

# NCAA Men's Frozen Four: Boston U. vs Minnesota

Thursday, April 6, 2023

Tampa, Florida, USA

Amalie Arena

## Minnesota Gophers

## Coach Bob Motzko

## Luke Mittelstadt

## Aaron Huglen

### Semifinal Postgame Media Conference



Minnesota - 6, Boston U - 2

COACH MOTZKO: I liked us tonight. And I thought we were playing well. And there we were tied in the third period. And we had some unfortunate ones called back and another one's on the goal line that kind of looked like it was in, but it was inclusive. But our guys stuck with it.

And then the Koster power play, three goals tonight. And Luke Mittelstadt is a heck of a player. Great job tonight, Luke. And then we got our chances and we finished this thing.

So one thing I was really impressed with, boy, the Minnesota people that showed up. What a crowd that we had tonight. It was just fantastic. And nothing would have been worse than having them stick around without their team being here. So we're pretty fired up that we can all stick around for the next couple of days.

**Q. Great win, but unfinished business. 24 hours to separate the victory and get ready for the next one?**

AARON HUGLEN: Yeah, I mean, fun to win. But that's right, we're looking to win Saturday. So we're excited. Excited to rest up and get going.

LUKE MITTELSTADT: He hit it right on the head. Fun win. Just gotta get ready for Saturday.

**Q. Luke, how often do you talk to Casey? He's obviously played in this building a few times. What kind of advice did he give you in playing in this kind of atmosphere?**

LUKE MITTELSTADT: We always talk. He just wants me

to have fun, keep playing my game no matter what. I'm super fortunate to have him. And I think he wants me to keep playing.

**Q. Luke, was that left circle your office tonight; is that how you saw it? Could you go through both of those goals for us?**

LUKE MITTELSTADT: I think Mike gave me that first one, and Hucey set up the great screen, I don't think the goalie saw it for a second. All I had to do was put it in the right side, and fortunate enough I did.

Second one, Chez gave me a great pass, kind of same thing, screen out front and fortunate to put it in.

**Q. Do you think the experience of being at the Frozen Four altered the pregame mentality or pregame routine for the team this year?**

AARON HUGLEN: I think experience helped in everything. So I think a lot of guys, especially returners, have a new level of confidence. And the young guys see that. And just have a good culture around here. So definitely helps.

LUKE MITTELSTADT: I wasn't here, obviously, but having that leadership back and all those guys in the locker room, they've really helped all the freshmen since day one have confidence. Super lucky to have them.

**Q. Did you do anything different, Bob?**

COACH MOTZKO: No, I mean, the biggest thing I liked that we played the 5:00 game. Last year we went into overtime started at 9:00 at night. And that was different. I liked it.

**Q. Aaron, you went through a real battle in your first NCAA Tournament game last year where you were down and basically in a hostile environment. You had the big push tonight. Don't get anything out of it. You come back from a quick deficit. Looks like you're up 3-1. Then second period, they tie it up. At one point the shots were 9-1, BU. How do you maintain an even keel, not get frustrated after all the good work you**



## **guys had done?**

AARON HUGLEN: To be honest, I turned to Gordo, like, what's going on there. We're getting him into a couple shifts.

But they have their pushes. That's how the game goes, and you just kind of have to weather the storm and hang in there.

## **Q. Could you take us through your pass to Rhett for that goal? And when did that come to mind, that type of pass?**

AARON HUGLEN: Rhett sent me a Sidney Crosby kind of play similar to that this afternoon. I said, yeah, we'll either try that or else break to the net. And he broke to the net and I found him.

## **Q. Luke, you had 17 missed shots as a team through two periods. Was there anything you guys tried different in the third period to get pucks to the net, specifically on your two goals?**

LUKE MITTELSTADT: I don't think we tried anything different. I think we had guys in front of the net all night. That might have credited that a little bit. I think we just keep firing the puck and good things will happen.

## **Q. Can you talk to us a little bit about the physical nature of this game and how you guys were able to, from my perspective, lean into it and take over those parts of the game?**

AARON HUGLEN: It's an intense game. Just gotta keep going. You prepare for it all year. So we're all ready for it. You've just gotta hang in there.

LUKE MITTELSTADT: I think the physical part is a huge part of the game. And being able to practice against that Cooley line, Hügey's line has really helped me a lot, and I'm helped all the D a lot. Like Hügey said, that's what we've been preparing for all year.

## **Q. First time in a national title game and you're going up against two coaches who both have been used in big games. Brandon beat you in the Big Ten title game this year. And Rand Pecknold beat you in the Frozen Four in 2014. What's your preparation going into Saturday?**

COACH MOTZKO: Well, why don't we wait until about 11:00 tonight and see who we're playing. And we know we're going to be in the game.

We played Michigan five times this year. So we're very familiar with them. We're not familiar with Quinnipiac. Just happy we're going to be playing. That's the first job you do when you get here is to punch your ticket the first night to get to that game.

