

NCAA Men's Frozen Four: Michigan vs Quinnipiac

Thursday, April 6, 2023

Tampa, Florida, USA

Amalie Arena

Quinnipiac Bobcats

Coach Rand Pecknold

Jacob Quillan

Zach Metsa

Sam Lipkin

Semifinal Postgame Media Conference



JACOB QUILLAN: At the start of this tournament we told ourselves to focus on one thing at a time. Today was Michigan. So, I mean, tomorrow we'll start focusing on Minnesota and take it one step at a time from there.

Q. You end up getting two goals off banked shots. How much is that emphasized to get that puck back on the net when you have a goaltender who might be maybe a tiny bit out of position to get those shots?

JACOB QUILLAN: Yeah, I mean, creating scrums in front of the net is part of the emphasis we had going into the game. Creating that traffic. So as you can see we had two bank-in goals. So it paid off.

SAM LIPKIN: That was obviously on the pre-scout. He's big aggressive. Portillo is a really good goalie. But the big thing for us was get pucks on net, create traffic and we were fortunate to get two. And they were two pretty big goals for us.

Q. Just your ability to go in transition off of what Michigan was doing all night long, was that planned for in advance of the game, or just something you were able to capitalize on as the game was going on?

ZACH METSA: I think it's something we knew they were going to do. They were run and gun. They love to try to make plays one-on-one and create offense. When we can turn that around and bring it right back down their throats, we always talk about playing north, playing with pace. That's kind of the result of that.

Q. Jacob, huge game for you tonight. Can you talk us through the preparation going into the game and how you felt out there?

JACOB QUILLAN: Yeah, I mean, part of the keys we had going into the game was puck management. We wanted to take care of the puck, limit their chances. But, I mean, at the same time we want to pounce on offense. And that's what we did early on in the game. Even later in the game with Mets' goal and Lipper's goal.

Q. Earlier on it seemed like another back-and-forth

Quinnipiac - 5, Michigan - 2

COACH PECKNOLD: I thought Quinnipiac culture was on full display tonight. That was just outstanding. The battle level was great. We won a lot of races. We won a lot of battles. When we got beat at times, we had a second wave, second, third wave. Good stick on puck.

Obviously Yaniv was outstanding for us. I loved the chances we created offensively. Certainly Portillo made a lot of breakaway saves and grade As. Could have broken it open early in the second.

But in the end I thought our culture came through, our conditioning was awesome tonight, our battle level was awesome. Just proud of the boys and we're excited to move on and play Minnesota.

Q. The only problem is still unfinished business to happen Saturday. How long can you enjoy this win before you start thinking about Minnesota?

SAM LIPKIN: The reset's now. You've got to focus on the body, get your body right. Obviously the win is really nice. And it's great to be in the championship. But we've got to reset right now and get our minds wrapped around playing Minnesota.

ZACH METSA: I agree, I think maybe you give yours 15, 20 minutes to enjoy it. And we still have a job to do. It was our goal at the beginning of the year. We have an opportunity to get it. Gotta take care of our bodies, eat well and rest up.



game like you saw at Ohio State a few weeks ago. Now you're playing against another Big Ten team in a few days. Are you going to use some similar preparation you used on Michigan to Minnesota?

SAM LIPKIN: I think they're similar teams. They have a lot of really high-end talent, both squads. But it's our approach and how we need to play. So the main focus is on us, not our opponent. But they're obviously a great team.

ZACH METSA: Our process will still stay the same. Watch video. Coach will do a great job giving us pre-scout and letting us know our key points and what we need to do.

And Minnesota's a great team. It's like every team in this tournament. It's the final game, it's the top two teams. We've got to be ready to go. But in terms of preparation, we're going to stick to what we've done all year and prepare the same way.

JACOB QUILLAN: I think we're just going to keep buying into our identity and take it one step at a time with video tomorrow and see what they've got.

Q. I'm curious, just the reaction on the bench after the last couple of goals. Has it sunk in yet that you're going to play for a national championship, or is this a better question for tomorrow?

