

# Allstate Maui Invitational

Tuesday, November 21, 2023

Honolulu, Hawaii, USA

SimpliFi Arena

## Syracuse Orange

## Adrian Autry

## J.J. Starling

## Judah Mintz

### Postgame Press Conference

Gonzaga - 76, Syracuse - 57

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by head coach, Adrian Autry, J.J. Starling, and Judah Mintz. We'll start with some opening comments from Coach.

ADRIAN AUTRY: Again, kind of the same thing, rebounded the basketball, playing better defense. I mean, that's the thing that we have to do better. It's glaring. I think we understand that. We just got to get working -- keep working at it and getting better. No moral victories here. We just got to get better at it, just plain and simple. We have to get better on that side of the ball, and I think it will help out the other side of the ball as well because it's frustrating when you play good defense and can't finish the possession off.

I thought we had a couple, especially late in the game, where we kind of clawed our way back into under double digits. I thought we got some really good defensive possessions, but we just couldn't finish the possession with a rebound. So again, putting pressure on our offense, that's what's happening right now. But, again, we got to get better. We got to move on and get ready for tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Open it up for questions for the players, to start off with.

**Q. How much pressure do you feel to score the ball? If you have the ball in your hands a lot, do you feel a lot of sort of pressure to score the ball during the games?**

J.J. STARLING: No, it shouldn't be any pressure. At the end of the day, we're just going to try and make winning plays for our team, and it just so happens to have the ball in our hands and we're just going to go out, whether it's



getting downhill, finishing, or kicking out to our teammates. So it's no pressure at all. We just want to win.

**Q. Did anything change for you offensively when you were running this offense today as compared to yesterday?**

JUDAH MINTZ: I mean, they're not as good as a defensive team as Tennessee, to start off with. I mean, I think yesterday I got to where I wanted to go. I didn't play a big chunk of the game because of foul trouble, like I said before. So I mean, it wasn't much of a difference for me. I think I just played for a longer period of time and I made the shots.

**Q. There was a demoralizing couple of plays today. You got it down to five and then they made two threes, one on a scramble for a rebound and then made another three. So how do you sort of get yourself going after that, after you've played such great defense for those stretches and then just try to hang in when they make those two big shots?**

JUDAH MINTZ: Trying to come down and score on the other end. That's the only way you can bounce back. You can't get it back all in one play. They're a good team, at the end of the day. We clawed back, but at the end of the day, we put ourselves in position to have to claw back, which make it's harder to beat good teams like Gonzaga.

**Q. J.J., what comparisons do you see in your team as compared to -- or I should say similarities between Syracuse and Tennessee and Gonzaga that you've seen in these first two games of the tournament?**

J.J. STARLING: I would say just the competitiveness. Coming in, we weren't expecting to do much. Like you saw yesterday, we started out pretty good on the defensive end, but our biggest thing is putting it together for 40 minutes rather than just the first half or second half, because once we do that, we can compete with any team in the country. So like Coach said, defensive side of the ball and rebounding, once we do those things, we're good.

**Q. What makes their backcourt kind of hard to deal with? Both Nembhard and Hickman can kind of both**



**run the offense, score, kind of do a little bit of everything out there.**

JUDAH MINTZ: They push the pace. But at the end of the day, I think they dominated us inside the paint. They have good guards, but I don't think that's what killed us. I think that their big man and their rebounding and their presence inside is what killed us.

THE MODERATOR: That will do it. Thanks, J.J. and Judah. We'll take questions for Coach.

**Q. I got to ask you about Benny. He didn't play today. I'm curious what's up with him.**

ADRIAN AUTRY: No comment on Benny. Just no comment.

**Q. Did you want to take 23 threes in the game today or was that just what they gave you in this game?**

ADRIAN AUTRY: I thought Chris Bell got a majority of those shots and that's who we want shooting. He's one of the best shooters on our team and probably one of the better shooters in the country. Again, he had good open looks. That happens.

We played the game and we tried to play to our strengths, and one of those strengths is we got to get Chris Bell and Justin Taylor and Kyle Cuffe some open shots, some threes, and if Judah is going, he'll take his fair amount, and J.J. as well.

But Chris Bell, he shot a fair amount of those and we got to shoot threes. That's who we want shooting threes.

**Q. When you look at Judah and J.J. kind of running the backcourt, do you think they have the right dynamic right now playmaking and scoring, those types of decisions they have to make?**

ADRIAN AUTRY: Well, you know, they're two elite-level guards. It will take some time to get everything right, but for the most part, I believe they do. We have focused a ton on trying to really get our defense together, so our offense is a little bit behind right now. I do think that they have the chemistry and they both want to win to figure it out. We'll figure it out. The one thing I'm very confident in, this group is a competitive group. They don't take losing lightly, nor do I, so we'll figure it out.

**Q. The players talked about how the paint was the biggest area of weakness today. How do you see those Gonzaga bigs and those Tennessee bigs comparatively to your big men?**

ADRIAN AUTRY: Well, I thought today their guards got into the lane a lot, where Tennessee's guards really didn't get into the lane as much. Today, Nembhard was constantly in the lane. And they screen for him, you know, they set a ton of ball screens for him, and we didn't do a good job of impacting the ball. And, again, when you're trying to make a comeback and you have those two demoralizing possessions, that's tough.

But those guys, they push pace. Those guards are faster, so to speak. Obviously, the other guard is recovering from Tennessee, but they just stayed in the lane and it was really Nembhard. He did a really good job of probing and getting into the lane and keeping our bigs occupied, and eventually in the second half, we did a better job of that sink-and-fill rotation back there, where in the first half, we didn't.

**Q. What typically goes into your decision-making on whether you want Maliq Brown, Naheem McLeod, today, Mounir Hima yesterday, Peter Carey? What goes into your big rotation decision-making?**

ADRIAN AUTRY: I think it's the feel of the game. Knowing your team, knowing your players. Today was a -- their big man was physical. He was posting up, he was trying to get the ball inside, which we hadn't seen. So today I thought Naheem would be, he's one of our more physical centers, so I thought try to get him a look. But Maliq, he makes our offense run a little bit better defensively he can move and he can battle. We go small at times, but that's for the most part Maliq's going to play. That's what he's going to do, he's playing. So it's not a decision to be made there. But defending upon the game. I thought the Tennessee game the stretch that I tried to put Peter in, they had a smaller group out there with one big who was a freshman, so I thought maybe I can steal some minutes here and there. That didn't work out the way I planned it. But that's -- the decision-making comes down to what I feel is best needed for that game.

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

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