

Allstate Maui Invitational

Monday, November 20, 2023

Honolulu, Hawaii, USA

SimpliFi Arena

UCLA Bruins

Mick Cronin

Adem Bona

Sebastian Mack

Postgame Press Conference



win. I'm just a competitor, so if the team needs me to score zero and get 25 assists, I'm with it. Just trying to compete to get the job done.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Guys, you can go back to the locker room.

Questions for Coach.

Q. How do you look at this game? Obviously a lot of positives, but I know you want to win every game, but a lot of potential shown from a young team.

MICK CRONIN: Well, we didn't play near as smart. Two things that our inexperience showed, the run, we got rattled offensively. I told the guys it was coming. I mean, they've got great players, and we got rattled. It took us awhile -- too long to get our composure back. That's where you don't have a veteran guy to calm -- even though Adem's a great player, he's still a sophomore. So that showed right there.

The second thing it showed is we had too many defensive breakdowns against their penetration. That's just game-plan stuff, specific stuff, that you have to execute to beat a top team. Obviously, we showed what we're about, but it's all irrelevant. It goes down as an L and we got to get focused on tomorrow. I told 'em, we just went over the things we needed to go over, but from here on out, you know, to have to play at noon tomorrow is tough.

Q. What did you feel like you guys did do right defensively, particularly in the first 30 minutes?

MICK CRONIN: I thought we competed. I thought we competed. Here's the thing, so when I say that we had defensive mistakes, so you play smart and solid defensively 80 percent of the time, that ain't enough, not against this team. You'll get exposed. So as the competition changes, your margin for error shrinks and that's the issue. And that's why it's great to play these games because you can have a multitude of mistakes. So say you have -- we all do block outs by percentage missed, how many what we would call blow-bys where they were attacking the switch and just blowing by us, causing too much -- we weren't ready to stop the ball. So it's all

Marquette - 71, UCLA - 69

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with opening comments from Coach.

MICK CRONIN: I don't really have any. We play at noon, so if you guys could start asking questions, we can get out of here.

Q. How do you --

MICK CRONIN: I thought we were going to ask the players first so they can leave.

Q. You guys came out with great intensity. What went into that and is that something you can build on?

ADEM BONA: I think we had a game plan and obviously we didn't finish the job tonight and we plan to finish the job next time.

Q. Going and dealing with that 17-0 run for them, what does it say about the building character of this team that you guys were able to come back and still be in a position to win it at the end?

ADEM BONA: I would say we got distracted a little bit and we lost sight of the game plan we had and towards the end of the game, we kind of got back into the game plan and that was it.

Q. Sebastian, you showed an ability to get the free-throw line again tonight. What were you doing offensively to be such a force in so many ways?

SEBASTIAN MACK: I was just trying to do whatever it takes to rally the troops up and just do whatever it takes to



percentages and it's who can hurt you when you have those breakdowns. They're good enough to hurt you. We gave up two fake handoffs to Ighodaro. We went over that for five days. Those are two dunks, we lose by two. So against a team like that you can't have the mistakes that we had tonight.

Q. How challenging is he when he gets in space?

MICK CRONIN: He's a good player. He's a really good player. I think -- look, I knew, I told Shaka in the hallway, we played at Marquette, is it called Fiserv? Is that the name of that arena? I said I didn't want to see him in a couple years because all these guys were freshmen then. And it didn't take 'em a couple years, they won the Big East and were in the tournament last year. So, you know, not a shock. He's not their only good player. They got a lot of good players.

But I like our talent, I like our team. The game got too crazy. So I don't really want to say anything else. It was hard to post up, which I've been telling Aday how it is in college basketball. So -- and that's our strength. So when a game gets like that, it's tough. We get called for an elbow. And our post guy's trying to post up the entire night and can't. Welcome to college basketball though. But they got a very good team. Obviously games like this are good for you early. Tells you the truth. And it tells me things I need to get better at as far as coaching our team.

Q. Berke got the start and I know he didn't score a point but it seemed like his switching on defense helped you guys a little bit.

MICK CRONIN: He got tired. I had to get him out of there. He definitely got tired. Look, he's going to be a big player for us, so I got to, just might as well throw him in there and get him ready. This isn't the NCAAs, it's not a one-and-out deal. And I thought playing Adem and Aday was going to be tough together, tough to do against their speed and their five out. We haven't had enough time to work on our zone yet to where we can, you know, I'm confident enough to play it, which then you could, then you don't have to match up with 'em. We're just, we tried it in practice a couple days, I didn't like what I saw with it. So we got to continue to work on that. So if you see a team like that and you want to play those two together, you can, when you play these small teams that spread it out. But they're so fast and quick it would have been a tough putt for those guys to play together tonight. And you say, what was the point, you can't post up anyway. You try to post up -- you watched the game, so what's the point?

Q. Will makes more threes in one game than he did all last season. How big is that for his future?

MICK CRONIN: Look, I told you guys, I believe that you have to -- and Shaka and I are similar with this -- I want to see if there's another game that's played this year with only -- I know we only have one transfer, I don't know if they have any, maybe they have one, I don't know. We believe in recruiting guys that are good guys with character and they may not end up being your best player, but they help you win games. Now I happen to do that and the guy got drafted in Jaylen Clark. But I've been doing that for 20 years. It's just something I believe in. And Will's one of those guys. So I was very happy for him, personally, for him. He's been through a lot. Extremely traumatic knee injury. It's just been a really tough comeback for him, but I was very, very happy for him.

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

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