

Allstate Maui Invitational

Monday, November 20, 2023

Honolulu, Hawaii, USA

SimpliFi Arena

Marquette Golden Eagles

Shaka Smart

David Joplin

Postgame Press Conference

Marquette - 71, UCLA - 69

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started. We are joined by head coach, Shaka Smart, as well as David Joplin. We'll start with an opening statement from Coach.

SHAKA SMART: Aloha, everybody. It's great to be here in Hawaii. What an incredible field. We've been looking forward to this event for a long, long time. A couple years ago we played UCLA and we didn't belong on the same floor with them.

So I give our guys just an incredible amount of credit because tonight was not our best game. We were a little bit scattered at times, a little bit tight at times. We got down 12 points, though. Our huddle was the huddle of a team with real character and these guys looked at each other and told each other what they needed to do and we went out and attacked and took the lead, and then UCLA deserves a lot of credit as well for fighting and taking the lead back. Huge shot by Sean Jones to win it for us.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions specifically for David.

Q. Down 12 points, what do you think flipped offensively for you guys down the stretch?

DAVID JOPLIN: I think we just took our time. We were more composed, kept telling each other, preaching one play at a time. It started on the defensive end. Once we got our stops, got turnovers, then we could play on the other end. So I think just taking our time and getting settled into the game.

Q. (No microphone.)

DAVID JOPLIN: That's our leader. That's Oso. When he makes plays like that, everybody's hyped and on to the



next play, let's get a stop.

Q. Dwyane Wade was in the crowd. Did that inspire you a bit? Did you know he was there?

DAVID JOPLIN: Oh, yeah, we knew he was there. We've seen him this whole trip. He's been around the guys, just giving us words of wisdom and talking to us a lot. So it's always great to have some greats come support us.

Q. What's that been like for you getting to know a guy like Dwyane Wade?

DAVID JOPLIN: It's special. I mean, not many people get the opportunity. I think just hats off to him. It just shows his character, coming to speak to the guys. He doesn't have to do this. He doesn't have to be in our locker room giving us words of wisdom, talking about out of bounds plays, stuff like that, so it's special, it's really special.

Q. UCLA had a few chances on that final possession for them. What was it like? You guys seemed like you were doing a good job of being disruptive and staying disciplined there.

DAVID JOPLIN: We work on that. We work on just keep playing, no matter what happens. They shot it, they got an O board, keep playing, just keep flying around. So it was nothing new to us.

Q. You've seen the evolution of Sean and Chase over the last couple years. What did you see from them tonight? How much have they grown defensively and how much have they given you this season?

DAVID JOPLIN: They're some dawgs. You see what they did last year as freshmen, and they have only gotten better, they're growing older. So I have the utmost confidence when I see Sean or Chase rustling the ball. Their play speaks for themselves. Both diving on the floor, they got that clutch steal in the second half towards the end of the game, just their energy, it's really big for our team.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, David.



Now we'll open the floor up for questions for Coach Smart.

Q. How surprising was UCLA's intensity and focus in the first half, given how young they are?

SHAKA SMART: Not surprising at all. I told our guys, we're going to take very little from their first three games because they just weren't against high major opponents, and you know a program like that, coached by a coach like Mick Cronin, they're going to come out with a level of fight and aggressiveness and toughness and nastiness, and they had something to prove, which is something we need to come to expect in the position that our guys have put us in.

I thought they became us a little bit and we became them, and then we got back to being us. They showed a lot of character down the stretch. We did a poor job on Mac. He was phenomenal getting in the paint and getting to the foul line. So they deserve a ton of credit and they've got so many young guys. They keep getting better. They're going to have a heck of a team.

Q. Tyler did have nine assists. He set some other guys up, but what does it mean to be able to win a game like this when your All-American is held to nine points?

SHAKA SMART: Well, that's what he does, is pass, so the nine assists is -- we'll take that any day of the week. It's a little troubling that we only had two assists from everyone else. But for us, we have a very good offensive team. That was not a good offensive game for us, and UCLA deserves credit. Their switching bothered us a little bit. We got a little frantic.

There will be a ton of stuff we'll look at on tape tonight as coaching staff that we can clean up and we're going to need to clean up, obviously, with who we're playing next. Our spacing, the timing of our actions, and just the precision of when we cut, when we space, some of our passes, we need to get better with and we will.

Q. Your bench guys BG, Sean, and Chase, they seemed pretty big tonight. What have you seen from them that gave you confidence that they could handle that moment?

SHAKA SMART: That sophomore class has really improved, and that's our way. You know, we say relationships, growth, and victory. Well, we mean it. The growth part is incredibly important because we're not bringing in transfers, so our freshmen have to grow up and become sophomores that can go close a game out the way that Sean and Chase did, and Ben was in there a lot at

crunch time as well. I thought he did a nice job. When UCLA tried to iso him and bring him up into action, he did a really nice job there.

So those guys are only going to continue to grow, and hopefully, that's a template for future young players and a current freshmen to look at because if guys in our program can continue to improve year by year, they're going to put themselves in position to be in the game when it matters.

Q. It's probably no coincidence that today, every game had a big guy in the middle really affect the outcome of the game and you guys had your own in Oso. What did he do with his presence inside, both in Bona and the little things that he did to adjust that swung it for your team?

SHAKA SMART: Yeah, that was a heck of a fight between those two guys. Bona is a real load physically. The officials for the most part let those guys fight it out. It was like MMA down there, which that's how it is in the Big East.

I thought Oso, he showed really good aggressiveness, getting to the foul line, you know, a really good job handling the ball. We were able to create some switches in some of our actions where their smaller guys were guarding him. We were able to attack a little bit the way they were guarding baseline out of bounds. He was huge for us tonight.

Then defensively, he's an anchor for us because he has a sturdiness about him. I thought he changed some shots around the basket, including at the end. But, man, we got so much getting better to do it's really, really good to win tonight knowing that there's a million things on both end of the floor that we need to improve.

Q. Did you do something second half in terms of trying to get Oso the ball more in space and change your spacing around a little bit with the way they were guarding it?

SHAKA SMART: Yes, a couple things: They were -- baseline out of bounds defense is unique. They put the biggest guy on the ball, try to fight it in, and then when we threw it in to Oso in the corner they denied the next pass, because we pop it around to the other side, so it basically becomes one-on-one and he got a couple baskets from that and then we put him in some pick-and-roll because we noticed they were switching, he got in the paint he got fouled a couple times, with smaller guys on him. I think overall though our spacing was not as good as it needed to be, part of it UCLA really decided, hey, we're going to give help and fortunately at the end Sean Jones was able to capitalize on that. A lot of open looks that we'll take that

we didn't make tonight but we made enough.

THE MODERATOR: That will do it, thanks, Coach.

SHAKA SMART: Thank you, guys. See you tomorrow.

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