

# Big East Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 13, 2025

New York, New York, USA

Madison Square Garden

**St. John's Red Storm**

**Coach Rick Pitino**

**Kadary Richmond**

**Aaron Scott**

Postgame Media Conference

St. John's 78, Butler 57

THE MODERATOR: St. John's is here with Kadary and Aaron Scott.

RICK PITINO: Basically I told the guys that a five-plus performance is a Michael Jordan performance, and we were a four-star tonight, which was good enough to win, which you expect.

Sometimes a team that plays a game has a little under their belt that hurts them in the third game, obviously, but we played good enough to win. We did a lot of good things tonight. We did a lot of things we need to get better at, but overall, it was a four-star performance, and we'll take it.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the players.

**Q. Aaron, do you think that there's something that you can do to stay on the floor a little bit longer in terms of not committing fouls? Do you think that there's a key to doing that?**

AARON SCOTT: Most of my fouls early on, they were just stupid fouls. I just got to show my hands and stop reaching in at the last second.

**Q. Did you feel good about the minutes that you spent on the court?**

AARON SCOTT: Yeah, I did. I feel like I impact winning, so I did feel good about the minutes I had on the court, but obviously I got to stay out there and stop getting stupid fouls.

**Q. Kadary, this is now back-to-back games for you**



against Marquette. You had a triple-double. Today you come a couple of rebounds and an assist shy. Can you talk about the rhythm that you are in now that the postseason is here and what you are feeling when you are out on the court?

KADARY RICHMOND: I feel like I'm just making the right play, just going out there, playing basketball and having fun freely. Guys are making shots. That's really it.

**Q. You drained a three-pointer when there was five minutes to go in the game and St. John's was leading by 21. There were 25 seconds on the clock. Was there a thought of, perhaps, dribbling a little more, and trying to use more clock than risk taking a shot?**

AARON SCOTT: I thought I was open, and Coach always says, shoot your open shots. I really didn't look at the time, so I just shot the ball, honestly.

RICK PITINO: That's a bad question (laughing). Everybody can make a mistake.

**Q. Either one of you can take this one. Coach says it's a four-star performance. There were some things you needed to improve on. What? What do you think you did wrong today?**

KADARY RICHMOND: Attention to detail. Gave up a couple threes in the first half. Not rotating, stuff like that.

**Q. Guys, I think you're 10-0 at the Garden now. How much confidence do you have playing on this court in front of these fans? Do you feel it's a little bit of an advantage? It's your home court.**

KADARY RICHMOND: I wouldn't say it's an advantage, but I feel -- we feel comfortable in here. We've played in here. Like you say, we're undefeated. We're just treating every game like every game we have in the past, so we're just staying humble and getting better one by one, day by day.

AARON SCOTT: We just take it game by game. We're in



New York, and the fans are going to come. It's our home gym, but like he said, we're just taking it game by game.

**Q. Kadary, we've asked you, kind of, over the course of the season just what it means to be at St. John's, but now just being a native New Yorker doing this in the Big East Tournament, how does that feel for you?**

KADARY RICHMOND: It's special. You know, just having one more chance to play in this tournament, there's nothing like it. It's one of the best tournaments during Champ Week, so it's a great feeling.

**Q. You guys were out-rebounded the first few times you played Butler this season, and they were two close games. Was that a point of emphasis today for you guys?**

KADARY RICHMOND: Yeah. Got to block out. I missed some block-outs in the previous two games, and today was a much better day for that.

**Q. Guys, the first two games you won by combined 14 points. How important was it for you to get out with the big lead that you did tonight?**

AARON SCOTT: It was very important. Like you said, we had two close games. We didn't want this game to be close at all, so first four minutes we emphasized that.

THE MODERATOR: Guys, thank you very much. We'll have questions for Coach now.

**Q. Rick, with Aaron Scott, it seemed like he had some pretty productive minutes when he was on the court, but there are a couple of important games in a row where he's gotten into foul trouble. Is there something that you think he could be doing?**

RICK PITINO: The first foul was really ridiculous. He had the guy locked up. He couldn't dribble. All he had to do was just stay square, and he reached in and tried to slap at the ball. He had no chance at it. That was an absurd foul.

