

Big East Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Wednesday, March 13, 2024

New York, New York, USA

Madison Square Garden

Xavier Musketeers

Coach Sean Miller

Dayvion McKnight

Quincy Olivari

Desmond Claude

Postgame Media Conference



minutes against Marquette at home. I understand Tyler Kolek didn't play, but if we play that game, I'm going to tell you Zach Freemantle and Jerome Hunter and Dailyn Swain didn't play for us. It's all part of the long journey for both programs and all teams.

Sometimes in a loss, you can still see the quality. I felt like that we played really well this weekend. I was anxious to see how we would respond now that our regular season was over, get a couple of good days. You can ask these guys. We worked hard in between the Marquette game to prepare for this game, and these three guys obviously did a great job carrying us like they have all season.

Q. What did you guys see, particularly in the second half as far as transition was concerned, as far as just taking the lane and being able to execute?

SEAN MILLER: Yeah, we'd love to say we play with pace. I think when you play us, that's something you have to talk about. These three guys are a big part of that. I will tell you we came up empty a couple times in the second half. And really, whether it's Quincy, Dayvion, or Des, I thought they all had their own moment where they had a great opportunity and maybe didn't cash in on it.

But the pace, you know, playing that way, sometimes you can break a game open. I agree, we're not just reliant in the half court, and certainly our team is at its best when we can get those transition points.

Q. Coach, just kind of following up on that question, what allowed you guys to kind of shoot better in the second half from the three-point line especially after going O-fer in the first half?

SEAN MILLER: I actually said it to Quincy at halftime that he in particular has done that throughout the year where you could put a bad segment together or behind him and really get hot. But it was great to see everybody contribute from three. I think at the half we were 0 for 8. Is that right? So you think about that. I guess being 7 for 14 versus 0 for 8 was a big difference.

Xavier 76, Butler 72

SEAN MILLER: First things first. Really thrilled with the fact that we were able to win the game today. Obviously us and Butler very similar in terms of how we play during the regular season. We didn't feel like we played as well as we were capable when we played them at Hinkle Fieldhouse last week. And that doesn't mean anything. You have to be able to respond.

But we played a really fast game and a really good game against Marquette in our last regular season. And playing without Dailyn Swain now in addition to some of our other shortcoming that we've had from day one, I wasn't sure how this whole thing would go at the very end.

But I think the resiliency of our group, the character, but mostly these three guys. They've carried the water for our team perhaps more than any three have in the Big East. Their individual performance, you had all three -- I don't even have to look. It's probably somewhere between 60, 65 of the 76 points. It's been that way every game and today was no different.

I know we have a big challenge tomorrow. That speaks for itself. We're just thrilled to have the opportunity to play tomorrow.

Q. Sean, what's it like ending the season the way that you did and being able to come back here and start this way?

SEAN MILLER: Yeah. I don't really think that we ended poorly. We lost at Butler and we lost really in the last few



But you have to stay with it. You can't let a cold shooting segment affect the next play, the next half, and I thought the three-point shots that we took in the second half were good ones as well.

Q. Desmond, you had a great game at the field. What kept you poised toward the end of the game at the free throw line?

DESMOND CLAUDE: Yeah, I mean it's something that I work on every day, you know, stripe work in practice, having to make free throws, and just staying confident. That was another thing. I wanted to get my percentages up, and that's what I did. But I just let the game come to me, and once you're in the flow, you just hoop, you don't really think about it. And that was my way of just keep going and I kept progressing.

Q. Quincy, you had a big second half, and maybe this is one of the arenas you went to with your dad. You went to a bunch of NBA games. What was that moment like in the second half?

QUINCY OLIVARI: Man, it was a great feeling. As a basketball player, this is like one of the dreams of where you want to be and play. So I mean, even when we first got here, I was the first one on the court. And I just took a long walk out on the court, headphones off just to soak the whole moment in and be able to just realize that this is really -- like I'm here.

Whether that's NBA or college, I'm still in Madison Square Garden being able to play, and my family is here for free. They have free tickets that we don't have to pay thousands of dollars for court-side seats at Madison Square Garden.

So just embracing the whole journey. Because this is a dream, you know. Last year we were playing at the Star in Dallas where the Cowboys play, me and Dayvion, and Abou. We actually joke about it, and now we're at Madison Square Garden.

So it's just a great feeling and then being able to win here, get the first win and have an opportunity to advance and play UConn, it's a great feeling. The emotions came out. I believe Butler thought it was two shots, and I knew it was one and one. I knew it was off. The ball was too much on my left hand. I wanted to get my tenth rebound, and the rest is history.

Q. Quincy, second half you're coming down on a fast break. You go right, you go left, you Euro step. That was a beautiful move. Does that just come naturally? Are you thinking about that ahead of time? Do you practice that?

QUINCY OLIVARI: You're asking for my tricks. A magician never tells his tricks. They call me Houdini. I can't tell you my magic tricks now.

Real talk, though, it's just feel for the game, honestly. It's nothing that I predetermine because if you predetermine Euro step, it won't work. But just feel for the game. That's all.

Q. Sean, you mentioned the challenge tomorrow. Just what do you have to do better this time around against UConn that you didn't do the first two times?

SEAN MILLER: Yeah, for sure. The first time we played them, it seems like a year ago, it was a hard-fought game at the Cintas Center. And if you watch UConn, they have a way of putting you away, and that's what they did.

The second game, I really don't have words to describe it. They overwhelmed us at the tip. They were ready coming off a week off playing in Hartford. We weren't at our best. We're not the only team that they had a big margin of victory against, especially at home this year. They're terrific. They're terrific on offense. They're terrific on defense, talent wise, coaching staff, Danny.

I can't give them any more superlatives, but what I can say is we have to be ready to play the game and be at our best, and that's our goal.

Q. Dayvion, we heard from Q about this, be playing in the Big East tournament in Madison Square Garden, how would you describe walking in this building, playing in this event, what it was like this afternoon?

DAYVION McKNIGHT: It was a great feeling. You know, like Q said, I was playing with me, him and Abou in Frisco, Texas, last year, playing in the Dallas arena. So playing in MSG is something that everybody -- you want to tell everybody about. It was something that I soaked up, like he did. So it was a great feeling.

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