

Maui Invitational presented by Novavax

Tuesday, November 26, 2024

Lahaina, Hawaii, USA

Lahaina Civic Center

Michigan State Spartans

Coach Tom Izzo

Jaden Akins

Jase Richardson

Postgame Press Conference

Memphis 71, Michigan State 63.

Q. Jase, what was it like to play Memphis and go against them for 40 minutes versus how Tom and the coaching staff would have prepared you through video for scout? I remember talking yesterday about UConn staff and you won't really know until you face them, so I didn't know if you felt that immediately or if they wore you down over the course of 40 minutes?

JASE RICHARDSON: Just going through the game, they were more physical than what they seemed on film, so they were definitely for physical defensively. There was a lot of pressure, they were pressuring full court and then half court it was all the way up. It was just getting used to that during the game.

Q. Jaden, there was a moment where you said something, I think, to Jeremy after you made a bucket, and I was just curious what you said there. Was that sort of a get me the ball moment? I know the next time he came down the floor he found you and you missed the shot but what was said in that moment?

JADEN AKINS: I just told him to keep looking for me.

Q. Tom, there was a possession, I think you were down eight late in the game and you wound up with Tre sort of shooting a fallaway in the lane shot. I'm wondering what you're looking for in that moment when you need a bucket with seven minutes to go?

TOM IZZO: Well, there's no secret that we don't have a true go-to guy yet. Tre got his lip busted, and I never felt he was the same after that. It was a physical game there.



I love the way they play. I do. I didn't think we matched that.

But they are more physical -- not just athletic, but they are more physical. We had trouble getting into offense. I thought we could run them, and when we did run it at times, we ran pretty good.

But when you think about missing a dunk and then missing all those free throws, it just goes to show what I've said all my career here; I'm the one complaining about missing all those threes, so today we shoot 35 or 36 percent from three and lose because we didn't guard as well.

I thought we took a couple of poor shots, and they got breakaway lay-ups on them. That's when Tre got busted in the mouth, and I didn't think he got back very well because he usually does a great job of that.

Jaden played really well early. And give Penny credit, they choked them a little bit the second half, didn't let them come off those ball screens.

I thought Jase did some really good things. He was so mad at himself for missing those free throws. But it is what it is. For a guy that has the experience that he has in college so far, I thought he played very well, too.

Our bigs let us down today a little bit, and they've been playing really well. I don't know why, but maybe some of it was the competition.

Q. It feels like your signature is points in the paint, second, the bigs doing it. What were they doing? What was happening with that?

TOM IZZO: Well, you know, it's funny because I kind of agree with you. But paint points, 32-22, but they had at least eight or ten on breakaway lay-ups, so those are points in the paint that aren't physical. Fast break points, 11-5.

Again, those three or four breakaways when our point guard did not get back, points off turnovers, 22-10. Some of those are undefendable.

I look at it, our defense, we held them to 55 shots, we held



them to eight threes, but they only had six offensive boards. We out-rebounded them by eight. Turnovers we had a few more than them.

We did some good things, it's just if you watched it where I watched it from, which I think you did, you've got to give Hunter a lot of credit. He made some shots that I'm sure Penny -- I don't know if Penny made those shots when he played, and I mean that. He was falling right, falling left, end of the shot clock, and he drained them. Give them credit; there's a reason they beat UConn.

But I think if I take something away from this game, a couple of stretches, I think we could play with just about anybody here so far. We'll see what happens tomorrow.

Q. You brought up the idea of learning how to play with anybody and you've played a lot of different styles to this point in the season, you've got Kansas and Memphis and Colorado, another good opponent tomorrow. I'm wondering what you sort of can definitively say about your team at this point that you think this I know about us or whatever?

TOM IZZO: I'd like to go back to Northern Michigan. It's safer up there playing a Division II school than some of these schools. (Laughter).

I didn't think we quit. I didn't like the fact that I thought we got punched in the mouth and didn't respond early enough, and then responded. But it's because we've got a lot of new guys in different roles; not a lot of new players.

But it was a hard prep in one day, too, because they're shooting 48 percent, and we tried to change our ball screen coverage a little bit and had some success. To be honest with you, they beat us on one-on-one. I think they only had like eight or ten assists. They only had ten assists. That was one-on-one they beat us. They didn't beat us on actions as much, just one-on-one, and those two players -- Hunter was one of them, but boy, the other kid played pretty well, too, Haggerty. One of our goals was to keep him off the free-throw line. That's why we changed our ball screen coverage. He gets four free throws, he's averaging 10.

We did enough of those things. We shot it well enough. It was the easy buckets they got. It was the lack of making free throws, which has been one of our strengths.

Then give credit, someone is going to have to really play well no matter what they do, not to be MVP of this tournament the way he shot it. He's made some big plays.

Q. Tom, you've got as much if not more than any other

coach when it comes to experience in this. Not knowing who you're going to play tomorrow yet, drawing on all your previous trips here, third game in three days, you never have anything like this again until the Big Ten Tournament. How do you go about preparing your players? How much is rest? Do you want to not info overload them? I'm curious about your approach.

TOM IZZO: I don't believe in the rest. Rest when you're dead.

You know, it wasn't like we're going to go beat the hell out of them tonight. We're not going to play the war drill or something. But we've got to give them enough information to play the game, and everybody is going to be doing the same thing.

I'm looking forward to it. Either way, we're playing a top 10 team, I think.

The third game, a lot of times it's won on who wants to play, not who's the best to play or who plays the best even. It's who wants to play.

I think this is a great experience for us. The tournament has been awesome. No complaints. A call or two here and there, but no complaints, to be really honest with you. I just wish we would have made some free throws. I wish we would have defended a couple of those ball screens a little better and gotten back on defense.

The shots he made, I can't blame any of our players for some of those. It was -- there were some hellacious shots.

No, this will be all good. It's go home and work; get to sleep on the plane. What the hell you want to sleep for? I've seen enough of the island. I've been here six times. Love the island, but love the film room. So I think I'll just go to work tonight a little bit.

Q. Since you mentioned kind of new guys in new roles, can you talk about when a guy like Jaden Akins can't perform in the second half, what does that do to your team?

TOM IZZO: Well, it does a lot, but it's not all Jaden's fault. We didn't do a very good job getting him the ball, I guess, and give them credit. I mean, I think Penny really likes his team.

We were kind of neighbors in our hotel there and talked a few times. I think he likes his team, and rightfully so. They play incredibly hard. They've got incredible guard play. Hell, we must have done a hell of a job there shooting 48

percent, and today they shot 34 from the three. There's something we did right.

But just so disappointing in us not getting back. Those four baskets and those five free throws, that really changes a game.

We've got to get Jaden more involved. That's not all Jaden, that's us. We've got to do a better job of that. I want to be able to get 14, 15 shots a game. He still led us in shots but didn't get enough of them if you ask me. So I'd agree with you on that.

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