Then he goes and gets two. He makes one or two of those per game, and it makes no sense at all.

**Q. The other thing I was going to ask, if I can steal a second one, it seemed like when play was stopped and Smith was in the game, he was touching that shoulder a lot. Where do you see him right now in terms of, you know, health-wise?**

RICK PITINO: I think he's mentally very self-conscious, and it's bothering him more mentally than it will bother him

physically. Injuries, you've got to get over the hump mentally, and he has to get over the hump mentally.

I'm sure it's bothering him. He's a tough kid, but you've got to get over the hump mentally, and that's what he is really struggling with. Pays too much attention to it. He's got to block it out of his mind, and it's easier said than done to do that.

**Q. Rick, usually people say the defense is the biggest part of your game, but -- the team's game, but tonight the offense kind of turned up more than it usually does. How would you say -- how important is it to find this shooting rhythm as you progress further into March?**

RICK PITINO: Well, I think you have to have a number of assists. You have to share the basketball. We did that tonight most of the night. We got good looks in the breaks, good looks moving the basketball. Like I said, we're a better shooting team than our numbers indicate, and we will continue. We're not going to be a great shooting team, but I think we're going to be a good shooting team.

**Q. Compared to the first two games with Butler, how would you rate the energy tonight, especially since it was a quarterfinal in the tournament?**

RICK PITINO: Energy was good. We didn't have a lot of our fans here. There was a lot of blue. Must be Marquette. A lot of blue in the place. It's not a home game because it's tough to get tickets. I think you get 300 tickets. Is that what each team gets?

THE MODERATOR: I think so.

RICK PITINO: It's not a home game. Now you get more tickets as it opens up. Although it's a home court, it's not a home game.

**Q. Rick, you talked about sometimes when you play a team a third time and you beat them twice, you have to do some things differently. What did you think of what you guys maybe changed up, and what did you think of how --**

RICK PITINO: We focused on blocking out. Our point guards did not block out last game off rotations. We wanted to get out in transition and make good plays because they go to the glass hard and get out in transition. We did some different things. They opened up in a 1-3-1, which we've only seen a few possessions and we handled it well. We played really good defense in the first eight or nine minutes, holding them to three points. Like I said, it was a good four-star performance, like I said.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

**Q. Sometimes the one seed and the favorite, like you mentioned, the other team played the night before. They kind of have a rhythm. To play the way you guys did and win the way you guys did, what does that kind of say about how well-prepared you guys were for this tournament?**

RICK PITINO: It was a good four-star performance, Zach. That's all I can say.

**Q. Rick, in the past couple of weeks you've talked about the development of your bench, and they played well again today. When you are getting that production out of the guys like Sadiku and Lefty and Vince, how much more dangerous does that make this team?**

RICK PITINO: Well, Sadiku said he is getting a lot of fluids, IV fluids, before the game. While it's dark, he's getting IV fluids before the game, which helps with Ramadan. I asked the trainers and him, Can we get something in the IV to help his defense (laughing)? They said they're going to work on that.

**Q. You said you were unhappy the other day that Kadary and those guys were fasting. Did you scold them? Did you talk to Kadary about it? How did you assess Kadary's overall play here?**

RICK PITINO: Kadary was -- I told this to the team, and I'll repeat it to you guys, and I think I've said it before. Kadary, a lot of our team was upset that Kadary wasn't First Team All League. I understand it because it's getting tough to get in three guys. I said, Kadary, your teammates and coaching staff think you're top three guards in the nation. Maybe the best guard in the nation. So what does that matter? You've got the respect of every coach and every teammate. We think you're the best guard in the nation. So that's better than anything else.

He's been terrific. All of a sudden he wants to play for the Celtics with his three-point shooting. I would like to see him cut back a little bit on that, but outside of that, he's playing brilliant basketball. He's a 6'5", 6'6" guard that has great body control, understands the game, owns up to everything he does wrong. He's coachable. He's got a great attitude. He's very humble. There aren't enough adjectives I can say about that young man.

**Q. Did you tell him to stop fasting?**

RICK PITINO: He stopped. I don't know why they were -- it wasn't helping Diku. His defense still sucked (smiling). I'm only joking, by the way.

