

Big East Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 10, 2023

New York, New York, USA

Madison Square Garden

Creighton Bluejays

Coach Greg McDermott

Baylor Scheierman

Ryan Nembhard

Postgame Media Conference



Creighton - 87, Villanova - 74

COACH MCDERMOTT: Obviously the job we did defensively in the first half and to start the second half, they had 23 points in 30 possessions the first half, then they scored two of their first 10. We were able to stretch it to 18 and then hold on for dear life.

They have so many guys who could make shots. Always feel like if you want to beat Villanova you've got to make as many 3s as they do. We had 12, they had 13. They got a bunch of them late in desperation mode.

But proud of our guys. 22 assists against a Villanova defense is one heck of an effort.

Q. I know in these games all year it's either you probably played well offensively or played mostly well defensively. But it feels like, from the jump, maybe not a perfect game but it feels like your most complete game. Would you agree with that?

COACH MCDERMOTT: Yeah, we played both ends. But on the season we played 32 games and we're, whatever we are, top 12, 13 in defense and top 30 in offense. We've been relatively consistent most of the year.

Tonight I thought we were exceptional offensively with our ball movement, good mix of inside and out. And defensively I thought our attention to detail that first 26, 27 minutes of the game was really on point.

Q. That's a program that's going to the NCAA Tournament 10 straight years, probably won't go this year. What does it say about that program, what's it say about your guys and your team that you could end

that streak?

COACH MCDERMOTT: This same team just dominated us a couple weeks ago in Philadelphia. And I told Kyle after that game the job that he's done navigating all the injuries and guys coming back and losing guys and guys -- trying to get guys back in the lineup, whether it was Whitmore or Longino or Justin, that's hard for a guy that's been coaching 35 years, let alone a guy that's in his first year in that job.

He did an unbelievable job navigating them and having them play their best basketball at the end of the season. Anytime we can beat Villanova it's a great win for our program because of the respect that we had when Coach Wright was there and we continue to have with Kyle.

Q. Obviously last year you could only watch from the sidelines during the Big East Tournament. Now this is in the rearview mirror. How did it feel to be on the Garden court in this tournament, especially in the environment you played tonight?

RYAN NEMBHARD: It felt great. It's a huge stage. Kind of feels like a stage when you get out there when the lights hit. It's great being out there. I kind of missed out on it last year. Super excited to get that win, big win for us, and looking forward to tomorrow.

Q. I know there was some concern with Eric Dixon after he got (inaudible)last game. Just break down the adjustment for me and how you feel the team did on him.

COACH MCDERMOTT: He got some late obviously and a couple of them, I thought, were tough. But we watched a lot of film with Kalk and Fred and talked about their activity and not really to get caught in between, which I thought we did in Philadelphia.

We also talked about the rest of the guys about when it goes to him let's have a quick stunt and give the illusion we're coming to help and hopefully get him to freeze for a second.



Because it's tough for us; we've got one of the best rim protectors in the game of college basketball. And Villanova forces you to kind of flip your defense upside down and pulls him away from the basket. It takes us away from what we do best.

But he was much better guarding Eric tonight, as were the rest of the guys with their activity in helping.

Q. You talked last year after the Big East Tournament final that Villanova was kind of the standard bearer of this league. Does tonight feel a bit like getting over that hump?

COACH MCDERMOTT: Villanova is not going anywhere. They had a lot of adversity this year. And that program's here to stay.

But there's a lot of pressure to win the first game in the tournament because we have a lot of people that showed up and traveled out here from Omaha, and they're not very happy if they have to go home tomorrow. There's a little bit of added pressure to get to that semifinal game and make sure they're here for a weekend.

So we're excited. Like I said because of the respect we have for Villanova, you have to beat Villanova because they're not going to beat themselves. So to beat a team that's as disciplined as them, you have to exhibit the same type of discipline. And I thought for the most part tonight we did that.

Q. Ryan, back to last year, obviously Nova beat you in the championship. Is that in the back of your mind tonight knowing they ended your season last year and you want to do the same to them this year?

RYAN NEMBARD: That's part of it, but also just knowing how great of a program they have and what they've done for years on end, and just knowing the history they have. It's always good to beat a team like that. And definitely a little bit of payback, but it was good.

Q. With the offense how much more confident do you feel about it moving forward towards March Madness?

COACH MCDERMOTT: The reality of it is in college basketball you talk about a lot of things but at the end of the day it's a make-shot, miss-shot game. And we've had games this year 5-of-25. We've found a way to win a few of those with defense and rebounding, and we've lost some of those.

Tonight we made shots. And like I said I really think

against Villanova because of the percentage of their shots in the 3-point shots you have to find a way to even that out.

And I thought we turned down good 3-point shots to get great 3-point shots. And we executed some stuff in the second half, a couple of plays back to back for Baylor that we got seven points out of and that execution was really good.

Anytime you score that many points against Villanova, you're doing something right offensively because the other two games we played we were in the 60s.

Q. Coach, obviously now with the win you have a quick turnaround tomorrow. My question really is, as a coach, how do you get your mindset in, OK, we just won this game tonight but we have a quick one right back for the semis tomorrow? And how do you think you match up tomorrow night as well?

COACH MCDERMOTT: We had two really good games with Xavier. I told the team in the locker room, I looked at my watch, and it's game day already. We had to celebrate Artu's birthday -- today is his birthday, when the clock hit midnight here.

But Xavier played a game right down to the end, high scoring fast-paced game just like we played. You'll be operating a little bit on adrenaline tomorrow night, but you're also playing in the semifinals of the Big East Tournament in the greatest arena in the world. If you can't get yourself ready for that, you've got problems.

Q. You guys had the lead early on. Seemed like you never looked back, although the other team came back a little bit. But seemed like you guys gained control of this game. Would you say that's the right case?

COACH MCDERMOTT: I didn't even have to say it to the guys, again, because of the respect we have for the Villanova program, our team was saying, "These guys aren't going to quit; they're going to play to the end. They're going to keep fighting to the end," which is exactly what they did.

Our guys are familiar enough with their program and their personnel and the way they're coached that that team was going to continue to fight until the clocks were double zeros, and that's exactly what happened.

So I was proud that we were able to -- I'm glad we had enough cushion where it didn't get totally in danger, but they certainly grabbed the momentum for part of the second half.



