

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Louisville vs Michigan State

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Buffalo, New York, USA

KeyBank Center

Louisville Cardinals Coach Pat Kelsey

Ryan Conwell

Adrian Wooley

Media Conference

Michigan State 77, Louisville 69

PAT KELSEY: I want to congratulate Michigan State. A really good team, as always. Every one of Coach Izzo's teams, tough, physical, disciplined. They played a really good game tonight.

Really proud of our guys. These press conferences and these postgame speeches to your team are the ones that you dread the most, especially talking to your team for the last time. When I say for the last time, I told them, that's the last time that that group will be together in one place probably forever.

It's hard because seasons and lifetime, you go through so much together, you fight together, you go through adversity together, you enjoy triumphs together. The most difficult things about those meetings is the guys that are playing their last collegiate basketball game, and one of them is sitting next to me right now in Ryan Conwell. I said it at the press conference yesterday, he's just one of those guys that I'll never coach another one like him.

Adrian has got a lot of basketball left to play, and I'm proud of him, but those other guys, Ryan, because he's sitting right next to me, just world-class individual, represents our school and our city and our basketball program in a first-class manner.

When your best player is your hardest worker, your most disciplined guy, you've got something really, really special. But just seeing those guys in the locker room disappointed and distraught knowing their careers are over and they're going on to their professional deals, it's really tough.



But I'm very, very proud of our guys. We're well aware at the University of Louisville what the standard is in our city for our program. Losing at this round in this game is not the standard, and we understand that. But these guys have a whole bunch to be proud of. We haven't advanced in the tournament in this tradition rich, one of the best brands in college basketball, in eight or nine years, and this team did this over this weekend, and that's something that they should be very, very proud of.

Q. Ryan, can you just sum up your career and this experience, this week of getting this win and playing a team like Michigan State?

RYAN CONWELL: Yeah, first and foremost, I just want to give all glory to God. I'm just blessed. Just to sum up my career, it's just blessed. All the things I've been through, just all the places that I've -- all the schools that I've went to, just all the experiences that I've been able to have, I'm thankful for every piece of my journey.

I think it's a huge reason to who I am today and why I'm here. I'm just thankful just to be a part of this team, and just to be able to play for just a great coaching staff and just with my brothers. I will always love them for life.

Obviously it just hurts, you know, that this is the end of my college career, but it's the beginning of another. It just hurts just having -- just knowing we don't have another game with my brothers. I'm just thankful, but just in pain at the same time.

Q. Either one of you can answer this. What did Michigan State do defensively that maybe got you guys out of a rhythm in that first half?

RYAN CONWELL: I feel like we really got some good looks, and the shots just didn't fall down. But I think we executed our game plan really, really well. We got out in transition. We got our open threes, got downhill, tried to put pressure on the paint. They were trying to be physical with us and disrupt us, but especially in the first half, I thought we got some really good looks, and they just didn't fall.

Q. Tom Izzo was just up here saying he's very proud



of his kids because they persevered through a lot. What was it like seeing a team that maybe rose to a different level in this tournament?

PAT KELSEY: Are you talking about our team or their team?

Q. I'll just ask, what do you make of your team right now and what it's accomplished this season, if I could start there?

PAT KELSEY: Very proud. Those guys, they left it all on the floor, and that's all you can ask of them. Every locker room in college basketball right now at this point of the season, I'm sure Coach Izzo or their trainer could come out and they could just talk about the thigh contusions and the fat ankles and the staples, and everybody is banged up, and our team is no different. I'm just so proud of them.

They fought. They fought. There are no moral victories, especially at a program like Louisville. That's for another day, to talk about that stuff. I'm just proud of this group.

Several games ago, we lost two tough road games, the last one being at Clemson, and I felt like from that moment on, there was just a renewed connectedness. Guys are always locked in. I always talk about the maturity of our team, the professionalism of our team.

But I felt like the team really, really started to come together and fought. I thought they fought tonight. We went neck and neck with the best rebounding team in the country. We were right there. I thought we fought. I thought we scrapped. Worked so much on defending the post. They go at you at the pipes.

At the end of the day, you've got to give No. 1, their point guard, his flowers. He had 16 assists, which is crazy. He's got 300 on the season, which is ridiculous. Really makes people around him better. And 55 had a huge game for them tonight and gave us a lot of problems.

