

Allstate Maui Invitational

Wednesday, November 22, 2023

Honolulu, Hawaii, USA

SimpliFi Arena

Marquette Golden Eagles

Shaka Smart

Postgame Press Conference

Purdue - 78, Marquette - 75

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Coach Shaka Smart. We'll start with an opening statement from Coach.

SHAKA SMART: They're a great program. Coach Painter does literally everything -- and his staff, they do everything they do in a first class manner, and they earned the win today. Bottom line, they earned it. We had some misfortune at different times throughout the game, but to win games like this, you have to overcome misfortune.

I love the way our guys continued to fight, play with tremendous guts and toughness. Edey's a load. We've seen him twice now in the last couple years and 28 and 15 looks a lot like what he does to a lot of teams. Our guys fought their tails off to try to keep the ball out of there, and then when he did get it, to try to double. I thought they did a good job forcing some turnovers. But he was the best player on the floor tonight, today. Hat's off to Purdue.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach.

Q. He also gets two fouls pretty early. How difficult is it to defend him when your guys do have foul trouble and they know that --

SHAKA SMART: Yeah, that's a great point. I think the foul trouble in the first half really took away from our violence of action. That's how we play. It's a great lesson for us early in the year, November 22nd, that regardless of circumstances, we have to play our way. That's fouls, that's individual foul trouble, that's team foul trouble, because the stuff we do, it's not going to work against a team like Purdue unless we do it with max effort.

Q. Three games in three days. This one goes down to the wire. Did you learn anything new about your team this week?

SHAKA SMART: Of course. Yeah, I learned a ton about



these guys. First of all, just incredibly grateful for this opportunity down here in Hawaii. We don't take for granted even -- it's called the Maui Invitational, so we don't take for granted being invited, being able to be in this field.

I told the guys in the locker room, there's teams in this field that will play each other in March. It might not be us and Purdue, but there's going to be teams in this field that play again and it won't be in the first round of the tournament.

And so to be part of that, we're grateful and absolutely this was an incredibly rich learning experience for our staff, for our team. It's just unique because normally after the game, you're able to consume everything from the game and then distill teaching points and communicate with the guys and get feedback from them, and when it's three games in really two and a half days in our case, you don't have that opportunity. So I thought our guys did a good job turning the page. I did think today there was a little bit of fatigue that affected us at times. But these guys are human beings. They're not machines. Sometimes they look like it.

I thought Purdue, man, they made some tough shots in timely moments, including the three-quarter court shot. You know, that counts for three too. Again, hat's off to them for playing like a championship-level team.

Q. I think when you saw Braden Smith and Fletcher Loyer last, it was their third college game. Can you speak to the difference in them now?

SHAKA SMART: Well, Smith was terrific in that game too, if you remember, down the stretch. But those guys just -- they play with more poise now, they play with more confidence. Purdue is their team. I think those two guys -- for having the National Player of the Year on your team, those two guys' ownership of their program is special. I think that separates them as a program from even other teams here, is you got two guys like that as sophomores that they are Purdue and Purdue is them.

So, tough guys to deal with. I thought our guys at times did a nice job on Smith, at other times he got loose. He obviously shot the heck out of it. We'll learn from it and grow.



Q. Obviously, you're dealing with Edey inside and they're just banging in threes. I think at one point they were 9-11, something like that. Do you almost throw up your hands and say, well, if they're going to do, that they're going to win, or do you have to adjust? Does that make them almost impossible to beat when they're doing that?

SHAKA SMART: Yeah, we tried different things. I watched them play someone before we got down here and, I said, That's the best team in the country. Again, because of the combination of those two things. You've got the most dominant force around the basket, and then you got guys cutting and moving and passing and making shots. So as a defensive team, you have to make them miss, and then sometimes you have to have good fortunate that they miss even open ones.

As the game went on, we had some of that, and that got us back in striking distance, but then they got some critical rebounds, including the free throw rebound at the end. They can't have both. They can't make shots and Edey get going and then also have offensive rebounds.

So, easier said than done, but that's an area for us to look at and say, hey, we've got to find a way as a team -- it's not just on Oso or one guy, as a team to go grab the ball.

Q. What you said earlier about how a lot of these teams are going to see each other in March, you also touched on last night how neither you nor Purdue are going to come out of this game at the level where you need to be in March. What needs to happen to get to that level when it does matter?

SHAKA SMART: Getting better. It's November 22nd. I can't think of any championships, national championships or conference championships, that were won in November. Now, they just won the Maui Invitational championship and that's significant. But for us, man, I mean, we won two games against very, very impressive programs. We were toe-to-toe with Purdue today, who I'm sure will be No. 1 in the country next time the poll comes out.

But we got a lot of improving to do. I could give you a long list on offense. I could give you a long list on defense. Right now, we're ahead culturally compared to where we are defensively and offensively. We always kind of break things up in those three areas. If there's one of the three to be ahead in, it's culturally, which, again, I'm so grateful of our guys for their willingness to buy in to that.

Now, what can tend to happen after these tournaments and as you get into the dog days of the season, is you can move the wrong way in that category, and that absolutely

cannot happen and will not happen. It's my job to make sure we keep growing championship habits.

Q. You've experienced a couple of Maui Invitationals now that were not on Maui. I was wondering your thoughts on how this tournament came together just as a total tournament experience, just it was a matter of weeks.

SHAKA SMART: Yeah, I think everybody did a great job. I'm so grateful for the Maui Invitational staff. You know, it used to be that these multi-team events were more rare, and so when you got a chance to play in one, it was really, really special. Now there's thousands of different tournaments and events everywhere. But this one's the best.

Obviously, number one, everyone's commitment to trying to raise money to help with counteracting the devastation in Maui demonstrates a level of selflessness, and then the staff of the Maui Invitational being able to come here and pull this off. University of Hawaii, I mean, last night we got done with our game and I went out there to do radio and they were about to play their game. These are long days for the staff and the folks here at the arena. So I'm grateful.

I think in moments like this, it's a devastating loss. We're extremely disappointed. It's been several months since we've lost a game. That feeling always jars you. But when you can find things and people to be grateful for, that gives you at least a little bit of perspective.

Q. Curious how many games Purdue games you and your staff -- I know it was a short turnaround, but how many did you watch, and how many different strategies did you consider or debate using today?

SHAKA SMART: Yeah, well, it's not just guarding Edey. It's their pick and rolls and their actions, handoffs and that kind of stuff. Because it's a tough decision. There's definitely some things I would do different, if I could go back. I won't tell you, just in case we play 'em again. But how many games did we watch? Watched the Tennessee game from yesterday. Watched the Xavier game, just because we're familiar with them. Then watched our game from last year, last November against Purdue. It's all we really had time to do. And still, at the end of the day, I've never seen a game won because the coaches watched more tape than the other team. So, it's about being connected, it's about finding a way to support your guys to be their best. We had some guys that didn't have their best game today, and you could kind of see on their face they weren't playing with the most confidence. So I got to do a better job helping those guys understand that, man, if

you can get in your circle and attack and go after pressing
your advantage, we'll roll with you, man, we love you.
Thank you.

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