

Big East Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 10, 2022

New York, New York, USA

Madison Square Garden

Creighton Bluejays

Coach Greg McDermott

Ryan Hawkins

Postgame Media Conference



Creighton - 74, Marquette - 63

COACH MCDERMOTT: I thought my guys were terrific. Marquette's a heck of a basketball team. And we've played them in two previous games that frankly we were probably lucky to win both of them. But kind of found a way at the end.

And our roster is different than it was in those two games, without Nembhard. And we had to fight through some foul trouble today. But these guys, they've been incredible. I just told them in the locker room, I take timeouts when my team looks unsure, scared or panicked. When I looked out there, even when they made the run, I didn't see that. I saw, let's get to the next play, let's try to execute it a little better. And we did.

We hit some big shots. And obviously that small lineup gave us some fits there for a second that let them get back in the game. But we didn't really have an option. I only have a few guards on my team. So we don't have a choice.

But really proud of our team, what they've done since Nembhard went down, winning three out of five games. And two of those wins are against two teams that are in the NCAA Tournament. Really, really proud of them, and looking forward for another opportunity to play Providence tomorrow.

Q. You talk about Ryan going down. Ryan Hawkins really stepping up big. He hit seven 3s today. Talk about that performance today.

COACH MCDERMOTT: I mean, it's good to see you guys without masks again, too. He's been great all year. And in what you see on the floor is such a small part of what he's done for our program this year.

We've had a lot of growth with our young players. And a big reason we've had that growth is, number one, the coaching staff believes in it. But more importantly, when your senior leader believes in you, that goes a lot farther than what a coach can do. And Ryan took the time to really get to know these guys when they first met in June, even though he's five or six years older.

They were like in sixth grade when he was a senior in high school. And because of that, they really respect what he says and they respect his daily actions. And it's not just talk. He backs it all up with the way he is, with his positive attitude. And he hasn't had a bad day in the time that I've coached him. He hasn't had a bad play. I've never seen him shrug his shoulders or hang his head.

For a coach that's trying to teach young guys how to do it and how to be successful at doing it, couldn't ask for anything more.

So the basketball stuff you see, and it's really, really impressive, but what he's done for our locker room and the growth of our team, has been awesome.

Q. 11-2 run to end the game following the 3-point play by Elliott that cut the lead to two. How impressed were you by your team's response and how strong they finished the game?

COACH MCDERMOTT: You know, we pushed it, I think it was after a made free throw -- no, it was a missed shot. They lost Hawk at the top of the key. But we pushed it up there and the 4 flattened out because of Kalkbrenner down there. And he was able to hit the trail 3. And then Kaluma makes a great job to the drive to the basket through contact, on a day he was fighting foul trouble the whole way.

Our guys didn't quit. And I thought we got better at defending that small lineup as time went on. And it's a hard lineup for us. Justin Lewis is a pro. I've got to put my center on him, Kalkbrenner. And we switched some screens and they took advantage of us getting to the



basket, hit a couple of 3s. I thought late in the game we adjusted to that much better.

Q. I think there's perception, maybe you're tired of hearing about it, that Creighton is sort of like this nice little gem out in the Midwest, and you're a top 10 in attendance and all that other stuff. Are you guys tired of hearing that? Do you look forward to this time of the year when you can kind of show people what you are?

COACH MCDERMOTT: We're top five in attendance, not top 10. (Laughter) just a fact. I'm just kidding. We are, but -- I said this my first couple of years at Creighton when we were still in the Missouri Valley. And at that time we had the play-in facility and the crowd was starting to come. But we didn't have the practice facility and the things we have now.

But I told many people at that time, we're a Sweet 16 away from people understanding our story. And we're in a community that's unbelievably supportive. It's a sports town. It's a basketball community. We don't have to deal with professional sports. So we're it. And our guys are rock stars wherever they go around town.

And the Big East did that for us. Once we entered the Big East and certainly Doug having the year he had the first year, I think, accelerated that. And I think the teams in our league that come to our building are really impressed with what we have.

I think it's a great basketball place. And it's okay -- people don't really know about us and think about us, but as long as this time of year our name keeps popping up, that's just fine with me.

RYAN HAWKINS: I think it just has a lot of special people and a lot of support. This is my first year at Creighton, and just the accepting and the love I've gotten from the fan base tells me everything I needed to know. It's kind of like a hidden gem in the middle of America, and I wouldn't change it for anything. The people are what makes it special at Creighton.

Q. Your thoughts on tomorrow? It's come to my attention you're undefeated in semifinal Big East play. Obviously numbers don't really matter. What is the thing you're looking forward to against a tough Providence team?

COACH MCDERMOTT: We played them on a night when I'm not sure the Golden State Warriors could have went in there and won that night. That place was electric. And the town was rocking. And they kind of pounced on us late in

that first half. We weren't really able to get our footing.

But we're just excited about the opportunity to play again. And we're excited what this win does for our postseason resumé.

And I told Hawk earlier, yesterday, that we've been to the final three times, just haven't been able to kick the door down and win a Big East championship. Obviously we've got the best team in our league standing in front of that.

So we didn't play very well at Providence. Didn't get a chance to play them at home because of COVID. They're the league champs. Our guys have a lot of pride, and we look forward to another opportunity to play.

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