

Big East Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Thursday, March 13, 2025

New York, New York, USA

Madison Square Garden

DePaul Blue Demons

Coach Chris Holtmann

Postgame Media Conference



Creighton 85, DePaul 81 2OT

THE MODERATOR: Coach Chris Holtmann here for DePaul.

CHRIS HOLTMANN: Give Creighton credit. It was a whale of a game. Give those guys credit, Greg and his staff and players. Whale of a game. 7 came in and made some big plays for them late. Incredibly proud of our guys the way they battled for the last six weeks. But we give them credit. Tip our hat to those guys, Creighton, for pulling this out.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. As disheartening as it is to lose on an effort like tonight, can you just take it all in and describe what you took away from the season? Especially a lot of people didn't think they would come back in that first overtime. You were down eight and came back. I want to talk about the resiliency and building the bricks for next year.

CHRIS HOLTMANN: Yeah. Yeah, this has been a really rewarding team to coach because of that type of stuff that you see. You know, we talked all year about, at DePaul, we're going to have a strong backbone. We're going to respond the right way in the face of hard things. Man, did they do that in overtime and did they do it for the last -- for the bulk of the season, but certainly with the injuries and everything.

So, you know, Troy and Isaiah, those two guys that played throughout this stretch, they're two of my -- man, I just love those kids. I just love those kids. They just wouldn't let this group give in.

There's no question that this group has laid a foundation moving forward in a real positive way. I would like to begin giving credit to those two guys. Obviously hurts on a night

like tonight, but I'm really proud of this group.

Q. Coach, in yesterday's press conference you had mentioned that finishing, you guys play very well normally or play well enough, but sometimes just finishing isn't your strongest suit. Is that something that you're going to take into next season and really try and hammer home? Like, now it's time, we have the team, we just have to finish?

CHRIS HOLTMANN: That's always the case. Offensive rebounds. I have to help them more late, too, in a couple of those situations. Offensive rebounds, we have to make free-throws. You are going to have some of that. The rebounds hurt us.

Like I said, 7 made some key plays there late where it was an eight- to ten-point game, seven-point game. You knew Kalkbrenner was going to be Kalkbrenner and Ashworth was going to be Ashworth, but he made some big plays for them in critical moments.

Yeah, I mean, I think that's always the case when you play games this close.

Q. Chris, after an emotional game like this, what do you tell your team after the game?

CHRIS HOLTMANN: We just had some time together. You know, it's tough because there's a possibility that there could still be more basketball in our future here, so the finality of the season is real because our guys obviously played well enough to advance and wanted to advance, but that's a conversation, as well.

I think as much as anything I just really thank the guys. There were a lot of tears, a lot of emotional guys, coaches included. I think when you go through something like this with a group, you can feel really good about kind of the fruits of our labor collectively. That's, I think, what we'll reflect on, that this group really has laid a foundation of competitiveness that we need to build on moving forward.

Q. It's tough at the loss, but in this world in NIL and

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the transfer portal, do you have any time for players that are coming back? Do you want to talk about the plan for that going forward?

CHRIS HOLTMANN: We'll have those conversations here immediately. Those are two-way conversations, but yeah, we'll have those conversations immediately. There's always already been some of those, but yeah, those will happen here in the next couple of days, couple of weeks.

Q. In terms of looking into next season, what are your points of emphasis as you continue to build off of what you've made at DePaul so far?

CHRIS HOLTMANN: I think the biggest thing is we want to build a roster that we -- we want to build a roster and play a certain way that we played this year... skilled, versatile, high IQ, tough, and high character. That's the most important thing moving forward.

Then we'll adapt to in terms of how we play if we need to, but that's the most important thing this offseason.

Q. After a tough loss like that that ends the season, as you mentioned, sometimes coaches are in better position to sort of keep the big picture in perspective, the progress of the program and stuff like that. You guys had a large lead. You guys had a big lead late, a couple of chances to put it away. How are the players handling that, kind of letting it slip away there?

CHRIS HOLTMANN: It's obviously disappointing. They played their hearts out. They played their hearts out. That's normal. I think they laid it all out there. Like I said, just in these games it comes down to a few plays.

Give Creighton credit, but I think they also reflect back and know that to be in that position, they had to play a really, really good game. A really good game. We played a really good game.

Q. Coach, you really got this thing turned around here. I can tell the finality of it is tough for you. My question is, you're going to build on this for next season. When you lead these guys for pretty much the whole game except for seven minutes, how invigorating is it for you moving on to next season?

CHRIS HOLTMANN: That's a good question. Most of what we'll look at is how we played for the past four to six weeks in spite of season-ending injuries, the character of our guys, how together they came, the example that is for our younger guys that are going to continue to be a part of our program. That's the foundation that was laid.

We all want to make improvements across the board, and we will, both in terms of -- you know, across the board, but I think there's no question that our guys, when they have a moment, can reflect back and say, Yeah, this was the start of something pretty special.

I think when we look back in a few years, God willing, see this program take real steps forward. Guys like Troy and Isaiah will be a big part of that happening.

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