

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

Thursday, April 6, 2023

Tampa, Florida, USA

Amalie Arena

Boston U. Terriers

Coach Jay Pandolfo

Domenick Fensore

Jay O'Brien

Semifinal Postgame Media Conference



Minnesota - 6, Boston U - 2

COACH PANDOLFO: Obviously not the result we were looking for. I thought the start of the game we were on our heels. They came out hard. You've got to give them credit. They're a heck of a hockey team. They're all over us in the first.

I thought Drew played well. But then I thought we found our game in the second. We started playing our game. We ended up finding a way to tie it up. And then just the discipline and penalties caught up to us.

You can't give that team seven power plays. That's not winning hockey for us. And we have to learn from it. And it's disappointing because these guys to the left of me and the rest of the senior class, they're a huge reason why we got back to this point. But it's tough to win. It's really hard to win.

And I didn't think we gave ourselves a great chance. Not taking anything away from Minnesota. They're probably the best team we've seen this year.

But, again, I want to give these guys credit. I'm so proud of them. They made my job really easy this year. It's been a pleasure working with them every day, the way they got this program back to doing things the right way, showing up every day, competing.

And at the end of the year it was a player-led team, and that's what we wanted. I give these guys credit. And I'm going to miss these guys. I'm really proud of them.

Q. What has it meant to wear the BU jersey and the pride you have to bring this program back to this kind

of place?

DOMENICK FENSORE: It's been awesome coming to the rink every day and competing with these guys. It's been unbelievable. The way we bought in this year was really fun to see.

Just to be with Jay, it's been unbelievable. He's my roommate the last two years, last three years. But it's going to be pretty weird not seeing him every day. It stinks, honestly. But this program has a bright future ahead.

JAY O'BRIEN: Just really proud to be a Terrier. Hell of a group, hell of a season. Going to miss putting on that scarlet and white. Just really proud and honored to be a Terrier.

And like Dom said it's going to be a little weird next year not being able to give him a hard time every day and living next door to him. But just overall just a great season. Obviously not the result we wanted tonight. Just really proud of this group and just honored to be a Terrier.

Q. Dom, you mentioned the bright future. Working with some of the underclassmen what have you seen kind of grow in their leadership that's going to help them take the next step next year?

DOMENICK FENSORE: I think throughout the year you kind of saw guys buy into roles and really understand what it takes to win here. Give it to them, they put their egos aside and wanted to be a part of success. That's what playing for BU means.

"Everything matters," that was our motto this year. And it was really cool to see everyone buying into that. It stinks. I'm just not going to be here anymore, not going to be a Terrier, which is crazy. I can't even put it into words right now. But I'm real excited to see what happens for them in the future.

Q. The hardest thing to judge watching tape is how fast a team is. Did Minnesota surprise you with their speed at all?

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DOMENICK FENSORE: We knew they were a talented team. We knew they were an opportunistic team. They like to get out in transition and make plays off the rush. I mean, we just had to manage the puck a little better, I think.

In the first period we were kind of -- didn't really -- we were just watching those guys go around the ice and we didn't really put stick on puck and didn't really close time and space. And they were buzzing around the first period.

But credit to us we made some changes in the locker room between the first and second. We were just flying in the second. I think just discipline caught up to us there. You give that team that many power plays they're going to score. They're a good team.

JAY O'BRIEN: Obviously we knew they were a fast, skilled team coming into it. I don't think we were surprised. Maybe we just, like Pando said, we just had a slow start. Credit to them. They played a great game. Just gave them too many power plays, a little too much time and space and that was it.

Q. We often ask coaches how proud they are of their players. But how proud are you guys of the job that Jay has done as a first-year coach helping you guys get all the way to the Frozen Four?

DOMENICK FENSORE: He's been amazing. He comes to work every day, pushes us. Doesn't matter if you're a freshman, senior, treats you same way. That's exactly what you want from a head coach.

Man, he knows the game so well and taught me so much over the last two years at BU. Going to miss him so much. He's so dedicated to the program. And he's the right guy at the helm to lead this team to the future.

JAY O'BRIEN: Just very lucky and fortunate to have Pando lead us. And coming here and trying to change the way things have been going for BU. I think everybody knows that. And I think, as I said yesterday, just cares so much about his players, staff, everyone around BU he treats the same.

He holds us to a high standard. Holds everybody accountable. He's going to be a coach at BU for as long as he wants. Hopefully that's a long time. But just lucky, very lucky to have had him as a head coach.

Q. Sam Stevens gets that first goal. What's that fourth line meant to you as far as the buy-in and depth?

COACH PANDOLFO: They're a big part of our team all year. Forward depth on our team, it was very strong. Those guys bought in to playing a certain way. They had tough matchups, a lot of D zone starts. And they relished the role they had.

That's what you need on winning teams. You have to have guys buying in to playing roles: Not everyone can be on the first line; not everyone can be on the power play. You need those type of players.

