

Maui Jim Maui Invitational

Wednesday, November 23, 2022

Maui, Hawaii, USA

Lahaina Civic Center

Creighton Bluejays

Greg McDermott

Trey Alexander

Ryan Nembhard

Postgame Press Conference



Arizona - 81, Creighton - 79

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

GREG MCDERMOTT: Very proud of my team. We showed some grit in getting ourselves back in that. That stretch end of the first half was really probably pretty critical. We were up, I think, 26-25 and then we scored on two of our last 16 to end the game -- or end the half.

And then you're down nine, and then it felt like in the second half, every time we would get it to three or four, they'd stretch it back to nine or ten, and we just couldn't quite crack the seal, so to speak, to get 'em where they were really, really nervous.

And then we executed some stuff down the stretch pretty well to give ourselves a chance, you know, on the free-throw line there to cut it to two, and then ran a play where we thought we could get a good look at a three there to tie it, and obviously didn't work.

Arizona's a heck of a basketball team. They're hard to guard. One of the things we set out to do was try to keep 'em off the free-throw line and we won that battle. But Ballo was just, he was a load down there. And you have to make some decisions when you play them because of their ability to shoot the basketball. And we decided to play 'em one-on-one and did a better job the second half than we did the first. But he had a heck of a game.

And then they, it felt like whenever we were gaining some momentum, it seemed like Kerr would hit one of those threes or long twos off the dribble, which are kind of backbreaking against our defense.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for our student-athletes?

Q. Ryan, as coach was saying, you were trying to find a way to break in after 10 points. It seemed like after you hit the floor, hit the three, they went down, Baylor got the steal and came down and got the layup. It seemed like y'all got going. At that point, did you feel like y'all could make a run?

RYAN NEMBHARD: Yeah, definitely. We kind of made a run. That was kind of just a momentum swing. We had a little run. It just came down to the last play and we just, we had a look, but it just didn't work, fell short. Credit to Arizona.

Q. For either of you, how do you think being here in this environment playing that kind of game can help you for the rest of your season?

TREY ALEXANDER: Well, me personally, I feel like, us as a team, I feel like we grew tremendously. I feel like we played a couple teams that wouldn't be able to give us a look in the conference that we're in. Like, a lot of teams don't play drop coverage, a lot of teams don't have bigs that are as good as theirs at the 4 and 5, so obviously, we grew in that type of sense.

From statistics-wise, that's a hard team to defend. They're one of the best teams in the country at offense and scoring points. So I feel like that helped us grow on the defensive end and we can be able to watch this film and grow on the offensive end as well.

RYAN NEMBHARD: Same thing. I think just playing these games this week kind of prepared us for post-season play. You get a bunch of teams with a different style of play, and I feel like that just prepares you for March.

So I think it was great for us. We grew a lot as a team. We got better. We're going to take this as motivation and improve for the rest of the year.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you, guys. We'll let you go, and we'll take questions for coach.



Q. Kind of the same question. This atmosphere, this week, how does that kind of catapult you guys on to the rest of your season?

GREG MCDERMOTT: Yeah, as I told the team, there's so much learning that can take place as a result of three games like this. You play three ranked teams, essentially, in 52 hours or whatever it was, it seemed like.

But it's everything that you have been working on, everything you've been practicing. You really find out, it's a barometer to where you are and where you have to grow, both from a team perspective, but also as an individual perspective, is your spacing correct, are you making the right cut at the right time, are we moving the ball when we're supposed to move the basketball.

Then some of our defensive coverage, where are there holes and gaps and what did some people exploit during the course of these three days. So there's a lot to learn from a game like this and a week like this.

But I think we also found out that, you know, we got punched in the mouth against Texas Tech at the start of that game and came back and found a way to win the game.

The Arkansas game had so many momentum changes during the course of the game where you had to kind of gather yourself and get ready.

Then same thing this afternoon. We're down 11, 12, whatever it was with five minutes left, and you just keep executing and playing defensively and make a few shots, execute a few plays, and you put yourself in a chance to at least have a chance to tie the game.

So there's a lot of good things that come out of it, but a lot of things that, we're going to be off for a couple days, but we'll get back to the practice floor Saturday and be able to really work on ourselves on Saturday. We haven't been able to do that for awhile.

There will be plenty of film that we can learn from. This team, as you can imagine watching 'em play, they're a blast to coach, a lot of fun to coach. It's going to be a fun year in that regard because they really, they're about each other, and that makes it pretty enjoyable from a coach's perspective.

Q. Curious, yesterday the atmosphere, the game itself, was one of an all-time Maui Invitational games. I was curious, between the turnaround, the quick turnaround, you got a noon tip, much did yesterday impact your guys today, do you think? From a neutral

perspective, we feel like maybe the emotions of last night carried over today. Is that something that you sensed in your locker room?

GREG MCDERMOTT: What I was worried about was the start of the game. Arizona was here last night late too, later than us. We had our feet up while they were still playing. I think probably both of us wondered how our teams would start after that.

We scored 16 points in 10 possessions. They scored 15. So there wasn't many ill effects, at least on the offensive end, maybe on the defensive end.

But obviously that took a lot out of both teams yesterday. You play an Arkansas team that's as athletic and talented as they are, and they had to play a very good, physical San Diego State team. So, you know, you would love to have more prep. We both run a lot of stuff that can be kind of tricky to defend. So you were kind of adjusting on the fly because you didn't have any preparation time.

But that's what makes these games fun. You get to see a little bit of everything. But I thought our guys, I was proud of their preparation and how we started the game. Again, we gave ourselves a chance at the end.

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