I think we played Quinnipiac back when 2013. That was a long time ago.

## **Q. (Indiscernible) Ohio State?**

COACH MOTZKO: That was a long time ago. I draw nothing from that game. But I don't know, I worked with that guy right there that has two national championships, and I learned a lot from him. And I played against that guy who has three national championships. So hopefully I stole something from these guys.

## **Q. When you left the Twin Cities, it was below freezing. It's going to be 90 degrees in Tampa tomorrow. Normal April day for us. Do you have to keep an eye on your players make sure they don't get out and get sunburned, anything like that?**

COACH MOTZKO: Just gotta keep an eye on me. We've had an awful winter, I think that's one of the great reasons why there's so many Minnesota people here. We talked about it, just an awful, awful winter. So what a great place to be in Tampa, Florida.

## **Q. Middle of the second period, when BU was making that push, did you have to say anything, do anything different to kind of calm your players down? Because I think you closed the second on like an 8-1 shot run?**

COACH MOTZKO: The question before that. We had two two-on-ones in the first 6 or 7 minutes in the period. We missed the net on both of them. We had some chances.

All the teams here are pretty good. Everyone's going to put on a push. And you've got to weather the storm. We played a tough schedule this year. So we're battle tested. We've been in this before. And you weathered it and we got back on top of it.

## **Q. Luke Mittelstadt, obviously just a freshman. Curious what kind of progression you've seen in his game throughout the season from the beginning to what we saw tonight?**

COACH MOTZKO: It was kind of like when you start practice, at the start of the year, like some of the good ones, you just go, there's a good one. And he had it right from the start.

One of the reasons we were calling USA Hockey and said you've got to watch this guy. I know he wasn't drafted. But he's a candidate for the World Junior team. And they start watching right away.

So his progression, he had a terrific season last year in the USHL. And he's really been great from the first day that he stepped on the ice with us.

And we have to spread our minutes around. We play seven defensemen. It's the strongest D corps I've ever had or ever will have. So they all contribute.

That's the great thing; I said it the other day -- there's no ego amongst them. Even Faber, he used to play 30 minutes. He's now down to 22. But it's all about the team.

And as you saw those three freshmen are pretty good players for us as well. They kind of hide under the radar a little bit from the four upperclassman, but they're terrific players.

**Q. You were a first-year coach at one point in time. Wanted to get some thoughts on your thoughts on Jay and the job he did with BU this year?**

COACH MOTZKO: I can tell you this. I didn't win the league my first year or the playoffs, or the region, or get to a Frozen Four. So what a year that Jay's had.

And everything that we read, we talked to a lot of people, just a ton of respect for him, just a class act. He played with Paul Martin. Paul said he's a terrific person. So obviously BU's in pretty good hands with Jay.

**Q. When I asked Brodzinski what he did differently after Fargo when he got four goals, he said it was his linemates telling him to shoot the puck more often. Was that the message for Luke or any of your D going into this one?**

COACH MOTZKO: They're a really good defensive team. And they pack it in. We were going to have a lot of shots from the flank. It all started on the first goal when he set it down at the goal line and Hucey did his behind-the-back pass. That opened up the shot lane the next time because they were trying to take that away.

And Luke nailed both shots. They were big-time shots. We want to shoot every chance we get.

**Q. Maybe following up on that, was there anything that you had seen in prep, because I think a lot of your shots were coming from that left elbow side and able to get those shots over the glove, I think three of them,**

**if I'm right.**

COACH MOTZKO: Both sides. They collapse to the middle and really, and they're there to block shots. And we knew we didn't want to miss the net and we didn't want to get shots blocked. We kind of failed on the one, missing the net too many times.

But we felt that was something we could do was chuck some pucks in from the side angle. And you've got to be careful because they're dangerous at their transition game out of their defensive zone. That's one of their great, great strengths that we had down.

But our guys, I felt we did a really good job with that tonight, stopping their transition out of their zone.

**Q. What was your reaction on Aaron's pass to Rhett? Have you seen it from him before; what have you seen in practice on that?**

COACH MOTZKO: We've worked out -- and we talk about it but after a timeout they were all -- and Rhett, he's a video guy. He's got clips from everything. He probably called it. I'm going to go with it.

Great call by Pitter and those guys to make that happen. It's the one change we made was -- because we've had two righties on that unit a lot. That's why we're using Pit more, that righty/lefty combination there. The right guys got the puck.

**Q. This pace felt like a World Junior medal game. Was that what you were looking for in your game plan to have that pace and that intensity?**

COACH MOTZKO: I said it the other day. I'll say it, this was any four teams here could win this thing. It's a single-elimination, one-and-done type. And it comes down to limiting your mistakes and capitalizing when you got a chance.

We had three power play goals. The pace is going to -- you're going to see Michigan tonight try to push pace again Quinnipiac. And there's some fast teams here. There's a lot of talent on all four teams. And we've got one left.

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