I give those guys a lot of credit. They did a heck of job. We probably don't get to this point without they way that line played at certain points this year. It was a pleasure coaching those guys.

Q. You kill off almost two minutes of 5-on-3. Did your P.K. just get tired there at the end?

COACH PANDOLFO: I just think you play a team with that much talent, you just can't go in the box that often. And I think we have Dom and Lane out there killing penalties -- I don't know what their minutes were on the penalty kill, five or six minutes. That's just too much for those guys.

And at the end, the guy made a nice shot there. It would have been nice, the game might be different if we end up killing that, last, I don't know what it was, 12 seconds on that kill. And maybe it would have been different. But that's how it goes.

Q. Torrid start to the second period. What could you say about the adjustments you guys made in the first intermission and lack thereof for the third?

COACH PANDOLFO: I think in the first, to me it looked like we were a little bit overwhelmed with the moment. I thought we talked about all the things with puck management and putting pucks behind them. And we didn't do any of that in the first, I don't know, five or six minutes.

And Drew kept us in it. Then we started finding our way a little bit. Then we ended up getting the first goal, which was huge. Then, again, we end up in the penalty box and it cost us. I think they had two power play goals in the first period. That's not a good recipe against a team like that.

But in the second, we adjusted a little bit. We started doing the things that we know could be successful against them. And we started controlling the game. But I think they might have only had two shots in the first 10 to 15 minutes of that second period.

And then, again, towards the end of the second, discipline

cost us again.

And in the third we just ended up getting that goal and just looked like our group got a little bit deflated. And we kind of never found our game again.

Q. You were talking about Drew a little bit in that answer, but he made some great saves down the stretch to keep it close. Can you talk about Drew's performance tonight and throughout the tournament and this whole season and what he's brought to the team?

COACH PANDOLFO: You can't blame Drew tonight. In the first period he kept us in it. Gave us a chance and he made some big plays on all the power plays they had.

The last month and a half he's been excellent. He got us to this point with some of the games he won for us going back to the Providence game in the semifinals of Hockey East. We don't win the Hockey East championship without Drew playing that way that he did that night.

So, he's been excellent for us. I'm really happy, the way he is as a person, too. He's a leader as a goalie. You don't see that as often with some of the goaltenders. And he's been a big part of our leadership group this year.

Q. Wins and losses aside this year, was there a moment that you thought that this year was going to be different than last year?

COACH PANDOLFO: I think from the start, really, of the season, the way our guys showed up every day to the rink and were buying into the way we wanted them to act away from the rink, at the rink, on the ice, off the ice, all these little things I saw right away. And I've talked about our senior leadership group a lot this year, and I saw it from them right away.

I knew they were going to help lead the guys that were coming in and get everyone to buy in. And I think I saw it right away. I knew we had talent. I knew if we bought into doing that all year that we'd have a good chance to where we ended up today.

It's tough to win this tournament. It really is. The margin for error is slim, and you can't beat yourself. And I think taking nothing away from Minnesota, but tonight I don't think we gave ourselves a great chance to win.

Q. You talk a lot about just the seniors. And what do you hope that they take away from their experience playing BU hockey that they can take forward into their careers in whatever they do?

COACH PANDOLFO: I just want them to be proud of playing for this program and moving forward for them to understand that if you want to be successful, you have to sacrifice certain things and do things a certain way and just learn from that.

But, listen, I learned a lot from these guys as well-being a first-year head coach. So it was mutual. I just wanted them to be proud.

Q. When you look at the season as a whole, how would you describe BU's new identity compared to where you guys were a year ago?

COACH PANDOLFO: I think we've got back to kind of playing a certain way, knowing what to expect every single day, and not only during games, but in practice. Like I've talked about, like coming, competing every day in practice. That's how you get better as a group, pushing each other. Our guys did that. They were great at that this year.

You start getting into the games it's easy, you play hard. It's easy to compete against the other team if you're used to doing it every day. I think that's what this group did. That's what I remember when I played at BU, is just the competition within. It pushes you.

And I felt our group bought into that this year. And I thought you saw it during games, with the way we played. Were we perfect? No. But I thought overall we found that identity again as a group. And we want to keep that moving forward. And it's about the team. At the end of the day, it's about the team. If you don't have that buy-in, it's tough to win.

Q. When you talk about guys like Dom and OB and that whole senior class and all those leaders, what kind of precedent do you think they've set for the next group of leaders and for the rest of the years to come for BU?

COACH PANDOLFO: I think they've done a tremendous job with the younger -- we had 17 upperclassmen this year. I think all of them as a whole taught the younger guys kind of what it takes and what we expect every day. And I think our younger guys bought into it.

There were some talented younger players. And for them to buy in the way they did, I think it's going to propel our program moving forward. We'll have some other younger guys come in, and now they can lead them and show them what's expected every single day.

And I think that's what Dom and that leadership group did.

Like I said, I couldn't be more proud of them in how they
bought in how they wanted to be difference makers.

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