

Maui Jim's Maui Invitational

Tuesday, November 23, 2021

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

St. Mary's Gaels

Randy Bennett

Logan Johnson

Alex Ducas

Postgame Press Conference

Saint Mary's - 62, Oregon - 50

RANDY BENNETT: Another game that we just feel privileged to be playing in. Playing Oregon, really one of the better programs in the country. So to get to play them here in the Maui Invitational is just special and it was the same at Notre Dame.

So we're living a dream being able to play really good opponents on neutral floor and our guys really competed tonight. I thought we really competed defensively.

And our leadership, these two guys were a big part of it. Was it outstanding. I know we played really high level defensively tonight. It helped us get a lead and it helped us win the game.

Q. When you're in a tight game like that, especially in the first half, but knowing that every single point from last year is back, you guys know what one another is capable of is, is it just a matter of patience and waiting for the game to come to you and sticking to the process?

LOGAN JOHNSON: For sure. Last year it was kind of a challenge to know who to go to every night. But returning with everybody, we know that we can count on everybody. So we know that, if it's not going in the hole for one of us, we know that somebody's going to pick us up.

Like, yesterday, for example, Dan stepped up in a huge way. We don't need that from him every night, every night it's going to be something different from somebody else, and on that particular night he stepped up. And tonight it was more balanced out with the scoring. Dan still led the way with a huge part for us.

But, no, I think it's just having everybody back, it's easy to talk to one another. It's easy to pull somebody aside and



they understand what they need to do when they go in the game.

ALEX DUCAS: Yeah, I think it's just a belief that, it starts from the top with our a coaching group. Everyone knows our players from last year. I think it's just a belief that guys can get the job done and they really have a belief in them.

Q. Weird question. Off the court, listening to the game, watching in the seats after the broadcast, and in between commercial breaks, we're hearing everyone on the court, PAC-12, West Coast Conference, the battle lines. But is it good that two West Coast Conference teams against the PAC-12, big question this year: Is the West Coast Conference going to be maybe better than the PAC-12? Is it a bit of a statement for not just St. Mary's but for the West Coast Conference today?

LOGAN JOHNSON: The West Coast Conference is definitely on the up and up. I think teams are really going to stop sleeping on the West Coast Conference.

We started the season out, I think yesterday I checked, we were 25-0 in the West Coast Conference in top-5 teams. So we're able to compete with anybody. It's just putting our best foot forward and throwing the first punch.

Q. What were you guys able to do defensively to hold Oregon (no microphone)?

ALEX DUCAS: I think the big part of our defense is to believe in one another. Coach relates it all game and leading up to it, but it's just how every guy believes in our scout. We trust it. We implement it. We just go out there and get it done. We have a belief in each other that each guy needs us to get it done and go and do it.

LOGAN JOHNSON: We know when the ball's not going in for us. We know that we can rely on our defense. We know that we're going to be able to help one another in gaps and play gaps and take away driving lanes from teams and make them shoot tough shots.

It's just about rebounding and boxing out really. Yeah, we're going to get the job done defensively nine times out

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of 10.

Q. How much did the atmosphere of the crowd help you guys?

ALEX DUCAS: For me it was massive. The lift that those guys give us in the crowd is huge. You can't really replicate it anywhere else. It's neutral ground, but I feel comfortable that we're at home pretty much. We had the majority of our fans here and they were loud all game so give credit to them.

LOGAN JOHNSON: For sure. We travel well and they're screaming every second of the game. There's no letup in that. So they help us. They definitely help us and they give us a lift that we need.

Q. (No microphone.)

LOGAN JOHNSON: We practice it every day. We practice shooting every day. We practice getting into every, like, every little detail when it comes to scoring, being efficient, we do that every day. So it's just about being able to step up and shoot the shot. We're confident in one another and I think that goes a long way.

ALEX DUCAS: I think a big part of, obviously going off what Logan said, is our shot selection. We go back to each game and see right shots and wrong shots and even shots that can be cleaned up a little bit. So I think that plays a big part in our team shooting so well.

Q. When you have that tight of a first half, is it just a matter of patience as a coach and whatever you told them at halftime that knowing what they're capable of and knowing what they're going to do in the second half?

RANDY BENNETT: I think they kind of hit it. When you spend -- all these guys are back. They're kind of older, on the older side now. They're juniors and seniors. And we've just been through some wars, and you go through those wars and you either get tougher or you get beat, and our guys, they can talk to each other in a way that a lot of teams can't.

Now, like they will hold each other accountable and it could be really direct. Logan's really good there. And he's had to sacrifice his role a little bit as a scorer. Last year he was our leading scorer, and now he's just one of the, one of a balanced team. Fotu's kind of taken the scoring lead and Ducas should, and he showed it a little bit tonight.

But they're comfortable in their own skin. They're comfortable with each other. They trust each other. So I

really don't have to -- I trust 'em. Halftime was positive talk. We held them to 15 or whatever we did at halftime and that's hard to do against Oregon, the program they are, and the coach they have.

But that's kind of their mentality. They're just going to, they're pretty gritty and pretty tough, and they're going to try and lock you up and then get the best shots they can.

First half it was a struggle for us to score, but we didn't, I didn't think we panicked and got frustrated and started taking bad shots, which would have hurt us a lot.

Q. You played Wisconsin a couple years ago. What do you remember about that game and what do you expect tomorrow?

RANDY BENNETT: Davison is one of those guys you remember. Like, that's the one guy I remember from that team, and he's such -- he's what we got. He's one of those stud leaders, and you could feel it when he's on the court.

So we know what we're running into. That was, I think that was an overtime game in South Dakota when we played them. So we know what we're getting into and it's going to be a tough game, but like I said when we began this thing is we're just so privileged to play against these teams in this event and we feel like we're one of those teams, but we don't always get to play 'em, but we're getting -- these three teams we're going to play in this tournament, we couldn't ask for more.

And the last one is -- Wisconsin beat Houston. We all know how good Houston is. So we understand what we're getting into and you're looking forward to the challenge.

Q. What is the keys to victory for Wisconsin?

RANDY BENNETT: I don't think it will be a high-scoring game. I think it will be two teams going at it defensively, and I mean, they're really good. You look at their numbers over the years, Greg does an awesome job, and so we have a ton of respect for them.

But I think it's going to be a gritty, tough game and two really good defensive teams going at it. It's going to come down to, can you do the little things when it's in a pretty intense atmosphere against a pretty tough team.

Q. Two losses on Oregon, both by WCC teams. Is there something that you saw from the BYU game film or did you really apply that it's your team? Something maybe you saw in game film to attack them?

RANDY BENNETT: Not really. Not really. We watched

that game, quick turnaround. Personally, I watched two games and just trying to get a feel for the team. For whatever reason I really haven't watched Oregon a lot over the years, we haven't played them, so I haven't needed to. But we just kind of went with what we do and we got a little feel for their personnel, a little feel for them what they run offensively, but I don't think we had our normal scout on 'em, because it's so quick. We didn't get -- our players didn't get to watch film on 'em, but I just, I think Oregon ran into two teams that are older and pretty far along for this early in the season. And I think they have a lot of new guys, so they're going to have to figure out their roles and who they can play off of and there's guys that are going to have to come together and do the little things you got to do to win. They did a good job on us defensively tonight too, so I just think they played two good WCC teams and I do think the WCC is up this year and you have five teams that are playing at a high level right now and some others that are pretty good. So I think college basketball's about programs, I don't think it's necessarily about leagues. I think that's a mistake people make. Right now we have some good programs in our league and that's what makes our league good.

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