

Maui Jim Maui Invitational

Wednesday, November 23, 2022

Maui, Hawaii, USA

Lahaina Civic Center

Arizona Wildcats

Tommy Lloyd

Oumar Ballo

Kerr Kriisa

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.

TOMMY LLOYD: Thank you, guys. Obviously, I'm super proud of these guys. They played their butts off. These tournaments are hard. To play three games in three days against three really good teams with very distinct styles and to come out of it on top the way we did, it says a lot about this group.

But before I really get started here, I want to kind of mention a few names here, and I had 'em write 'em down so I wouldn't forget 'em. This wouldn't have been possible without our support staff. And Justin Kokoskie, our trainer, we call him J-Rock, he's a GOAT and he does an amazing job of keeping these guys ready to play to play three games in three days.

And then, hey, our strength and conditioning coach, Chris Rounds. I mean, he and Oumar are going to share this trophy because they did it together. And he's done an amazing job with Oumar getting him ready to play.

Our nutritionist, Tanner. He's keeping these guys well-fed at home. Our massage therapist, Paul. It's a beautiful thing, yes, we have massage therapists these guys days. It's a real nice thing.

Our physicians, Dr. Paul and his staff, do an amazing job with this.

Our sports psychology department does a great job with these guys, making sure we're mentally sharp, with Rachel running that thing.



And then our student managers are amazing. I mean, I was probably on their you know what's a little more this week than ever to make sure our guys were hydrated and giving them water at shoot around and stuff like. They just did an amazing team effort to make sure these guys were primed and ready to play. And without them, this wouldn't be possible. I mean, I don't even -- did we have one cramp the whole tournament? I don't know, did we? I don't think we did. I mean, you see a lot of these teams cramp up in this deal. So it says something about these guys.

So thank you for our support staff. They're first class and they're the best in the business.

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll take questions for our student-athletes?

Q. How do you guys feel about being the champions in Maui?

KERR KRIISA: First of all, I want to say I actually did have a cramp the first game, end of first half, but okay.

But we feel good. We've been working hard all summer, guys did in Tucson. We have a great group of people. Like coach said, the staff, everybody surrounding us, it's just like a great place to be, and Bear Down.

Q. Can you talk about what Oumar means to your team, what he brings to the table for you guys.

KERR KRIISA: I mean, if you watch the game, he brings everything. He rebounds, he scores. He had 14-17. That's outstanding. Oumar's been putting a lot of work in during the summer trying to get his body better, his fat down, which he has done. So we are all. It's, not me, but --

TOMMY LLOYD: Who has higher body fat, you or Oumar?

KERR KRIISA: Me. (Laughing.)

But we are proud of Oumar and he definitely deserves this. But I don't want to give too much credit to Oumar too right now because, you know, we had, Pelle played hard on

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defense, Courtney made great shots. Like, that was a team effort.

So Oumar doesn't need to get above the clouds now because we have, because, you know, next Thursday we play again, and then this tournament is already finished and we got to start playing again.

Q. Kerr, just what was the key to getting Oumar the ball? For all you guys, really, like you said, it was a team thing getting him the ball in some really good spots there.

KERR KRIISA: Yeah, if you have two best bigs in the country, then you got to give them the ball, if you play smart. If you're trying to win, then you give them the ball, and you let them do their work. Zu played, obviously, outstanding this whole tournament. It's funny how Zu scores 12, but you don't even realize how he scores 12.

So it comes, you know, it shows our how explosive our offense is and obviously our guard play is getting better too. So I think we're just in a great spot right now.

Q. Oumar, how do you feel? There's been a lot of talk about just the long progression you've had in college basketball so far. When you have a game like this in a tournament like this, does it feel like you've finally arrived or it's been worth it kind of thing?

OUMAR BALLO: I actually haven't arrived because we haven't done anything yet. It's a long season. It's a marathon. So I'm just trying to run with the pace and trying to be available for my team.

Q. Oumar, in the second half there was, you had a two-hand dunk with, and one, I think, and then you pointed toward your Arizona fans, put your hand to your ear and kind of waved them on. Just wondering how that felt in that moment with the fan support you had.

OUMAR BALLO: I mean, we got to give a lot of credit to those people because they have our back and no matter what the scoreboard is, those people will show up and cheering on for us. For them to book a flight, book hotel, to come all the way to Hawaii to support us, it means a lot to me, and it means a lot to my team. So the only thing we can do is just play hard and do anything we can do for them.

Q. If I'm doing the math right, you've shot 27-34 here from the field in three games. Wow, man, what can you say? Is this the best three basketball games you've ever played?

OUMAR BALLO: Probably. Well, I didn't even know that. But that is a little bit crazy. But it might be, honestly.

