

Big East Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Wednesday, March 9, 2022

New York, New York, USA

Madison Square Garden

Xavier Musketeers

Coach Travis Steele

Jack Nunge

Postgame Media Conference



COACH STEELE: Listen, I thought we turned it around against Georgetown. I really did. I felt really good going into this game. I thought we played well tonight for 39 minutes. And then we didn't finish the game well, obviously.

And that has been one of our mottos throughout this season is finish, finish -- finish every rep you do in practice, finish every lift you do in the weight room, finish every drill, finish games. And we weren't able to do that tonight, which is disappointing.

Like I said, it's not on one person. It's on us, it's on us as a team, me included. I'm right at the forefront of that.

Q. The decision is out of your hands, but what do you do until the committee's decision comes out? Does it make it that much more difficult that you just have to kind of wait and see?

COACH STEELE: Yeah, listen I wish it was up to us, I wish we were still playing. It is what it is. Now it's in the hands of other people.

When you don't control your own destiny, I mean, you're nervous constantly. Puts a pit in your stomach. It's what we work for every single day. It's what these guys work hard every day, starting last spring, all summer, all fall, all season. We've had 98 practices this season. It's a gut wrencher.

I'm hopeful we'll be in it because I think we're a team that can advance and really do some damage in the NCAA Tournament.

Q. Butler had 32 free throws. You guys had 29 free throws, Butler hit 25 of their 32. You guys hit 13. You left 16 points at the line.

COACH STEELE: Yeah, we've got to knock them in. We've got to make our free throws. We missed several of those down the stretch as well. I got confidence in all of our guys. Our guys worked really hard in their game, whether it's inside practice, outside of practice. I don't

Butler - 89, Xavier - 82 (OT)

COACH STEELE: Obviously a gut-wrenching loss for us. I thought our guys played really hard. I thought we left it all out there on the floor. I thought we were the better team for 39 minutes. But unfortunately we weren't able to close the game at the very end.

Obviously we've got to make our free throws. Went 13-of-29 from the free-throw line. I think we missed five in a row down the stretch of the game. Also had a turnover. Had a foul when we weren't supposed to foul. Got to close games better.

Listen, our locker room is very emotional, obviously, after this game. I told our guys we'd obviously get back together at the hotel when everybody is a little less emotional. But we have to stick together.

We don't know what our future holds but I do know this, we always win as a team and we always lose as a team.

Q. Travis, you mentioned the foul on Scruggs at the end. Could you walk us through what happened there?

COACH STEELE: Yeah, if we're up by three, we're supposed to be in what we call smack, which is a foul around half court, so the team can't get a 3 off. But Paul, I don't know if he got confused with the score. We were only up by two. He missed the free throw, obviously. And he fouled obviously. And they knocked in both free throws. You're not supposed to foul when you're up by two.

Q. You mentioned before the season that your motto for this year was to finish. What are your feelings on that at this point?



know what happened tonight, unfortunately, in our free throws, but obviously it was a big reason why we lost.

Q. Jack, you had a great season. Obviously this is a tough way for it to possibly end. Can you sort of walk us through what this game was like to watch it slip away like that?

JACK NUNGE: We're all grateful to be able to play here at Madison Square Garden. It's the mecca of college basketball. It's one of the best tournaments. I thought we went out there, we fought for the most part. We just didn't execute coming down the stretch.

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