

Big East Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

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Madison Square Garden

Xavier Musketeers

Richard Pitino

Filip Borovicanin

Jovan Milicevic

Postgame Media Conference



RICHARD PITINO: That bucket is the one that we've relied on all season, the spin in the lane, the great touch. It was certainly great to have him back. That's 18 points per game. It's an All-Conference player. I figured he would be a little bit rusty, but I thought he really battled. He only practiced once. He didn't practice Monday. Showed a lot of great heart. Rebounded the basketball very well. So, yeah, it was very, very nice to see him down the stretch make those plays like he's done all year.

Q. Was the focus in the first half kind of getting back on your transition defense? Because when you were settled in that zone, you were doing some good things, but when Marquette got rolling speed-wise.

RICHARD PITINO: Yeah, exactly that. We talked at halftime. We were not getting back in transition. We worked on a 2-3, we worked on a 3-2. I thought they were very effective to keep them off balance. But at the first half we were not getting back in transition, and they just ducked their head, and they would get to the rim. They're as dynamic as any guards that we play off the bounce. So I thought we did a better job in the second half, making them earn those plays as best we could.

Q. To flip ahead real quick, UConn's handled you pretty well the first two times you've played them. What has to change tomorrow night for you guys?

RICHARD PITINO: We're going to do the total opposite of what we did the first two times we played 'em in everything that we do. We're not going to do anything the same. You know, they're a terrific team, but we have not played them well. So we got to stay up all night, and as coaches, put 'em in a better position because they're a tough team.

Q. You talked about Nigel James Junior. You faced Marquette throughout the season. How have you seen their young players get better over the course of the season?

RICHARD PITINO: Yeah, I mean, they finished the season, blew out Providence at Providence. Maybe one of

Xavier - 89, Marquette - 87

THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and get started with an opening statement from coach and then take questions for the student-athletes.

RICHARD PITINO: Yeah, I mean, this is an amazing tournament. We don't take this experience lightly. It's one of the most special tournaments in all of college basketball. So it was a great game. We did our very best to kind of throw the kitchen sink at them, especially to Nigel James. We just did not feel like if we went man-to-man versus him the whole game, we didn't have a lot of answers, so we mixed up a 2-3 zone, a 3-2, a couple different zone presses. I thought it was somewhat effective, then they settled in.

And then offensively we were terrific in the second half. Shot 63 percent. So proud of these guys and we certainly know we've got to get some rest because we've got a tough one tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. Jovan, so many gut punches this season. What was it like in that locker room after finally breaking through and winning one of these close ones?

JOVAN MILICEVIC: Great win. Proud of the guys. We got three more to go. So just staying level-headed and staying mentally strong and hopefully we can go make something happen these next couple days.

Q. Coach, Tre, obviously coming back, what did you think of him shaking the rust off, got you started early, and then a big bucket late when it was tied up?



the most talented teams in the league. Then they beat a UConn team. Their defense was terrific in February. I think it was like top 10 in the country. Then a kid like Nigel James, I mean, the fact that, you know, he's one of the best freshmen in the country, I think it's really, really cool that he's coming back. I think that says a lot about Shaka, his culture, and what he's trying to do.

But they've got some great young players. I know it's hard to play young guys, but I tell you what, if they keep those key guys and add a couple, they will be really, really good.

Q. Can you talk about just how important it is to win in the Big East tournament as a first-year head coach in this league? I know, obviously, you're familiar with it because your dad was here a long time, but can you talk culturally what it means to win in the Big East tournament?

RICHARD PITINO: You know, I don't know. I think we have a lot of work to do to get to the level of St. John's and UConn. And we're doing it, on the court, off the court, to put Xavier in a position where they're at the top of this league. We have an amazing fan base. We've got a great school. We've got the best on-campus arena maybe in college basketball. So we got a lot of work to do. These guys are great guys, they work very hard, they're coachable. But certainly we don't want to be 15-17. So it was nice to get a win, and go experience round two in the Garden versus UConn.

Q. So you spoke about how tomorrow you are facing UConn. What does that process look like, making adjustments, creating your game plan in such a short amount of time?

RICHARD PITINO: Not going to get a lot of rest tonight. We'll have to dive into the film. As we said before, we have not played them well at all. But I think we've gotten better, I really do. We understand they run a very unique offense. They shoot the basketball extremely well. They're very, very physical. So we got to try everything, we really do. But UConn, although they lost their last one, they're the class of this league and they're a championship program, and they're what we're striving to become.

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