

Big East Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 15, 2024

New York, New York, USA

Madison Square Garden

Marquette Golden Eagles

Coach Shaka Smart

Kameron Jones

David Joplin

Postgame Media Conference



minutes to play. And, again, the guys, there were really good eyeball contracts between one another talking about what we needed to do next.

KAMERON JONES: Need to give yourself some more credit. We practiced that, too, chance for overtime.

Q. Coach, Tyler is always discussed, but what can you say about Chase Ross's confidence? These two have hit clutch shots their whole career, but he obviously hadn't started much the last few games?

SHAKA SMART: Chase has been great. He's been banged up for really the majority of the season, different injuries. And at times, it's been hard for him to be himself because he's not 100 percent, but he's such a warrior. And I thought the way that he battled and was ready to attack was huge for us. They were giving Kam and Jop a lot of attention, a lot. And they were very physical with Oso. So that meant that other guys on our team had to step forward and be ready to make plays.

Q. Jop, I think the first two buckets in overtime. How did you get yourself centered back in the game?

DAVID JOPLIN: Just staying aggressive, like Coach said or like me and Kam said, we practiced situations like that. You think you might make a shot and think the game may be won and we go into overtime. We practiced responding and like I said earlier, just staying confident.

Q. Coach, any update on Tyler? You guys are talking about him as if he's not going to be available for some time.

SHAKA SMART: No, we're not. We're talking about tonight.

Q. Okay. All right.

SHAKA SMART: And so Tyler has been practicing. Tyler is eager to come back. But probably the most conservative person in the room is our trainer and our doctor, and that's how it should be. So to this point he's not been cleared to

Marquette 71, Villanova 65

SHAKA SMART: A lot of credit to Villanova. You know, they were fighting. They made a terrific run to come back, take a lead. I thought our guys showed tremendous resilience. This team right now is still learning how to play without arguably the best player in the league, and I thought our guys -- during that overtime, I told the guys in the locker room, our guys showed who they are. Incredible character, togetherness, toughness.

Any time you have a shot that goes in and you got a high of feeling like you won and then it gets taken away from you, that can be dangerous, but I liked the look there in our guys' eyes.

Q. Tyler has the ball in his hands so much. How have you figured out how to play without him in these situations?

KAMERON JONES: I feel like everybody just stepped up in what they do, meaning you lose a guy, especially one of your main players, you don't really have to take his spot. You just have to do what you do that much better. And I feel like that's what we've been doing since he's been out.

Q. Coach, you talked about the resilience in the group to overcome that emotional high, thinking you win the game in regulation and having to move on in overtime. How did you do it so quickly in that moment?

SHAKA SMART: Our players, again, testament to our guys' character, their togetherness. Initially we thought that the basket was good and so we thought the game was over. But the longer it took to review it, obviously you're preparing for the possibility that you have five more



play in the game. And we're confident that that will change soon. But we don't know if that's soon as in tomorrow.

But he's going to play next week. Obviously we'd love to win the Big East tournament. We'd love to win tomorrow night. I think what our guys are showing these last couple of games and even the two games we lost without Tyler is that we can compete with anyone, even while he's recovering.

Q. On the inbounds play in overtime with 19 seconds left, you get the ball to Ighodaro. Hasn't scored a field goal until that basket in overtime. How much trust did you have in him? Was that the look you were trying to get?

SHAKA SMART: That's exactly what we were trying to do. We believe in the guy. He's a warrior. I've never coached a more conscientious player that wants to do well for his team and his teammates. And so he gets down a little bit when the plays don't go in. But we've got ultimate belief in him.

Dixon did a nice job all night long of being physical and being aggressive. So I told him I said, hey, man you gotta attack Dixon the way that you went at Clingan when we played UConn a couple of weeks ago. He had a career high shot attempts in that game and he was really physical. I thought he did that on that last play.

Q. Just your thoughts on facing the Friars tomorrow night?

SHAKA SMART: Kim's done a great job. Devin Carter is Player of the Year for a reason. I think Oduro has been effective as any big in our league. So it's going to be a heck of a war. I didn't get a chance to watch the whole game tonight, but the parts that I did see, they were just scrappy and tough. And they had a nastiness about them to go grab the game and take the game.

So we're going to have to take the toughness plays that we played with tonight that helped us win the game. We're going to have to multiply those. And we're going to need these guys and the rest of our guys to understand that, hey, tonight's over, go back and get our rest and go after tomorrow.

Q. Towards the end of the night, we heard the We Are Marquette chants. How much does it mean to you to have your fans here?

KAMERON JONES: That means the world, man. That support crew we have we don't take that for granted, and we hear We Are Marquette, usually that's a good thing for

us. That means we did our job. You look forward to hearing that, especially in the Garden. Great fans, man. We really appreciate that.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports