

Big Ten Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 15, 2024

Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

Target Center

Ohio State Buckeyes

Jake Diebler

Bruce Thornton

Postgame Press Conference



Illinois - 77, Ohio State - 74

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Ohio State, Coach Jake Diebler along with Bruce Thornton. We'll start with an opening statement from Coach.

JAKE DIEBLER: Really proud of how our guys fought all the way till the end against who I think is one of the top 10 to 15 teams in the country.

I loved just the aggressiveness that we played with. We kept fighting. We kept swinging. We stayed aggressive. A couple bounces here, there could have been the difference in the game.

But proud of just our effort, our toughness, and our togetherness today.

Q. Bruce, playing under Coach Diebler, what's it been like for you?

BRUCE THORNTON: It's been fine. This season we had our trials and tribulations, but we always have faith within us and within the team through the adversity we've had this year.

You couldn't tell me how the season was going to end or how it was going to begin, but I'm glad I had the experience. We still have an opportunity to play in the postseason, so as a team, we're going to play in that.

Playing with Coach Diebler has been very fun, very exciting, and we have more work to do.

Q. Coach, so this stretch for you guys has just been really strong. 6-2 down the final eight. You took this program, and you carried it and finished strong. Coach Underwood at the top of his press conference

shouted you out. He said you did an outstanding job. What impact do you think you've made on this team, or rather what impact do you think this team has made on you?

JAKE DIEBLER: Listen, what our program has been able to do these last few weeks has been special. I don't think anybody would have anticipated it go the way it went. These guys have really done more for me than I think I've done for them.

I've had dreams of being a head coach, and these circumstances were never a thought that it would be this way. But they trusted me, and they allowed me to be the best version of myself. I think that I owe them a great deal for that, and it was really impactful on me and my family.

Q. Coach, it seemed like your guys just came in it tonight not really caring who the opponent was. They were going to come in with confidence. What can you say about that confidence that your guys did show today?

JAKE DIEBLER: I'm really proud of just how our guys embraced this kind of aggressive mentality, this like playing with a sense of urgency. Those were two things we talked about right away when this started.

They leaned into it. It started in practice, and practice was challenging at first with that increased urgency. I'm just, I'm so proud again of how we played against who I think is one of the best teams in the country, who's poised to make a run in the postseason.

So I think we showed what we're capable of and who we are. I've said this before publicly, the greatest thing that I hope people see about our team is just the character of our guys because I think it was revealed at such a high level during this -- I guess now we're coming on around a month.

So I'm so happy that people got to see what they're capable of and really just how they played for something bigger than themselves, how they played for the pride that comes across their chest wearing that Ohio State jersey. This program is special, and it's got big -- it's a real family,

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and our guys leaned into that.

And the support -- I can't leave without saying this. The support our former players showed us this last month was unbelievable and really special.

Q. Bruce mentioned some postseason opportunities. Obviously you can't commit anything in stone, but is it looking like you guys have some games left in you?

JAKE DIEBLER: In my opinion we do. I think we've played ourselves into a conversation, and our guys have earned the right, in my opinion, to play in the postseason.

If you go back, I don't think anybody thought we would be here. So it's exciting. Today didn't finish the way we wanted it to. We wanted to keep playing in this Big Ten tournament. It's such a great, great tournament, time of year. But our guys have earned the right certainly.

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