

Big East Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

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New York, New York, USA

Madison Square Garden

Xavier Musketeers

Richard Pitino

Tre Carroll

Isaiah Walker

Postgame Media Conference



I've ever coached in 14 years.

Q. Tre, just what did this season mean to you and how nice was it that you're able to come back, win game here in the Garden and be there for your team?

TRE CARROLL: Even though our record didn't show it, I thought it was a great year. I don't regret anything about coming here. Obviously, I had a career year here, First Team All Big East. But I think this is the closest group I've ever been a part of in my college experience. Everybody got along. There was never any locker room drama. Nothing, like, outside of the locker room going out, having some dinner. We are all a close group of guys. Wearing the Xavier uniform meant everything to me. Even though I was only here for one year, I took pride in this jersey, I took pride in this school, and I'm very sad that I don't ever get to wear it again.

Q. You said that you had 12 transfers this year. Last night you faced a team that doesn't open the transfer portal, Marquette. What is building a roster this off-season look like to you? Are you going to rely more on the transfer portal or growing in-team talent? How does that look?

RICHARD PITINO: I think my goal -is, you know, there's three phases to it. I think there's high school recruiting. That's very, very important. Then there is retention of your current roster, also very important. And then the portal. I do not think, unless you have a boatload of money, you can sign 12, 13 transfers every year. That is really, really hard. Obviously I didn't have an opportunity to sign a high school class. We didn't have any of those guys. So for me, I'm excited about the high school guys we're signing. I want these guys to finish strong academically, to make sure they take care of that, and then we'll have those conversation. I'm sure they have a million people in their ear as well. It's just the new landscape of it.

But I really, really believe -- you know, UConn's done a really good job of that. They got some great high school players. Braylon Mullins, terrific. Reibe, terrific. But then they retain some key guys, and I really believe that's the

UConn - 93, Xavier - 68

THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and get started.

RICHARD PITINO: Well, UConn's obviously a terrific team. We don't really match up well -- that's an understatement -- with them. We've got a lot of work to do as a program to build to get to that level.

Really, really proud of this year's group, these two guys, especially. We never had a bad day in practice. Attitudes, effort, selfishness, we had none of that this year. I'm very, very grateful for that. Obviously disappointed with the record. I think anybody who understands the situation that we inherited probably wouldn't be surprised by that.

But I'm very, very grateful for the players in the locker room. To give us the character that they had and never quit was really, really special. So disappointed that we had to end tonight, but very, very proud of these guys.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. What are you going to miss most about this team? I mean, it was such, like, a close-knit group here, and then obviously season coming to an end, transfer portal, so many different things with NIL. What are you going to miss the most?

RICHARD PITINO: Well, you know, year one is always challenging and, as I said before, to add 12 transfers, guys from everywhere. For them to come in here and embrace Xavier, embrace the coaching staff, as I said before, an extremely low maintenance group. There was never any drama. They know how to act. They were raised the right way. So just the character of this group is one of the best



way to do it. So obviously can't do it when you inherit no players, but certainly we're going to start that process moving forward.

Q. Outside of players, is there something in this first year that you hope to carry over from this group to your next group next season and possibly anything that, inversely, you might change from this season?

RICHARD PITINO: Well, I think the positives of this team is kind of what Tre said about just the character in the locker room. Like, that can't change. We had no distractions, we had no drama, which was great. Offensively we set the school record for made threes. We were one of the best teams in the country at assist to turnover ratio.

So I thought offensively it was a good blueprint of the way that we're trying to play. But defensively we have really got to address a lot of issues there. When we match up against UConn, just the size, the physicality, like, we're certainly going to work on getting better there.

Q. It seems like everything these days comes down to just wins, but as college players and students, can you talk about the experience and the brotherhood of being together on the team and also off the court?

ISAIAH WALKER: Yeah, obviously, you want to win every game and you want to -- everybody wants to go to the NBA and all this stuff, but I think the biggest thing you take away from -- at least from my career in college is the guys that I may be friends with forever, especially guys on this team because we were such a close team. And that's something I'm going to appreciate forever, and the memories outside of basketball. Obviously, wins are great, but those are things you hold onto forever, the people that are around you.

Q. You were able to start the second half and disrupt UConn a little bit and were able to turn them over. What did they do differently to turn that around?

RICHARD PITINO: Well, we went big. We played Tre at the 3, we played Jovan at the 4, and Anthony Robinson at the 5, something that I tinkered with early in the year. The problem was it's not a great scoring lineup. So we would turn them over. We just couldn't convert by scoring the basketball.

So we did a good job of fighting, cutting it to 13. But I thought our length really, really bothered them. But that's been an Achilles heel for us. It's like our offensive group is really good offensively, may not be great defensively. And we had to choose one or the other. Going big, I thought it

was a curveball. I thought it worked, but it was hard to sustain it over 20 minutes.

Q. Isaiah, for you, your dad played here, it's been a part of your DNA forever. What did it mean, and what does this group epitomize to you.

ISAIAH WALKER: It was an unbelievable year for me. From going to Xavier basketball camps when I was in the first grade, all the way up to going to crosstown shootouts, watching every game, having the opportunity to put the jersey on and play, and come and play in an event like the Big East tournament, it's something that most people don't get the opportunity to do. Especially being a fan growing up. So that's something I'll never forget. And it's one of those things where it's easy to look back and question, like should I have transferred, should I not. But I don't ever do that, because I love Xavier and I love this group of guys, so I'm thankful for it all.

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