

Maui Jim Maui Invitational

Tuesday, November 22, 2022

Maui, Hawaii, USA

Lahaina Civic Center

Arizona Wildcats

Tommy Lloyd

Cedric Henderson Jr.

Adama Bal

Postgame Press Conference

Arizona - 87, San Diego State - 70

THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and get started with an opening statement from coach and then take questions for the student-athletes.

TOMMY LLOYD: Well, it lived up to its billing. It was a great basketball game. I've got a ton of respect for San Diego State's program. I knew it was going to be tough. I appreciate how hard it was.

We kind of got out to a little bit of a lead there in the first half, and then they made a run back and actually I think they took the lead from us. To take those punches and stay on your feet and respond the way we did, really says something about our guys' character.

I couldn't have asked the game to play out any better for our growth and development as a team. Not that I want teams to go from down 16 to up whatever they did, two or three. But it happens. And for our guys to hang in there and come out and make a bunch of winning plays down the stretch says something about them.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for coach?

Q. You talked about them coming back and getting up by two. What were some of the adjustments they were doing to make it difficult for you?

TOMMY LLOYD: Well, they just amped up their defense a little bit. They got a little more comfortable in the offensive end. Obviously turnovers were a little bit of a problem, and I'm sure during that stretch we had a couple turnovers, a couple missed layups that I probably would have rather passed on.



But they're a good team. They're experienced and they're going to make a run. I'll have to go back and watch the film to really dissect it. But for us to, I knew the run was coming. I was hoping it wasn't, but I knew, I kind of was expecting it to.

It couldn't have played out better for us to have to get a little bit of a gut check. We need that.

Q. They didn't have an assist until early second half and finished with only four. They have been a pretty high assist team this year. What were you doing that forced them into one-on-one basketball?

TOMMY LLOYD: Well, we wanted to really choke off their perimeter players. We feel like they're the heart and soul of that team offensively, so we wanted to do the best job we could, being a little stickier on their shooters and we were trusting we could help off their bigs and kind of jam the paint with the big, with our big defenders, and that would be where our help and our rotations would come from and try not to give them a bunch of easy uncontested jump shots.

Q. To go along with that, you guys had seven different guys who had assists, led by Kriisa, but it seemed like you guys shared the basketball pretty well.

TOMMY LLOYD: Yeah, that's what we do. We share the ball well. They don't make it easy to move the ball. They don't make it easy to get to your ball screen actions that we like to.

But I thought in the second half we finally settled in and we started cutting a little bit off the ball. I think that loosened some things up a little bit. We started actually setting and holding our ball screen, because they're really good at fighting over ball screens. They can blast through them, physically, and in a game like this, it's hand-to-hand combat. You're not going to get those calls. And they can shoot underneath 'em. So it makes it for a real challenge.

I thought our bigs did a good job adjusting and our guards did a much better job of making decisions and not over-penetrating if something wasn't there.

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by the student-athletes. If you have questions for our student-athletes, we'll take those now.

Q. Is this the Courtney Ramey you saw in practices this fall or do you think he's a little, just motivated to get out there finally and play on this stage?

TOMMY LLOYD: Well, Courtney's hungry. He's a hungry dude. He's got a little bit of a chip on his shoulder in a good way. I think he's been waiting for this opportunity and it's the stuff we talked about in his recruitment. I'm really proud of how he is kind of coming along. And this guy next to me, he was awesome tonight. Cedric was awesome.

Then, listen, I also want to give a shoutout to our young guys like Adama here. I know the stats aren't incredible yet, but like, we have like four guys that are 18 or younger that are playing. These are young dudes that are younger than a lot of high school kids that are playing high school right now.

So for them to get this experience in this type of environment and to kind of really show me they're making progress, it's really exciting for our program.

Q. When they made their run and got up by two, what were you saying to each other on the floor? You had a pretty comfortable lead. They come back, they're up by two. How are you reacting? How did you adjust on the floor?

CEDRIC HENDERSON JR.: I think the biggest thing was we really got together and we said, Get our heads together. We weren't playing how we know how to play. We weren't playing Arizona basketball. We were playing selfish. We weren't getting into our rhythms. We were dribbling the ball too much. We weren't swinging it.

