

Big East Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 9, 2023

New York, New York, USA

Madison Square Garden

Providence Friars

Coach Ed Cooley

Bryce Hopkins

Postgame Media Conference



with the energy and excitement -- this is a quarterfinal game on a Tuesday at 2:30. Tell me another arena in America, another conference in America that has this level of excitement for a game like this.

That's why the Big East is special. That's why the relationship between the Big East and Madison Square Garden is unique; there's no other conference tournament in America that's this great -- not good, great.

Q. I remember you said in a game earlier this season when you guys came and played St. John's during the regular season, how the Big East Conference tournament was like one of the best college basketball conference tournaments in the country. Just seeing you how you were trying to hype the crowd up and get everybody behind, just knowing you're Providence born and raised, and your coming back coaching your hometown school. How do you think that's going to carry on depending where you guys are seeded in the NCAA Tournament?

COACH COOLEY: I know we travel really well. We're going to need that energy. To play here -- and both teams were well-represented here. Connecticut travels really, really well. And if I can just back up a little bit, the fact that UConn is relevant again is the power of the Big East.

The reason they're nationally ranked and what they've done is you've seen a total transformation of the power of the Big East brand at its greatest because to me I think they're the best team in America.

Q. Bryce, how much was your comeback fueled not only by maybe an increase in the attitude but also trying to speed them up a little bit, try to avoid them getting half court situations, and was that probably a problem in the first half?

BRYCE HOPKINS: A lot had to do with us applying pressure to them. I feel once we got into our press, they started rushing and turning the ball over. So we fed off of that. We got them in transition.

UConn - 73, Providence - 66

COACH COOLEY: That was a tale of two halves. For 30 minutes we were digging the sleepers out of our eyes. We didn't have a lot of emotion. We didn't have a lot of physicality. I think the first 25 minutes they played their brand and they were very good at it.

I think we got a little frustrated against their physicality. And we couldn't score, so we got a little frustrated.

But as I told the guys, guys, the game is long, the game is long and we'll give ourselves a chance. We made a couple of adjustments.

The biggest adjustment in sport is attitude -- attitude, energy, resilience that our men showed. I think we were down 26, I bet everybody in here thought the game was over.

When you have the power of trust, belief in one another, amazing things happens. I thought the ball had a little music to it when it started to move. It sounded like Barry White out there when the ball was moving. Everybody's voice got deep; everybody got energy off of it.

Credit Connecticut. They're playing as well as anybody in the country. They made some big-time shots. Our defense has to improve.

But I was proud of our guys how we responded. I was really proud of our guys how we responded. A lot of teams that would have been a 35-, 40-point loss. It goes to tell you the fight and the organization of our players.

I definitely know we're a we're a tournament a team for sure. We're 100 percent a tournament team. This league has several tournament teams. Just to play in this building



But playing in Madison Square Garden in this tournament, it means a lot. It hurts we couldn't pull it out, because it was so electrifying to play in there in front of all our fans that traveled out. But we'll be back in the NCAA Tournament. We're going to come back harder.

Q. Just five days ago you had the situation where Seton Hall really blew the doors off of you. And today had a similar situation. And you talk about the attitude. How impressed were you with the attitude for these guys to not allow something like that to happen again?

COACH COOLEY: Processing your question, we definitely didn't play well as we wanted to in our last home game. But in sport you've got to have amnesia but you have to learn from it.

And it also shows you the character of the group. We could have easily packed it in. We could have easily gave up. But I really praised our players and organization about just the resilience to come back against a, to me -- obviously I'm very biased towards our Big East -- but again all of you guys have all the answers as all the writers, right? Tell me a team in America playing better than that team we just played. And I'm a basketball junkie. I don't see one team better than University of Connecticut right now.

Q. You mentioned that being a tale of two halves. I was curious, what was the message that you were giving your team in the locker room at the half to give them a jolt? And when you made the run to come back, what was the emotional roller coaster you were thinking at that time?

COACH COOLEY: I talked to our men about the game being long. The game is long. It goes fast but it's long and there's waves. You've got to be able to stand a couple of Mike Tyson swings, right? I mean, they were throwing haymakers. They made 13 3s. The fact we were this close to them making 13 3s was remarkable by the men.

You gotta give them a lot of credit. They made tough shots and timely shots. And Karaban's shot was game, set, match.

I think Hawkins' 3 late in the shot clock on the right side of the floor. Gotta give them credit. They earned that win. We'll do the best we can. We'll sit back on Selection Sunday and see where the Friars are going. Don't be surprised if you see us in the Final Four.

Q. Just the decision first to not go with Jared in the starting lineup, and what did you like of the

Corey/Jayden combination down there the stretch there?

COACH COOLEY: That's a loaded question. We try to put the best unit out there that gives us the best possible. That's why it's a team. It's not so much who starts but who plays.

Jared played a ton of minutes. We felt we needed a little bit more size against their size. So that had nothing to do with anything other than trying to give us our best opportunity.

And then our younger guys are really developing, Jayden is developing. Corey Floyd continues to grow, grow, grow, develop. That's the process that these young kids have to go through.

It's not where they're going to start at the beginning of the year because they weren't ready in November. But it's March. Great things happen in March.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