The free throw disparity was a difference in the game. We only shot six free throws, they shot 20. They're a hard-charging, driving, attacking team. But we try to be, as well.

Q. Pat, when you think in terms of your first two seasons here at U of L and establishing a foundation that you want, what in particular are you most confident and secure that you have been able to establish so far?

PAT KELSEY: What am I most confident that --

Q. Yeah, in terms of building the foundation you wanted for this program, what are you most confident in what you've done so far in these two seasons?

PAT KELSEY: I mean, what am I confident in? I'm confident in who I am. I'm confident in the way we go about our business, our processes.

The end of the season is the time to reflect and figure out what you need to get better at. I think any competitor or anybody that wants to be great at what they do, they're always going to take a step back when the season ends, get above the trees, self-evaluate, evaluate your processes, evaluate everything. Everybody does that. Man, the wound is still fresh. We just lost.

To me, my whole mindset right now is on loving on these guys that are distraught and crying up here because they just played their last collegiate basketball game.

Proud of what we've built over the last two years. You've been in Louisville for a long time. You know. Unless you stand on that podium and the confetti is coming down, you don't meet the standard. There's three National Championships at Louisville. I'm well aware. I know what I signed up for. I'm proud of the last two years. Those were fun teams to coach, great kids, did a lot for this city, with last year's revival team, this year we won a team in the tournament.

I'm not trying to sell what we did and stuff like that. You know me, I'm about the next thing. I'm probably going to spend some time with my wife and kids tonight, if that's okay with you, just to be a normal human being and to thank them for all the sacrifices they make because, gosh darn, the wives of coaches, they're warriors.

My dad is a 56-year car executive, and they call car executives' wives, they call them car widows because that's some of the longest retail hours, automotive business.

Basketball is right there. And Lisa Lou deserves some time tonight. So if it's okay with you, I'll get started on figuring out a way to get on that podium in about six or seven hours.

Q. You mentioned Fears and his game a little bit before. If I could ask you how tough he is to cover, being their leading scorer and also the nation's leading assist guy and having that dual threat?

PAT KELSEY: Yeah, he's good. What is he, Second Team All-American, first Team All-American, something like that? He played like a First Team All-American.



You've got to game plan for him. You've got to give him different looks. We're not a go-under ball screen team. We studied the crap out of him, and we thought you can't give him a steady diet of anything, but he's not a great shooter. He's a great player. He's seen all the different coverages.

I thought going under on his pick-and-rolls gave him some grief early in the game.

He's 3 for 13 from the field, which isn't all that efficient, but 16 assists and five turnovers, that's ridiculous. Then you start getting used to it a little bit and start hurting us, and we went back to our normal coverage, and he's the straw that stirs the drink, man. 16 assists, five turnovers. He's a bear to deal with. He's lightning in transition. As you know, Coach Izzo's deal is fast and faster.

I don't know if you asked him that question, we're pretty hard to deal with in transition, as well. Especially in that first half, man. I thought, gosh, we were 4 for 18 from three. I know CO asked the guys what they did. They're great. They're great defensively, Michigan State. But gosh darn, I felt like we had a ton of looks that normally go in, and we don't blink an eye about that. We're generating great shots. We know it's going to come.

Then in the second half we shot it a lot better, but then they started to get loose. 11 threes for them is a lot. That's a lot for them. They're not a great three-point shooting team, and when Michigan State makes 11 threes -- is that what it was? Yeah, they made 11 threes, they shot 42 percent from three.

55, God bless him, he played a heck of a game. He's above the rim, dunks it sideways, lobs -- when he's banging two threes and that one right in front of their bench, that was freaking huge. You've got to give him credit.

Big No. 15 is a really good player. I think that might have been his first three on the entire year -- I'm sorry, second, out of 35 games or something. It's not the reason we lost the game, but they shot it really well, and we didn't anticipate them doing that.

Q. Coach, kind of going off of what Jonah was saying about Fears, when you're playing a point guard that passes that well, are you more concerned about the on-ball defender, how they guard, or the actions off of the ball?

PAT KELSEY: All of it. All of it. Great point guards, when you're in a pick-and-roll, they pay no attention to who's on the ball and who's hedging the ball screen, who's helping

on the ball screen. They read the help. That's a special trait. Not everybody -- the game moves that slow to them where they can manipulate everybody else and see what's going on. 300 assists on a year, you can do it, and he really can. Give him a lot of credit.

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