We figured it out, we started playing defense, we started passing the ball more, and we started getting open shots.

Q. There was a sequence there, Adama, where you stole the ball and it led to Zed getting on the wing and hitting a three. That seemed like that kind of put 'em away, at least after, it made it a different game after all that closeness there. How would you guys describe it in the moment?

ADAMA BAL: I think that that was just like the way we play. Like, we practice every day and that's the type of thing that we do every day in practice. So, yeah, do it in game. I saw Zed was open. I knew he was open and I knew that was going in and that really changed the game like, yeah.

Q. For both players, can you tell me, what's the atmosphere like? What's it like playing in that building?

CEDRIC HENDERSON JR.: It's great. It almost feels like home, though. I almost feel like we're playing back in Arizona, how many fans we have and how many people are cheering for us. But it's great. I love the small gym atmosphere.

ADAMA BAL: Yeah, I feel like the same. We barely can understand us on the court and that's pretty crazy. It's really different than where I'm from and, yeah, I'm really happy to play in that atmosphere.

Q. What would it mean to you guys to find success tomorrow against Creighton in the championship game?

CEDRIC HENDERSON JR.: It would mean a lot. It would be the first check mark on our list. But it doesn't mean that that's all we're looking for in the rest of the season. That's a benchmark that we really want, but we still have other things we want to do too.

ADAMA BAL: Yeah, I think that's what we work for every day for those type of big games, and we're playing for a championship. We just got to have fun out there and play great.

Q. Following up on that play again towards the end. Of all the shots you made, did you feel like this was kind of a breakthrough moment there towards the end?

CEDRIC HENDERSON JR.: Yeah. No, it felt like that was the, honestly, it felt like that was the possession that really put a dagger into it. It got everybody hyped. Everybody was cheering. We all laughed and smiled.

But we realized there was still the rest of the clock left too, so we still had to play hard. You can't just give up. That's still a good team. We just we got our stuff together and really played well in that second half.

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll take questions for coach now.

Q. You won't get much sleep tonight. You're looking at a big one high noon. What do you think about now? What do you think about Creighton in terms of the kind of game it will be?

TOMMY LLOYD: Well, Coach McDermott's a great coach. He's been around for a long time. I got a ton of respect for

him. He's a great guy. They play a cool style of basketball. They play with great fundamentals, great ball movement, and great skill. So we have a ton of respect for 'em.

But again. On the back end of a back-to-back-to-back, especially playing at noon, there's probably not going to be a ton of adjustments made by either team. It's going to kind of, you're just going to have to kind of hunker down to what you do and then maybe as the game, over the course of the game, adjust a little bit here and there. But I wouldn't probably expect anything too crazy from either team.

Q. Sort of along those lines, you talked earlier about going over the film and looking at some of these things. Are you even going to have time to go over this film or are you mostly going to be looking at Creighton? What's your plan?

TOMMY LLOYD: Well, I ain't going to watch tonight's game. Tonight's game's done. After I talk to you guys, I'm on to the next one.

Yeah, we're obviously, we do some advance scouting, and I'm sure our staff has some ideas on how we want to play against Creighton, as we would have if it was Arkansas. So we'll go down and get together with the team and this is what you practice for every day. You practice to play in great games. I feel bad for the players if we needed more practice time. It's just let's go out and let it rip and see what happens. You have two really good teams playing in a great atmosphere. It has the makings to be a special day.

Q. Following up on that, have you ever seen, in conference tournaments you've played three games, three days, whatever, but have you ever had a situation like this where you're playing until whatever it is tonight and then noon the next day?

TOMMY LLOYD: Yeah. In, I think, 2018. I was an assistant at Gonzaga and I think we played, I don't know if it was the last game or whatever, but I think we had a battle against Arizona, and the Zags came out on top and the gift was you got to play Zion and RJ and Duke at noon. So that's just what it is. You know that coming in a Maui, and trust me, I mean, we know what's at stake and we really respect our opponent and we're going to go out and take some big swings and see what happens.

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