

Big Ten Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 9, 2023

Chicago, Illinois, USA

United Center

Minnesota Golden Gophers

Coach Ben Johnson

Braeden Carrington

Dawson Garcia

Postgame Press Conference

Maryland - 70, Minnesota - 54

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by the University of Minnesota head coach Ben Johnson along with Dawson Garcia and Braeden Carrington.

BEN JOHNSON: It wasn't the way we wanted to end it, but credit Maryland. I thought they were really good today. I appreciate my guys. I thought they battled all year down to the end. I just felt like today we didn't quite have the juice that we needed.

We cut into the lead a couple times but didn't have enough to capitalize to really get it to a one- or two-possession game. That was the tale of it. Got to do a better job protecting the ball. Again, some of that had to do with Maryland. I thought they did a good job and had a ton of energy and juice and fight.

But my guys competed, and it's never easy to end it.

Q. Dawson, can you just talk a little bit about what you saw from Pharrel tonight and just kind of the last few weeks of the season.

DAWSON GARCIA: I mean, he was incredible tonight. I thought he had a lot of energy on the offensive glass. I thought he showed a lot, but then again, I see it every day. I might be a little less surprised than other people watching it.

Yeah, he's an incredible talent, and he's only going to get better because he likes to work and he's very coachable. I'm just happy to be able to play alongside a guy like that and continue to do that.



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Q. Braeden, can you talk about Pharrel as well and just this entire freshman class and how much you've grown this season and have improved at the end of the year.

BRAEDEN CARRINGTON: I feel like the whole team just kind of had our back through the whole season. We had our ups and downs, but just feel like we stuck with it. We were in the gym every day and built that great connection.

Pharrel, obviously he's a good player. He's a good man to have inside. Just tough to go out this way, but to have this core group of freshmen for the next couple years is definitely exciting to have.

Q. For Braeden, a couple threes there late in the second half to cut it to single digits. What was the mindset of the team as you guys tried to chip away at the lead?

BRAEDEN CARRINGTON: We always say just fight to the end till that final buzzer goes off. When I got my shot, I'm just going to shoot it. I wasn't shooting well in the first half, but they always tell me keep shooting, the team has confidence in me, so I just keep letting it fly.

Q. Dawson, just talk about what goes into the off-season for the guys that you know that are coming back. I know some that might not, but what are you kind of looking to develop with the group that will be back next year?

DAWSON GARCIA: It's tough to think about it right now, but I'm sure when that time comes, just continue to be connected in the gym together and really like strive for something special. Because I feel like we can be -- I know we can be really good. I know we've got all the right pieces from top to bottom.

So really just a summer of just grinding and no looking back.

Q. Coach, 15 turnovers, the two ten second violations in the first half. How effective was Maryland's press and disruptive for you guys' plan tonight?



BEN JOHNSON: They do a good job. I also thought probably half of ours -- I have to look at the film -- was probably self-induced. Again, I just don't think we had the pop that we needed to to break it, and I thought we kind of made it a little harder than it needed to be.

Some of that obviously is on us. And Maryland, like I said, they do a good job. But we just didn't have that pop, that juice. Some of those turnovers were -- I don't know if they were tired or just careless, but we were kind of throwing the ball all over the place for a while.

Any time you have a ten second violation, a little bit of that is you're not playing with that kind of force that you need. And we talked about that. A little bit disappointed to have those.

Q. Coach, Donta Scott with 16 points in the first half. What were some of the problems covering him tonight?

BEN JOHNSON: He did a good job. Our ball screen coverage when we went into the game, kind of changed it a little bit on him and gave him a couple of open looks on his ball screen stuff and he had a good job of making them. He had 16, and I think the next guy had 5. So I think he really carried him.

The second half we were able to do a little bit on him kind of limit his touches. A player like that, you can't let them get into a flow early. We did that, and he capitalized.

Q. Coach, you guys did a good job containing Jahmir Young, especially in the first half. What was the game plan against him?

BEN JOHNSON: We did not feel we did a pretty good job on him the first two games with ball screen coverage. So that was one of the things we wanted to emphasize is not letting him get downhill and feel comfortable. Kind of be more at the level and make him play in a crowd, and hopefully our size would maybe cause some issues for him.

I thought we did that relatively mostly in the first half. The second half he kind of got away from us a couple times and got downhill and got to the rim.

No, he's a good player, and we wanted to make sure we definitely kind of corralled him better than we have in the past.

Q. Kind of similar to what I asked Dawson, you're not exactly sure who's back and who's not. But the core

that you were developing at the end of the year, the freshmen and Dawson, what do you need to see from that group in the off-season? What would you like to see?

BEN JOHNSON: We definitely have some pieces that we're all excited about. I think these guys learned a ton this year. I think sometimes experience is the best teacher, whether that's good or bad.

These guys, especially the young ones, are going to come back feeling pretty seasoned for being only sophomores. A guy like Dawson, who's been around for a while, got his first taste of the Big Ten and understands what that's all about, able to play multiple positions with him.

So off-season, we're going to attack it and definitely use this year as motivation. It's good to have guys back finally. This is year three, and the first two years we didn't have much that we retained over. So now you're able to actually build on concepts and stuff that you taught this year and get better at certain things that we do offensively and defensively.

So hopefully we'll be able to correlate that to a big change, and I know guys will be excited to get back in the gym and get back after it.

Q. Coach, a year from now this event will be hosted in Minneapolis. What needs to happen this off-season to set your program up to make a run at that point?

BEN JOHNSON: Again, player development is obviously huge, whether it's weight room, on the court, getting guys physically ready. I mean, you take a look at our league, there's a lot of older guys, and there's mature bodies, and we've got to be one of those next year, and we've got to take advantage of that.

Again, I think all the experiences that our team had this year, we've got to make sure we grow from it and learn from it, both the good and the bad. I think if we do that with the group we have coming back and the experience we have coming back -- very rarely I think are they going to be able to face what they faced this year. If you can go through what they went through this year and this is the worst of it, then I think we've got a chance to be pretty good down the line.

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