JACOB QUILLAN: I mean, probably hasn't sunk in. Probably sink in the next couple of hours or so or maybe tomorrow. But after we hooked that three-goal lead or two-goal lead, we were pretty confident we were going. So we're excited.

ZACH METSA: Yeah, I mean, I think it's sunk in. And there's still one more job to do. I think that's kind of the mentality. We know we're not done yet. So we're going to stay focused and stay level headed. You can't get too high in these type of tournaments. You've got to be able to rebound and reset. That's what we're going to do tomorrow.

SAM LIPKIN: Yeah, I think those guys said it pretty well.

Q. Jacob, so much emphasis, I think, a lot of times goes on your team about how good guys are defensively. You guys almost feel like people underrate you guys offensively?

JACOB QUILLAN: For the most part. I mean, if you look at the talent, like Minnesota, Michigan have, a bunch of draft picks. But even though we're defensive, we have offensive guns too. Showed all year, Collin Graf, he's a

50-point scorer. So we've got offense, too.

Q. That transition game, the ability to pounce, go the other way quickly, curious if it was addressed beforehand if that's something you wanted to do or if it was instinct during the course of the game?

COACH PECKNOLD: That's a great question. Is that game 40? We've done that for 40 games. We do it every game. We play fast, we play north, that's how we want to operate, whether it's Michigan, Harvard or anybody we play.

So I thought it was on full display tonight. I thought we did a great job. We capitalized -- obviously we didn't score on some of those chances, we had a lot of two-on-ones and two-on-ohs and breakaways. That's how we want to play, catch teams.

Q. The hardest thing to get off of film is how fast a team is. What do you know about Minnesota and have you had a chance to look at any of the film yet?

COACH PECKNOLD: Oh, yeah, we watched them. I watched a ton of Minnesota in the fall, getting ready for World Juniors. I think watched every game they played. They have four guys on their team that played for me there. I know how good they are.

I think there's a lot of similarities with Minnesota and Michigan. One of the things we talked about this week getting ready for Michigan was we're playing probably a little better version of Harvard. We played tonight how we played against Harvard, we swept Harvard this year, was a great team, I do think Michigan is better obviously. Obviously you've got Luke Hughes, and -- who is a game-changer -- and I thought Seamus Casey might have been the best player on the ice tonight. He was awesome. He really gave us a lot to handle.

That was the whole, in between first and second, talking about him and what we needed to do there. That's on me. We should have prepared better for him.

Minnesota's a great team. Bob Motzko is one of the best coaches in the business. Spencer Penrose winner, so we're ready for the challenge.

Q. Tonight's win sets your program record for wins. What is so special about this group?

COACH PECKNOLD: Just as they keep saying, keep getting asked that question all week, it's just elite character kids, really high compete, and just very selfless. That's part of having high character, the selfless, the buy-in, doing

things well and just being extremely coachable. I thought we were outstanding tonight.

And Michigan, they're excellent. Just a ton of talent. We had a lot to handle there. But we found a way. And like I said earlier, our culture was on display tonight.

Q. I know you touched on it a little bit in your opening statement, can you explain a little bit about Yaniv's performance? 29 saves, how much of a game-changer he was, especially the power play in the second period, something like three straight saves, something like that?

COACH PECKNOLD: He's excellent. I think he's been the best goalie in the country. You look at the stats, it's not even close.

But he's our guy. He's calm, cool, collected and he probably was the best player on the ice tonight. But we're fortunate to have him. And he helped us win the game, for sure.

Q. Can you share a little bit, the guys mentioned it seemed like they've turned the page already. How do you keep them focused on it's not the goal to get to the national championship game, the goal is to win it, like that the job is not done? How do you make sure that they're all on the same page and that their emotions are in check the next 48 hours?

COACH PECKNOLD: That's a great question. Probably similar to how we addressed coming to Tampa for the Frozen Four. It was, like, this isn't -- we're not going to the beach. We're not going to the pool. We're not going jet skiing. We're here to win a hockey game. I went at them pretty hard last Saturday to get them locked in on that.

