

Big Ten Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 16, 2024
Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA
Target Center

Illinois Fighting Illini
Brad Underwood
Luke Goode
Marcus Domask

Postgame Press Conference

Illinois - 98, Nebraska - 87

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by the University of Illinois, head coach Brad Underwood, along with Marcus Domask and Luke Goode.

BRAD UNDERWOOD: Well, obviously we're pleased with the outcome. It was a tale of two halves. Nebraska and Fred have had just an incredible season. I have so much respect for Fred. He's a dear friend.

Obviously they played a little bit man down today with Wilcher being out. It was a frustrating first half, just because I didn't think we had any pop, we didn't have any life. We looked like we were still in bed asleep. My halftime wasn't about any Xs and Os. It was animated. Probably didn't want to check my blood pressure.

But we had to find some life. It obviously didn't work because we had to call a quick timeout in the second half, and then they responded. It was on them. It wasn't me. It was all them deciding to play. That's who we can be in the second half.

I thought Luke and Ty were just unbelievable today with their offensive rebounding, I think they had 11 of our 14. Impacted the game. Obviously Luke made some balls, which is absolutely great to see. He's been fighting some injury with tendinitis in his knee and an ankle. Then Marcus, you look down, and it's 16, 8, and 7. You're talking almost triple-double type numbers.

You sit here, and you talk about a lot of things. Obviously Terrence breaks the tournament record. But the most important thing I hope our guys learn is it's lose and go home. We can't have first halves like we had. Today the



second half was fun to watch this group play because we can be pretty good when we do that.

Q. For both you guys. 40 points is obviously a record. What's it like to have Terrence Shannon on your team right now?

LUKE GOODE: It makes it easy for us. Get a defensive rebound and look for him in transition. That's basically the key to it. When you have someone that's gifted as a scorer and gifted as an athlete and can get downhill and still go 5-for-9 from three is pretty special. When you have a teammate like that, all you can do is look for him. He was able to knock down a bunch of shots tonight and help our team win.

Q. Marcus, obviously a little more comfortable tonight, shot it better. What went into that and what did you feel? Started the game a little bit slow, but then you got into rhythm.

MARCUS DOMASK: It's just basketball. You miss a shot, you make a shot, it's another possession. The mindset is next possession. In this possession, how am I going to help my team win?

I try not to think about what I'm doing other than the next possession and how am I going to help my team?

Q. Luke, Coach obviously mentioned you've been battling injuries. How does it feel just to have a game like you had today?

LUKE GOODE: It feels great. It's kind of just like I've said since I got to Illinois, just believing in the process. Anybody that's watched Illinois over the past month knows it's been a lot of ups and downs, especially for myself. But I just got to keep going and keep working hard in practice.

I feel like I've brought it in practice. And to have a game like this, it was nice to have for sure, for the confidence. I'm excited to help the team in any way, and today I was able to hit shots and get offensive rebounds. That's what impacted it in a winning way.



I was happy to do that and give us an opportunity to win a championship tomorrow.

Q. Coach said there wasn't a lot of Xs and Os at halftime, but what changed defensively with giving up 52 in the first half and only 37 or so in the second. Did anything change scheme-wise for you guys?

MARCUS DOMASK: We started switching a little more with Rienk Mast. In the first half, he got us a couple, and he popped and we were in our drop coverage. We switched a little more, and not let him get the threes. I think it was more of a team effort than it was Xs and Os.

Q. Luke, I know you had the four threes, but you also had four big offensive rebounds. How does that impact you when you're hitting it on both ends of the floor like that?

LUKE GOODE: Well, one of the biggest plays in my opinion you can do is offensive rebound. It usually leads to good things. I can recall two that -- one of them was a Marcus wide-open three that he was able to knock down, and another one led to layup.

When you can get second-chance opportunities on the glass, it's huge for the team, and it gives us another opportunity to score.

Especially Ty with seven, that's big time. When you have two guys that combine for 11 offensive rebounds, you're doing some good things. Any way to impact the game, and that too.

Q. Luke, obviously you've been a part of a Big Ten title team. This team won this a couple years ago before you got here. What's it mean for this team to have a chance to get a banner tomorrow?

LUKE GOODE: It means everything. I'll remember it for the rest of my life when Iowa missed that last three in the corner and we ran on the court. That's a memory I'll remember for the rest of my life. We have a ring to go with it. That's what we play for. We play for championships.

To have the opportunity tomorrow to win another championship, it's what we work for. We work all summer and the preseason and throughout the whole season to put ourselves in a position like this, and we're excited for the opportunity.

Q. You guys shot a lot better from behind the arc in the second half. What did you see out there, and how did you adjust and shoot better?

LUKE GOODE: So we were -- in the second half -- at halftime, we knew what they were going to do on defense. We started running some actions that put their defenders in a tough situation, long closeouts and stuff like that, and we were able to move the ball.

I think the second half we made quick decisions. We were able to swing the ball a lot faster and get way better looks, in my opinion. I remember a couple shots. Quincy got a wide open three late just from moving the ball. I was able to get a couple of locks. Marcus got a couple of wide open looks.

