

Allstate Maui Invitational

Wednesday, November 22, 2023

Honolulu, Hawaii, USA

SimpliFi Arena

Gonzaga Bulldogs

Mark Few

Ben Gregg

Anton Watson

Postgame Press Conference

Gonzaga - 69, UCLA - 65

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by head coach, Mark Few, Anton Watson, and Ben Gregg. We'll start with an opening statement from Coach and then take questions for the players.

MARK FEW: Hey, I'm just incredibly proud of our guys, man. That was just a tough, tough kind of a rock fight of a game where both teams were just competing their tails off and the A plan wasn't working, the B plan wasn't working, and you had to really, really dig deep. We did a great job of digging deep and getting enough stops there at the end and making just enough plays to eek it out.

But I want to also -- I think Mick's done a great job with UCLA with all those new guys and young guys and to get them to play that hard and that physical, that's really, really hard when you get that many new young guys.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the players.

Q. Anton, kind of the game of your lifetime, it felt like out there. That's beyond being in the zone. What did you feel out there?

ANTON WATSON: I don't know, it really just felt good. I was talking to my brother a lot and I just kind of told him, I need to see the first one go through, and I was just being aggressive and they kind of gave me some open shots, and I just kept it rolling. So, yeah, just being aggressive, that's kind of been key this whole year for me and this is a game to do it, so, yeah, it felt good.

Q. In a game with 51 fouls, I think every player on your roster had three, how did you guys get through that and what were the conversations in the huddles as



everyone seemed to be getting into foul trouble and playing through all the foul trouble?

BEN GREGG: They were calling a lot of fouls, but at the same time, we couldn't let up on the fight. We knew it was going to be a war. We had to keep playing physical, just play a little smarter. But, yeah, I mean, foul trouble hurt us a lot, but a lot of guys stepped up. Jun came in and a lot of good things. I think Dusty might have played the whole game. He did great too. So just those other guys getting in and helped us win.

Q. Anton, there's been times where you guys went big, had three bigs in this tournament, and then tonight there was one where you were playing the 5 and Jun was the 4. Maybe just the versatility or ways you can play big and little with your forward length?

BEN GREGG: Yeah, it was due to foul trouble. I mean, I don't know. We all can play a lot of different positions. We're all capable of doing a lot of different things, so I mean, when our name's called, we just got to step up and do what's asked of us no matter what position we're put in and just try and make winning plays at each position.

Q. (No microphone.)

BEN GREGG: Unbelievable. Unbelievable. Yeah, we all know he has it in him and it's one of those nights he turned it on and he was killing it. He's more than capable of doing that. So we knew he was capable of it.

Q. Anton, four games in four years against these guys, three of them were pretty close, the two tournament games. What's this kind of series been like to be a part of? I think only one of those games was on the schedule before the season. And then how does it feel to kind of finish your career possibly 4-0 against 'em?

ANTON WATSON: Yeah, it's really fun to play against 'em. It's always competitive, it's always a good team, no matter who they have. But, yeah, it's been a great season. I'm just happy I'm a part of it. Every single time we play 'em, it's a fight, and you can see that, it's usually a close game every single time, but, yeah.



Q. To go 2-1 here, what did you guys -- lost to a team that is probably going to be No. 1. What do you take from this?

ANTON WATSON: We just got to take the positives. And, yeah, we lost to a good team in Purdue. But, yeah, we still got a lot of work to do. I don't think we're satisfied with 2-1. But we got to take the positives and build off that. But, yeah, 2-1 in this tournament with all these teams, you shouldn't hang your head about that. Every single game we played hard and there's a lot of things to build off of.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, guys. Questions for Coach.

Q. Anton's had games where he scored 20 points, but just to take it to that level and kind of the variety of shots he was hitting, what did you see from him out there?

MARK FEW: Same thing you saw and what they just described. It was a great performance. We needed every one of 'em. And much like Ben said, I think we've all been waiting for Anton to kind of have a breakout game like that, and he picked the perfect time to do it.

Q. Dealing with the physical nature of that thing, the fouls and the lack of flow, how did you guys kind of find a way to juggle the lineup out there?

MARK FEW: Again, Jun did great job of coming in, and those were really, really good minutes for us. We grew the lead a little bit when he was in there initially. Yeah, we were in foul trouble and it was one of those physical games. Watching their other games, they were very much like that. Mick has done a great job getting these dudes to be physical and tough, and they're in the gaps raking you and they got a great post defender in Bona and they're really, really hard to score on, really hard to score on.

Q. Now that the tournament's completed, did it play out as you envisioned it? Anything that surprised you when you look at all the talent we knew that was here?

MARK FEW: No. It was a great tournament. All the games were good. I think what you'll see play out the rest of the year is there's a lot of really, really, really good teams here. They're going to have great years. I think Tennessee's very good. Who knows, they could even win a National Championship.

So, I mean, I think that tells you the depth and the level of this tournament probably more than anything. They were 1-2 here.

Q. Was it a pretty good game to have some depth in the front court with all the fouls being called and you guys can kind of run four to five deep and bring guys off the bench?

MARK FEW: No question. I think we both went really deep, both UCLA and us, especially at the big spot. We're shuffling guys around, the guards are driving hard to the rim, the bigs were posting hard. I thought the officials did a really, really nice job. It was a really physical game and they officiated it as best they could to kind of have some flow because the teams were going at it so hard. So I think we often don't give them enough credit, but that was not an easy game to officiate, and they did a really, really nice job.

Q. You hold Syracuse to, I think, 57, this game 65. What do you make of your defense?

MARK FEW: It's been really good. It's definitely ahead of our offense right now. But hopefully, we can get back home and work on some stuff again. Like I said, we didn't have Graham early and now we have Graham and we had Steele and now we don't have Steele, so we're still figuring some stuff out. But to come in here and compete, that's the most important thing. I'm proud of how we competed.

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

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