

Big East Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 10, 2022

New York, New York, USA

Madison Square Garden

Providence Friars

Coach Ed Cooley

Nate Watson

Al Durham

Postgame Media Conference



Just talk about in general, this type of flow, 19,000, a sell-out-type of crowd. What is the mindset going into today?

COACH COOLEY: Tried to prepare the group for it. We haven't been here in two years, with respect to having a crowd here. And I think it's almost to the day, I could be a day off, when we got off the bus some two years ago, when I thought we were playing as well as anyone in the country.

And to come back to this energy and to have so many Friar fans in the building, I'll say it again: I felt I was at the Dunkin' Donuts Center. Dunkin' Donuts of the South. It's down here in New York. And I can't be more grateful for the fan support and energy they gave our players. It was big time.

Q. Ed, how much did your foul trouble affect you and -- you obviously didn't want to have to play zone that much. They played a lot of zone as well because they had fouls.

COACH COOLEY: I thought they played zone the last 26 minutes. And, you know, this is the most zone we've played probably all year with that foul trouble. And it's a credit to the players, you know, I mean adjusting to it. Again, wasn't pretty. We just had a way to get through today. Hopefully we're better tomorrow against whatever opponent we face.

Q. Al, first game back in a little bit. How did you feel out there? And walk me through the last possession when you hit the game-winning 3.

AL DURHAM: It's a blessing to be out there with my teammates. I love playing with them.

And they gave me energy. They told me, don't go out there and -- just play. Let the game come to me. It was a little rough there for a second, but, you know, like you said, the last shot went in.

That's a credit to my teammates, my coaches having faith

Providence - 65, Butler - 61

COACH COOLEY: First and foremost, I thought we played a great team today. I mean, these guys fought right to the end. They had us on our toes the whole time. Wasn't pretty out there. We definitely showed some rust not playing over the last nine days which prior to I was concerned with.

And I think a lot of that credit goes to the way Butler defended us. But just like the season as gone, I guess we saved our best for last. Just was told Durham's last 3 he made was in January, was in January. I would laugh at that too.

But, you know what? He made it. And I trust him; he's made some big shots for us the whole time. Nate was a monster the whole night. We didn't do a lot of things great but we did enough to win. And I think today was a microcosm of the type of season that we're having.

Can't go without saying how hard Butler played. How tough they were. I don't know how many offensive rebounds they had. I don't have my glasses; I can't see. But I thought the offensive rebounding kept them in the game. We were in foul trouble the whole time.

So, I mean, I couldn't be more excited to play here in this -- thank you, appreciate it -- in this incredible tournament. I don't think there's a better tournament in the world let alone the country than to play in the Big East Tournament right here in Madison Square Garden on Fox.

Q. First off, I think the stat sheet said 11 offensive rebounds you had. That's what you were asking about -- or 14. First of all, congratulations on today's win.



... when all is said, we're done.®

in me. And just a credit to the grind and work and faith. And I just feel like, you know, it's just been a long time. Like January, you said, was the last 3 that was made. Right? So it's been a long stretch. But just been working and just believing. And the coaches and teammates have been believing in me so that's a credit to them.

Q. For Al and for Nate, guys it never seems like with your group there's any panic. Doesn't matter what the score is, what the situation is. What were you guys talking about going into that final minute that final stretch?

NATE WATSON: Oh, man, just keeping a level head and just continuing to get stops. If we continue to get stops, we continue to keep ourselves in every game. So we just pride ourselves on the defensive end.

And then you've got to give credit to Coach Cooley. Coach Cooley knows how to draw up a play for us. He gives us great looks. We just execute. And credit to him, man, because he gets us in positions to win these games. But also a credit to my teammates because when we all sit down, get stops and we're all on one page.

COACH COOLEY: I'll get you some more shots.
(Laughter).

Q. Coach, we spoke last week and you mentioned that I think this was your first practice after the Villanova game, and you were running through all sorts of late-game situations. I know down one with a minute to go was one of the ones you mentioned. Was that the play you practiced running, and giving the ball out to Jared for a 3?

COACH COOLEY: As much as my ego wants to say absolutely, hell no. That wasn't -- you know, that was something that the players did. Again, a veteran group. I trust our players. We had a designed look to try to get the big dog the ball. And Jared made a great play, and then AJ I think went one more which was exposed the whole game. We took a lot of corner 3s and we made the right one, in particular the big one. As much as I want to take credit for it, nah, it was them.

Q. For everyone, it's amazing it's come this far. We haven't mentioned his name yet, Justin Minaya -- two big blocks. Just talk about the contributions that's he made in the final minute?

AL DURHAM: I'll take it. Justin Minaya, like you said, we haven't said his name enough. I feel like he's the best defender in the Big East. I feel he should be having national recognition about it. Like you said, he comes up

big for us. He does the thing that doesn't show up in the stat sheet. But Justin Minaya, I feel like that name should be heard a lot and should be heard around the world a lot more.

NATE WATSON: I'm just happy about the win.

But Justin Minaya, he's a great player. He knows what to do. He's been around for some years. And that's just what he does for the Friars. He's a great defensive player, a great offensive rebounder. That major block that kind of saved the game for us. He's done that on multiple occasions. I'm happy for him.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.