

Big East Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 9, 2023

New York, New York, USA

Madison Square Garden

Marquette Golden Eagles Coach Shaka Smart Olivier-Maxence Prosper Tyler Kolek

Postgame Media Conference

Marquette - 72, St. John's - 70 (OT)

Q. Tyler, your offense has been so good all year. Kind of out of sorts in the first half. What made you guys able to flip the switch in the second half?

TYLER KOLEK: Just kind of getting outside myself, not focusing on personal circumstances and start pouring into the guys and focusing on everything else. On the defensive end, on their motivation, my motivation, and just play free.

Q. Olivier, you guys were clearly trying to counter their two big men reach, had double-digit rebounds, with transition. Did that work out the way you expected?

OLIVIER-MAXENCE PROSPER: Yes, I say we did a solid job in transition, pushing the ball and getting easy ones. That's the way we wanted to play. If they score, doesn't matter, we try to answer back right away. We definitely could be better in that area, but I feel like overall we did a solid job.

Q. You were down 14 at one point, which is the largest deficit you've come back from. What does it say about the team as a whole to fight through that and come away with a victory?

OLIVIER-MAXENCE PROSPER: I feel like it's our resiliency. That's what we're about. Doesn't matter how down we are or whatever, we feel like we come back and win any game. That's our relationships, the way we feel about each other and how connected we are.

That's how we came out in the second half. We came out



with that belief and that energy. And that's how we were able to come back and win this game.

Q. Coach, both regular season meetings with St. John's were shootouts. Today it was the polar opposite. What does it say about this group to be able to win this way as opposed to winning a high-scoring game?

COACH SMART: It says a lot. We faced a lot of adversity today, and the guys stared down the adversity. They stayed connected. They continued to respond, focus on the next most important thing.

It was a challenging game. Every game against them this year has been, but this one was uniquely challenging just because, let's face it, the first time playing in the Garden with this team, No. 1 seed and there's just been so much focus on the regular season and regular season awards and all that. And I think it took us some time to flush that and move on. But I thought the guys did a great job in the second half just playing to win.

Q. Tyler, Marquette is going to be the third youngest team in the field of 68. This team just doesn't seem rattled all year. Can you say something about playing these more experienced teams and rallying from 14 or all year coming through in these clutch games?

TYLER KOLEK: I wouldn't say we're inexperienced anymore just because of everything we've gone through this year, all the experiences we've had, all the close games we've won and lost. And that's just made us better.

I think coming into the postseason we're as prepared as we can be. Doesn't matter if we're the youngest team on paper, I think we're one of the most prepared teams in the country.

Q. Coach, another game that Tyler was able to score down the stretch and help you guys when you faced that adversity you were talking about. Could you talk about how important his leadership in that final five minutes to keep you guys intact with your goal to get



to Friday?

COACH SMART: I thought Tyler, starting at the beginning of the second half, had a much better clarity for attacking and being the most aggressive guy on the floor. Thought he made a lot of plays, not just the ones where he scored, but created some plays for other guys.

St. John's deserves a lot of credit, the way that they attacked and played and they wouldn't go away. They kept responding.

But Tyler's a guy, down the stretch, if we can have the ball in his hands we know that he can create a good shot for us. Today was the day where we missed a lot of good shots. We shot under 40 percent from the field, under 30 percent from 3. But to be able to find a way to win that type of game is huge.

Q. O-Max, what did you see on that steal on that scramble play at the end of regulation? And by extension, how much defensive intensity turned up in the second half?

OLIVIER-MAXENCE PROSPER: I mean, I feel like that's what we emphasize at halftime. We had to come out with a difference in identity and just be aggressive. When we're aggressive on the defensive end that's where we're able to get deflections and that's what really happened. And then we're able to come back and get easy ones. That's how we got back in this game.

Q. The first half probably didn't go as you would have liked, and the second half you kind of turned it back around. What was that like in the locker room during halftime?

COACH SMART: Our guys were great. They communicated with each other. I think we had a couple of guys that don't even get in the game kind of went off, which is good, from a leadership standpoint.

We knew that it was one of our worst halves. And we knew that we had to lead with the defensive end of the floor. And the way that these guys, plus Stevie, plus Cam and owe so started the first half was terrific. And I thought Chase Ross gave us a huge lift as a freshman coming in here playing with great poise.

When this group here has clarity about us and really plays through being connected with each other, we can play with anyone in the country. We got away from that early on but we got that back and that's what allowed us to win.

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