I think it was just the movement of the ball in the second half that allowed us to step into those threes instead of taking contested threes.

Q. Luke, even with Terrence doing his thing tonight, just how important was it for guys like yourself and for Quincy to still be able to knock down shots down the stretch?

LUKE GOODE: Yeah, it's super important. When somebody can score that well, a lot of the defenders on the other team will crowd the paint and do everything they can to stop him. When somebody has 40 points, you have to do something right.

For us to step up and hit shots, Marcus 16, Quincy 13, I was able to hit some shots as well. I think that opens up the floor as well, because now you don't have a bunch of guys that can go into the paint on his drives, transition, it opens up a lot of lanes for him because you can't have guys helping off of Quincy in the corner, me in the corner, situations like that. So I think it just works really well in itself.

Q. Marcus, Terrence has 25-plus in 8 of 11 games. You're a guy who can go off like that. What's that do for you guys as a team?

MARCUS DOMASK: It helps with spacing. When you've got guys that can shoot it as well as he does, everything opens up more for everyone else. Then it just, teams have to focus so much on getting back in transition against them, and that's tiring. Teams don't want to sprint back every single possession.

Terrence, he's got a motor that keeps going. He doesn't get tired. Little by little, he wears teams down. He drew ten fouls. That hurts teams.

Q. Brad, similar situation in the second half today, early timeout first couple minutes. Yesterday you were pretty visibly upset. Today not as much. What was



your message different compared to yesterday?

BRAD UNDERWOOD: At some point, it's not me. They've got to want to do that. You can't -- this team has a lot of pride. I challenged them at halftime. Then we didn't -- there wasn't much there. So I just sat there for a good little bit. I didn't say much. I didn't say anything.

At some point, it's got to be their leadership take over. Quincy Guerrier really stepped up. That became a happy huddle in terms of encouragement and so on and so forth. It's amazing how that worked for our team.

I didn't sub very much. I let those guys run for a long time. Boy, it was really encouraging to see because it's on them. It wasn't me. Yesterday was more me. Today was more them.

Q. The Big Ten tournament's never seen something like what Terrence did today. Have you ever seen anything like what Terrence did today in your time coaching over the decades?

BRAD UNDERWOOD: I was very, very fortunate in that I coached Michael Beasley. Michael Beasley as a freshman averaged 26 and 12. Unfortunately, I saw Michael do that quite a bit. I saw him have an unbelievable thing in Allen Fieldhouse one night against -- big game. So I have, but that was pretty special today.

I didn't realize he had that many. You get going just in the flow of the game, and we liked the matchups, and we put him in situations. It was kind of just fell into those things. It wasn't strained.

Q. Brad, obviously there's been a lot going on with him throughout the year. Can you put into context what his mindset has been to be able to play at this level?

BRAD UNDERWOOD: Great. He's handled it like a professional. He knows there's a serious situation out there. He's been an unbelievable teammate. But he has been great. He has handled it. His work ethic hasn't changed. Took him a little bit to come back because he's a great teammate. But he's been very professional.

Q. Brad, you guys, second half, you're able to get in the paint. Nebraska doesn't -- they really leave a guy in the paint almost, but you were still able to get to the basket. What did you change offensively to make that happen?

BRAD UNDERWOOD: I think Luke and Marcus both mentioned it, ball movement. We've got ball movement.

We call what we do point five basketball, and that's making the extra pass. It hits your hand and then it's out. First half we held it. I bet half the time we threw it back to the same side we got it from. So we were driving it right back into the defense.

That's all we talked about literally at halftime and one of the timeouts, just get rid of it, and then you can drive it. We've got some guys who were good at driving it, driving mismatches, and Ty and T.J. were those two. I thought Coleman had some opportunities to do that. It freed everything up.

Q. Coach, we've seen Ty Rodgers this weekend just play, just refusing to lose. Can you talk about the importance for you guys?

BRAD UNDERWOOD: It's nice to see him play well because he's been working his butt off in the gym. It's amazing how that works. Good things happen to those who work hard. He's always a great teammate. He's guarding with intensity and purpose. His rebounding has been phenomenal.

Again, we made a change in the second half, putting him on the ball and getting Marcus off of it. He just got downhill and creates some easy opportunities for himself as well.

Q. In the previous matchup, Coach, Keisei Tominaga had an amazing game shooting the ball. What did you guys do differently against him today to make sure he didn't get off against you guys again?

BRAD UNDERWOOD: Prayed. He's the one player in the country, maybe the one player in this league that really gives me angst because you can guard him great and it not matter. We really guarded him very, very well in Champaign in the game. I think the one thing we wanted to do is make sure they were twos or give him uncontested threes or blown assignment threes.

For the most part, Terrence had -- my game plan going in was to keep Terrence in on him all the time and not have to sub that. Again, it shows why Terrence is really good.

But he's a terrific player. He's had a terrific season. I'm glad we don't have to play him any more.

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