Southwest Maui Invitational

Monday, November 23, 2026

Lahaina, Hawaii, USA

Lahaina Civic Center

VCU Rams

Phil Martelli Jr.

Blake Harper

Postgame Press Conference

Providence - 72, VCU - 66 (OT)

Q. What did you see from your team tonight?

PHIL MARTELLI JR.: What I've been seeing from them a lot. There's a lot of grit. There's a lot of resolve with this group. We knew that they'd come out with kind of their energy that they'd come out with in a lot of these games. We knew as long as we just kept going and kept playing with our intensity and our energy and our discipline, that we'd be okay, and we were.

Just ran out of some gas, and they were able to play their physicality again late in the game and in overtime, and ultimately that's what got us.

Q. Walk me through the 3 that you had to end regulation and Lazar's tip-in that almost went.

BLAKE HARPER: Yeah, good play call by Coach. Zawa (phonetic) came up and set the screen. I saw two big dudes came out and trapped me. I got it up there with enough time for Za to make a play. And I knew Za and Torey was going to go make a play.

And I believe my shot was going to go in. And so I thought Za's shot was going to go in.

So I mean, that's just the bullet we're going to have to bite, I mean, that's just an opportunity we have. We focus on tomorrow now.

Q. You had a great game on the free-throw line. Talk me through your process every time you stepped to the line.

BLAKE HARPER: Yeah, just focus. We work on free throws every single day. Just going through my repetition. Taking a deep breath. No matter about the noise. Just me, myself and the ball, just focusing on myself at the line.

I didn't have a lot of shots to drop, so I had to impact the game other ways. So I felt like I had to get to the line, started drawing team fouls and stuff. So I thought that's how we got to the bonus early, and double bonus early. Also in the first half and in the second half.

Q. You guys, a lot of the guys played a lot of minutes. Is it too early in the year to have those minutes, or you welcome that opportunity?

PHIL MARTELLI JR.: That's what we all came here for, for an opportunity. Whenever your name's called, you've got to be ready. I never heard somebody complaining for too many minutes. Just gotta be ready to take it. That's all.

Q. Do you think you tired at all? Because it didn't appear that you did.

PHIL MARTELLI JR.: No, the way we operate, we don't really get that way. I think obviously you're going to get tired in a game like that at different times. Nyk was cramping up, so that kept him out.

But we just played a war of a game, overtime game on Thursday, and then got here. And it's kind of who we are. It's what we do. It's how we practice every day. I think their physicality is ultimately what got us there and kind of got us to slow down a little bit late in the game.

Q. I want to commend you on your composure on the sideline. You were steady as can be through the ups and downs of the game. Walk me through how you stay so composed especially in such a tight game.

PHIL MARTELLI JR.: I don't always. I always say this, I hate the hypocrisy of coaching. So there's coaches that will talk about, like, we need to be disciplined and then they go and get themselves in trouble and do stuff in the media and whatever.

So I preach to them consistency. I preach to them efficiency. Preach to them getting to the next play. If I'm not consistent with who I am every day, then how am I going to expect them to be consistent? If I'm not efficient with what we're doing, with our meetings, with our film

sessions, with everything, then how am I supposed to expect them to be efficient?

The same with that, if I can't get to the next play -- I haven't always been good at that -- but if I can't get to the next play and I'm telling them to get to the next play, well, that's the hypocrisy of coaching. And I try not to be that.

There are times I probably am. But I try not to be that, and I try to put them, you know, again, whatever I'm asking of them, I need to do myself.

And that's really it. And there's always something to think about, right? There's always what's the next play, what's the next thing, what can we go to, what can we get? This isn't working; what do we go to? You're constantly thinking about those things.

Q. Was it just cramps that kept Nyk out later? Was there something that tweaked --

PHIL MARTELLI JR.: Yeah, Ben is one of our student reporters out here on his own dime. I shouted these guys out at the NCAA Tournament last year. And the fact that he covers us and travels with us -- not travels with us, but travels on his own way to get out here is really commendable. And any of you national people, you should get to know Ben, because he's a star.

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