Another thing I talked to them about is we need to keep the parents and girlfriends at bay. They all get here they want a piece of guys. This is great, let's go to lunch.

No. I told them I'll call your parents and your girlfriends and leave so-and-so alone. So we have to do the same thing tonight. I'll get out here. I'm already itching to go get to my phone. And I'll be, like, guys, you've got this, this and this. You're done with the your parents get back to your room.

We can enjoy -- this is the best way to put it -- we'll enjoy the win in late April and May and June, we'll enjoy it all summer. But we've got to start reloading and get ready for a great Minnesota team.

Q. The second period seemed like Michigan was really

starting to come back and fight back. What did you say in the second intermission to really get them going, because you got an easy goal in the third period.

COACH PECKNOLD: I don't know if I would agree with that. I thought the start of the second we dominated. We had that power play. We had some great chances, maybe could have had a 5-on-3. It is what it is.

I thought we were dominant. We had a ton of chances to go up 3-1. Then they got their legs under them and started to play better. I don't know if I agree with that.

Between the second and third was same stuff I say to them all the time, let's stay the course. We're built for this moment. And they came through.

Q. Some of your players mentioned pre-scouting Michigan and what you guys were looking for. When you were looking at this Michigan team, what were you trying to defend? And do you feel you were effective in that tonight?

COACH PECKNOLD: We certainly weren't perfect. But we were pretty good. We talked a lot about their high-end talent, their 27 draft picks, whatever they have, and how we needed to defend in waves.

And just, like, we're going to get beat. It's going to happen. We've got to have that second wave there and third wave there. We talked a lot about how to defend 43. I thought we did a really good job -- I thought he was excellent -- I thought we did a really good job of getting on him.

I should have talked more about defending 26. And we didn't do that in the first and second. But some things on faceoff plays they run, just normal stuff, power play stuff, their tendencies that we have. Again, we weren't perfect but we were good enough to get the win.

Q. What do you take from your experience here before, and if you may approach something differently this time around to hopefully get the job done? And then the second part is, you've mentioned the guys that you've coached at World Juniors. There were 10, 11 Frozen Four players on that team. How helpful is that experience and knowing those players like as well as you would as a coach, in game planning against them? So that's the two-part question.

COACH PECKNOLD: I already forgot the first part. I should have taken notes. Just in terms of knowing them. Obviously they know some of the things, the way we played. We played the Quinnipiac system at Worlds. Did



we have as much detail? No we did not. We didn't have time. We had six practices.

But we did play a lot of the things we did. I'm sure Coach Naurato and the staff said, what will we see here. And he knows, most people know how we play, et cetera.

But I do think it helped me in terms of, like, I just know how good Luke Hughes is. And I know what a game-changer he is, and how good Rutger is and all those guys.

And to me, whether I had that or not, I knew what we needed to do going into this. We had to take away time and space. We had to -- like, it's a lot easier to defend Hughes and Fantilli when they don't have the puck. Because once they get it you're in trouble. So we tried to do that. Biggest thing we stressed this week was we had to have the puck. We had to have the puck. Again, we weren't perfect, but I thought and we had it a lot.

And the last time, I think it helped me just getting ready for tonight, getting ready for this tournament. And I'll go back to what we've done in the past to get ready -- obviously we haven't gotten over the hump in the national championship game.

But it's a tough task. We're playing Minnesota. They're loaded. Logan Cooley is, in my opinion, probably the best player in college hockey this year. Knies probably is not far behind him. Obviously Fantilli is unbelievable too. But that first line with Snuggy there too, it's a handful. They were just awesome the first game.

I think the thing about Minnesota, you look at that first line, they've got other good players. Seven was really good tonight and their D were really good and their goalie played well. It's a tough task.

And we don't mind being the underdog. We came in here. Nobody gave us a chance to win tonight. And nobody gave us a chance to win on Saturday. But we'll find a way to figure it out.

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