The first period was great. We got the lead. We kind of withstood it. We thought the horn, great, let's get in and regroup. Then we made a couple mistakes in the second period. Everything, they scored exactly how we knew we had to defend. Then we were chasing the game.

We made it close a couple times. Benny had a great chance 30 seconds into the third period, point-blank they stopped him, then they score a minute and a half into the third. That was it. It was over.

But I'm so proud of our guys. This is a terrific group of guys we had. This is not indicative of what the season we had was. Been a terrific season, a terrific team. We just ran into a really good hockey team tonight.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the players.

Q. Bryce, how big do your eyes get when you turn that puck over, you see there's nobody back there except you and Matt?

BRYCE BRODZINSKI: Yeah, I kind of saw Matt out of the corner of my eye. I turned around, I knew I kind of had to get him involved. That was kind of our only way of beating the goalie, kind of getting him to move laterally was something we harped on a little bit.



Yeah, it was a big opportunity, especially being our first shot of the game. Kind of being able to crack them early kind of kept us in it for a while.

Q. Guys, the defensemen produced the majority of the shots by the team tonight. When shots are limited, you're playing a stingy defensive team, how important was it for them to be able to get involved and help you generate the offense against the defense?

MATTHEW KNIES: Yeah, I mean, we had to get in front of his eyes. Our D did a hell of a job tonight getting pucks on that. We just weren't there. I think we had a plan that the boards were bouncy behind the nets, the more we could get on top of those, the better we can become. But we just weren't there tonight.

BRYCE BRODZINSKI: I think Kniesy kind of hit the nail right on the head there. He was giving up a lot of rebounds. We just kind of were letting them clear the puck out. I think if there were a couple more opportunities to be in front of the goalie's eyes, maybe they would have won it on the shot or we would have got the rebound.

Q. What exactly changed in the second period? Was it just the momentum swing or the adjustment that Minnesota State had? It seems like you had some chances in the first, after that they kind of dried up.

BRYCE BRODZINSKI: I think like coach said, we were kind of just hanging on the first. That goal kind of kept us in it. I think they're a really good team. I think that they controlled the game a lot that entire game.

I mean, nothing really switched. They sort of got a couple of bounces. Like coach said, we made a couple of mistakes. They're a team that capitalizes on those. Yeah, just a couple of mistakes by us and them jumping on it.

Q. Bryce, for the season you have been able to come back a lot of times, dig deep, gotten here where the program hasn't been in eight years, what are you able to take away from the season?

BRYCE BRODZINSKI: I mean, it's just a special group. I

mean, there's nobody else in the world that I'd want to be here with. We knew from the beginning that we had the group to be able to do this. Even at the beginning of the summer, when everyone was kind of getting here, we were all super excited for the season, super anxious to kind of get going.

We kind of had a rocky start at the beginning of the season. Justen Close stepped up huge for us. He was kind of the anchor for our team. He was unbelievable this entire season. A lot goes out to him, his play.

Overall it's just a fun group of guys to be at the rink with every single day.

Q. Matthew, I'm thinking back to the last eight months or so for you. Can you put into words what a whirlwind this has been starting college hockey, ending at the Frozen Four with a stop at the Olympics in between? Do you think about that at all, the journey?

MATTHEW KNIES: Yeah, honestly I haven't really wrapped my head around it. This one stings right now. This is what's stuck in my head.

But, I think it will settle in later in the future that this was the best year of my life. Honestly, this was the most fun group I've been a part of. I'm damn proud to be a part of this team.

THE MODERATOR: Guys, thanks much. Appreciate it.

We will continue on with your questions for coach.

Q. You guys had no one that's ever been in a Frozen Four. They have a whole bunch from last year. How much does experience being here help?

BOB MOTZKO: I'm sure it does for them. I know we gained experience from last year in the tournament. To be in two region finals and pop our ticket this time...

They're just a grizzled, old veteran team in every position. I was okay at the end of the first period. I'll just go to that. Their top guys didn't really hurt us. Their glue guys on the other lines kind of created things for them. Because you knew no matter what, whoever plays them, you're going to have to weather some storms. We were doing it at a little spurt in the second period. It was not a fun game for us to chase.

They're experienced. I'm sure they're just an old, grizzled team. Exactly how we watched them play in our film breaking down is exactly how they played tonight, it's

exactly how they're going to play on Saturday.

Q. Coach, the other day both coaches, you and Coach Hastings, talked about full sheet play. What was it for Minnesota State that just kind of presented to Minnesota to play up into the neutral zone, into the offensive zone, that they were presenting that was just difficult to get in front of?

BOB MOTZKO: It's their forecheck. They're relentless on the forecheck. They're going to hem you in, but we got free the one time in the first. We thought we could get behind them a couple times.

You spend time defending in your zone. You ice the puck. We dump it, then we'd have to change. There's just too many minutes of that, too much time like that, where you just spend your time defending, dump, then you got to change.

And they're a veteran defense, they do a great job of breaking the puck out. We had a few spurts, handful of spurts, where we were able to put them in their own end, but not enough.

Q. You touched on how this has been a special season. There's a lot of special players that have been a part of it. Ben Meyers, a big part of that. What has it been like to coach him this year and what will you remember most about Ben?

BOB MOTZKO: I mean, he's just a rock star of a human. How he works every day. He's an honor roll student, leads by example in his work ethic in practice, in the weight room, on ice, puts his team on his back.

You're so fortunate when you get those. He makes everybody else better. He's truly one of the class acts in college hockey this year. I know he won't be back with us next year. At his age, you know, it's time to go. I get that with him.

We're going to have a blast watching him. So happy. Made the Olympic team. A kid that was not drafted, didn't have a huge name a couple years ago, but he sure has one now.

Q. Your team took another step this year. What are you going to remember it for?

BOB MOTZKO: Well, the biggest thing, and I talked about it the other day, was this group from day one through now, they were easy to be around. I mean, you know, when you go through a season, I mean, it's like raising kids, every once in a while you're going to buck horns. We had a little

bit in the middle of the year trying to get over the hump.

But really when you look back, it was probably minor. At the moment to them, they're kids, it's big. But great work ethic. Never panicked. They knew we were getting better. We just had a belief we were going to be just fine.

They raised the bar. I think they also, because of their work ethic, how they competed, you can't fool Gopher fans. They got behind them. They knew this was a team that they liked to cheer for. That's why tonight stings because they were a special group.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thanks very much. Appreciate it.

BOB MOTZKO: All right.

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