

# Big East Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Saturday, March 16, 2024

New York, New York, USA

Madison Square Garden

**Marquette Golden Eagles**

**Coach Shaka Smart**

**Kameron Jones**

**David Joplin**

Postgame Media Conference



UConn 73, Marquette 57

SHAKA SMART: Congrats to UConn. Terrific game by them. Terrific season by them. I thought our guys had phenomenal fight, went toe to toe with a team that's probably played better than anyone in college basketball.

I thought we ran out of steam there probably in the last 10 minutes. Donovan Clingan was the biggest difference. He puts you in a bind as a team defensively because it's hard to guard him with one guy, and the way that we defend pick-and-rolls, sometimes smaller guys get on him, and that's a problem. But he does that to a lot of people.

Again, congratulations to them. They've got a great program, great coaching staff, great players.

**Q. Kam, what do you think you guys can take away from this experience this weekend, getting to the championship game, shorthanded, banged up?**

KAMERON JONES: Coach just said it's a big reminder that it takes what it takes. In these games like this, the possessions didn't go our way. But definitely using this experience to take into March Madness for sure.

**Q. Coach, you said you guys ran out of steam. What do you think contributed to that if there was anything specific?**

SHAKA SMART: You ever played three Big East games in three days?

**Q. You guys held them scoreless, I think, for the first six and a half minutes of the game. Did you just run out of steam or did they do something to switch things**

up?

DAVID JOPLIN: Kind of like we said, just running out of steam. I think we guarded them extremely well the first half, and we just have to keep up those same efforts throughout the game. It just made it difficult as time went on.

**Q. What is the overall focus towards having the deep run you guys did last year?**

KAMERON JONES: We want to be playing our best basketball every game, starting with the first round. It's single elimination, and it's non-negotiable to bring your best every game in March Madness.

**Q. Shaka, Oso didn't play the last seven minutes. Was that injury related?**

SHAKA SMART: Yeah, he banged his knee and he was struggling getting up and down the floor so I took him out because he didn't look like he was moving well. He just said in the locker room just now, he feels like he's going to be fine.

These two guys and pretty much all their teammates that played significant minutes are banged up, as I'm sure UConn's guys are, as Devin Carter and Providence was last night. When you play in this league with the physicality with which teams are allowed to play, there's going to be a lot of different bumps and bruises and things that come up. Oso is a warrior as is Kam as is Jop as is Stevie. Hopefully we'll get No. 11 back next time we play.

**Q. What did you think of BG getting thrown into fire having to guard Clingan?**

SHAKA SMART: I love BG. He's awesome. The biggest thing for BG is him believing that he's as good as we believe he is. But actually when he's out there, he's just as hard for bigger guys to deal with as they are for him to deal with because of his skill set.

We believe he's getting better and better.



**Q. Obviously Stevie had that brace on his right shoulder, didn't play his usual minute load. What's the status update on him?**

SHAKA SMART: Warrior. That's the status update on him. He'll probably play in our next game. Not probably, almost definitely. But he's also banged up. He's got an assortment of different things.

**Q. I know you're a little dejected right now. How do you turn that around and get ready for the tournament and start fresh again?**

DAVID JOPLIN: We still have life. Obviously losing this game is not what we wanted, but we have bigger goals, bigger aspirations, and we want to have the most fun in our lives the next couple weeks.

Today was rough for sure, but if we get the opportunity, like Coach said earlier in the locker room, we've got a great team, and we've got a great chance to play well in the tournament, and that's all you need is a chance.

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