KERR KRIISA: It was the rims.

OUMAR BALLO: Yeah, probably. Yeah, the rim was really soft, so I had a lot of balls rolling in there. (Laughing.)

Q. Were the passes from Kerr?

OUMAR BALLO: Yeah, absolutely. Because he too -- I'm going to give a lot of credit to the guards. Because they really found me today in those duck-ins and rolls. And this is a team that I love playing because like no one is selfish, we share the ball and we turn down a good shot to take a great shot. So I'm really proud of each of those guys in here.

Q. Oumar, 30 minutes today, 29 last night, how did you get through it? Did you have a lot of massages or anything like that?

OUMAR BALLO: No, I have zero massage. I just drank a lot of water. And, man, I want to play those games. I want to play those minutes. This is why I'm here. And I will do anything to be available for my team.

THE MODERATOR: All right, thank you guys. We'll take questions for coach.

Q. How do you feel about the win today?

TOMMY LLOYD: I love it. I love you guys. You guys were awesome. Great job.

Q. You talked about it. Three games, three days here. These guys got to come back so quick. What can this experience do for you guys for this rest of the season?

TOMMY LLOYD: Well, it gives you incredible experiences to learn from. It's important to learn from the good things as well as the mistakes. Our staff's going to do a great job dissecting these three games -- really haven't had a chance to dissect anything yet -- and try to figure out what direction we need to take this team.

Part of it is going to be reinforcing the things we did well and some of it is going to be areas we need to get better.

Q. Coach McDermott did say that he felt because of your shooters he made a decision to play Oumar a lot one-on-one. Is that something you expect to see the way things are developing with this team?

TOMMY LLOYD: Well it's game to game. Teams are going to throw different things at us and that's what's really cool about it. I think we're pretty well rounded in our approach. I've coached a lot of good big guys before and I'm comfortable with double teams and things of that nature.

A good friend of mine a guy named Mr. Arvydas Sabonis once told me, If you don't get double teamed as a post player you're not any good. So we ascribe to that and we love it when posts can draw multiple defenders and we'll play out of it if that's the way it is.

Q. That last couple minutes there Creighton made that final push. What was going on there?

TOMMY LLOYD: Well I was just kept looking at the score and the time and our timeouts. And I thought we had enough separation to kind of ride it out.

But you're just hoping for a miss. You hate to say that, you need to make 'em miss. But one of those shots bounces off, you know, and we rebound it, you know, the game could have been over a little bit earlier. But they didn't. They went in.

I think we had one or two maybe poor decisions that, you know, a little bit, you know, frustrating, but we'll learn from that. We practice situations a lot. So a lot of the situations came up there and I felt comfortable not calling a timeout.

I wanted our guys to rock a little bit. I want them to figure it out on their own. We practice for a reason. They don't need me to come over and script everything for 'em because they're smart players. We think we do a good job with the situations. I think down the stretch at least we handled the press situations, the last free throw situation, those types of things really well.

Q. A little bit off topic, but as an Indiana native and a Pacers fan I was curious if you have any statement on the budding Benedict Mathurin Rookie of the Year campaign?

TOMMY LLOYD: Stud. We miss him. We love him. But he's doing his thing. He made a huge impact on this program and he really blossomed in this program. I think he's going to set an example for others. If you come here and, you know, buy into what we're teaching and how we play and being great teammate and playing team basketball, you can go to the next level and have a lot of success.

Benn, when I think about the fundamental gains he made in his game the last year, it's pretty impressive. I watched

him play quite a few times and just to see him making floaters now and getting to the free-throw line. That's stuff he wasn't doing before. Handling the ball much better. So he's awesome. Looks like he's going to have a great NBA career.

Q. Wondering, the big picture for you guys. Did you -- and was this kind of comparable to last year where you played those games at home, not really sure what you got there. And then you go and win Vegas and same thing here you come win this thing?

TOMMY LLOYD: Well, you know me better than anybody in here. You know I'm a day-to-day guy. Okay? Paycheck to paycheck, bottleneck to bottleneck. We ain't getting more complicated than that. So let's just stay locked in here and keep getting better. We just wanted to win the game. I don't even know when our next game is.

Q. I know it's in the moment now, but you said going in you were looking forward to learning some things about this team. Off the top of your head what are you thinking now about what you did in these three days?

TOMMY LLOYD: I learned that we're good. We're tough. We're gritty. I think there's going to be some great things for us to really double down on and some things to show our guys where we went the wrong way.

So that's what you're looking for in these things. You're looking to reinforce good things, learn from the tough things. But we needed that. We needed to come here and get tested. We got tested every game. No game felt comfortable until the final horn went off.

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