

# Allstate Maui Invitational

Tuesday, November 21, 2023

Honolulu, Hawaii, USA

SimpliFi Arena

## UCLA Bruins

## Mick Cronin

## Sebastian Mack

### Postgame Press Conference



UCLA - 76, Chaminade - 48.

MICK CRONIN: We'll let Sebastian go first, and then I'll do the statement and stuff.

**Q. Sebastian, two things stood out to me today. They had made it I think, like, a 10-point game, and you scored like seven of nine for UCLA to turn it back, and then the other thing was your five steals. Can you tell us about the importance of both of those things, turning them back when they were on the brink of making it a game and then coming up with five steals.**

SEBASTIAN MACK: It starts off with the defensive end. Without those steals, we don't get those buckets. So I feel like once I turned it up on the defensive end is when we were able to get on that run.

**Q. What are the legs like playing late last night and then coming back and playing at noon today?**

SEBASTIAN MACK: I mean, it's fine. I do treatment every day. Shout-out to T Lesh (Tyler Lesh). He gets us right before every game. He helped me out a lot. So I'll be prepared.

MICK CRONIN: He's a better athlete than some of his teammates.

**Q. Knowing that you guys had a close one last night and you guys had a 10-point game tonight, just what --**

MICK CRONIN: We won by 28.

**Q. What just kept this team motivated, what kept this team inspired, knowing that it was close last night and just today with the win?**

SEBASTIAN MACK: I mean, sometimes you just got to let

things go. The ball doesn't always fall in every time. Today, Coach told us just out with the old, in with the new, pretty much, a new game today. Start it off and let's get in and get that W.

**Q. You guys played Gonzaga the last three years. Have you seen any of those games? Are you familiar with the recent history between these teams?**

SEBASTIAN MACK: Yeah, most definitely. I watched those games a lot. It's a big game, but it starts with us as a team listening to Coach's game plan and going from there. That's all I'm really worried about.

MICK CRONIN: You saw them on TV?

SEBASTIAN MACK: Um-hum.

**Q. The defense coming into this game was ranked No. 12 nationally in KenPom. How much does that help you guys to be in every game playing defense like that, especially with seven freshmen?**

MICK CRONIN: KenPom's a computer system. We don't talk about that type of stuff. It's a computer system.

SEBASTIAN MACK: I mean, you know, just listening to what he says. Like, everything starts with the defensive end. We don't start our run and -- even in the beginning of like the first seven minutes of the first half, like, we had to play defense in order to get that lead. So I feel like it really just starts -- everything starts on the defensive end for us.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Sebastian.

MICK CRONIN: Run now before they start asking more.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, we'll take a statement.

MICK CRONIN: Yeah, sure. It's always good to share. Chaminade, they epitomize what's good about college basketball. We were talking before the game. They only get 10 scholarship guys. They're missing three guys due to health issues for various reasons. So as the game has evolved, especially the college game, to such a commercial entity on every end, it's just refreshing to see



those kids competing the way they do.

And, look, he's got to deal with this every year. We come once every four years. He's got to deal with playing three of these type of games every year. He's doing it. We all have 13, he's got 10 scholarships. Like I said, he's down guys. So it's just refreshing to see the way their kids compete and what they're all about. So my hat's off to their kids, their program, Eric, and what they stand for, and really, all the kids at that level that are playing the game for the right reasons.

**Q. Two things for you: First of all, other than the 14 turnovers in the first half, were you able to get out of here with what you wanted today?**

MICK CRONIN: Yeah, look, I just wanted to get a win. We're so young, I don't know what I'm going to get from anybody at any given time. Like, we're still settling into -- like, I know this, I know what I'm going to get from Lazar. We're plus 39 in his 31 minutes.

But right now, with the seven freshmen, you just don't know what you're going to get. You know, I was up all night watching them. That's just how do I things. So our preparation, I was concerned, trap game, all that type of stuff, losing an emotional tough game like we did yesterday with a young team that's never been through that.

So I thought -- look, here, I'll give you my synopsis of the game. We came out with the right approach and we looked literally unbeatable. Then our approach changed, and we started playing for ourselves instead of our teammates. Our opponents stepped up their intensity and their help on the paint and we were soft, very soft with the ball. Our post guys got stripped seven or eight times in the first half.

That's just, you know -- excuses are for losers. I know this, a long time ago when I had a full head of hair and I was in better shape, I couldn't play golf at all, though, but I coached a guy named Kenyon Martin. Nobody ever took the ball from him, ever, or they would have had no teeth. So at some point you got to have some pride.

But anyway, I just thought we started playing for ourselves instead of each other. And this happens to all teams, right? You get a lead, I mean, it goes on. But also credit the other team. Like I said, you know, their spirit to come in here every year at this tournament and compete the way they do, it's just something I have a lot of respect for.

**Q. Then kind of similarly what I asked Sebastian, to get to No. 12 in KenPom defensively with seven freshmen four games into the season, that's**

**something --**

MICK CRONIN: Well, we got length, we got size. Adem's such an elite defensive player, I'm not surprised about that. I really am not surprised about that, to be honest with you.

You know, I'm going to be really honest with you. I take it as an insult that other people are surprised that my team's going to play hard and play defense. Like, I personally take that -- like, I take it as an insult, that, like, people thought we shouldn't be ranked with the recruiting class we have. Like, to me, it's insulting that people thought that -- were surprised at the way we played last night, I mean, personally.

I've been doing this a long time. It is what it is, though. Nobody cares what I think and I don't care what they think. Just so the first of the month comes around and my players respect that I'm trying to do the right thing.

**Q. Aday got the start tonight and then it seemed like through the first half, especially, a lot more lineup combinations than --**

MICK CRONIN: Well, I'm obviously trying to get some guys rest, which through the game -- when you do that as a coach, you mess up the flow of the game. Bill did it yesterday, early, trying to get Hunter. I mean, you're trying to get some guys some rest and you screw up the whole flow. You're trying to get guys in there that didn't play the night before. So it's kind of your fault as a coach when you do that.

But, look, I tell guys, You guys want to play more? When you got your chance, you better be ready at game time, and at practice you better earn minutes. Earn minutes. Young kids don't come from that. This is a new thing for young kids. They're so much better than the people where they were around, they were given everything. They haven't had to earn minutes.

**Q. The quality of the games against Gonzaga the last few years has just been entertaining. Were they as high quality as that for everybody involved --**

MICK CRONIN: That's for you to judge. My job is to try to win.

**Q. What are you expecting tomorrow, something along those lines or is it too new a season to tell?**

MICK CRONIN: I mean, look, it would shock me if it wasn't the same competitive game. It would shock me if it wasn't. I would be disappointed if we didn't compete. I would be shocked if they didn't.

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

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