

Big East Conference Men's Basketball Tournament

Friday, March 13, 2026

New York, New York, USA

Madison Square Garden

St. John's Red Storm

Rick Pitino

Joson Sanon

Dillon Mitchell

Postgame Media Conference



We're excited to play. We played really good offense tonight, moving the basketball, attacking inside the paint. We controlled the paint the entire first half. That's what you have to do.

Q. About being able to beat teams that are both, like, offensively oriented and defensively oriented?

RICK PITINO: We're playing good basketball right now. I've been impressed so many segments of this season with the way we responded against Connecticut for Villanova, the way we responded at Seton Hall, to get that victory with a lot on the line, and the way we responded tonight.

So we're proud of our guys. We know we have a road ahead of us that's going to be very difficult, whoever we play, and we'll just take it one game at a time.

Q. St. John's has the opportunity to make some history here. The school's never won back-to-back Big East tournament titles. You have a chance to do that tomorrow and also Coach could win back-to-back tournament titles with two different schools. What does that kind of opportunity mean, the chance for history like that?

DILLON MITCHELL: Us in the locker room we know what we're playing for, but we try to stay level-headed, understand that it's 40 minutes and it doesn't matter who you play, anybody can come out there and beat you for 40 minutes because all it takes is one game. So just staying level-headed, understanding the scouting report, understanding what we got to do, coming out, playing as hard as we can, leave it all on the court.

For us new guys who weren't part of the team last year, we want it just as bad and we have the same type of chip on our shoulder like we're defending it like if we won it last year with them. So it's just about coming together, staying as one, going out there to compete for 40 minutes.

RICK PITINO: These guys, what they don't understand because they're young, they're very proud of their

St. John's - 78, Seton Hall - 68

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started.

RICK PITINO: Well, we bent a little bit down the stretch after playing great basketball, but we never broke. Seton Hall breaks everybody. They come back against everybody because of their intensity. So I'm really proud of our guys. They made their free throws. They made good defensive plays down the stretch. Certainly when you can break pressure and make your free throws, you're always going to have a great chance of maintaining your lead.

So did a lot of good things tonight. Offensively I thought we were excellent the entire night. This young man here is like a third guard because he does so many things that don't show up in the stat sheet, and Joson has -- like he said, what do you think of your jump shot? He said it's cold-blooded.

JOSON SANON: I meant to say cold butter cheese.

RICK PITINO: Okay. Joson is going to say a lot tonight (laughing).

Q. Last night you guys beat a team that was a pretty accomplished offensive team and tonight you beat a team that was a very accomplished defensive team. Can you sort of speak to the characteristics and play on this team that allow it to do those two things?

RICK PITINO: Well, walking over here I was asked how impressive is it to go to a second final game. I said, Well, what's really impressive to me is to beat Seton Hall three times. That is not easy to do because of the way they get after you.



accomplishments, but what they don't realize is that St. John's in the '60s, '70s, and '80s dominated the East Coast. It was a dominant basketball team. From Lapchick to Carnesecca, they dominated. And then they went into hibernation like a bear for a while, and then these guys got 'em out of hibernation.

But Dillon and Joson don't realize how good St. John's was back in the day. They were a great, great basketball team. They dominated the East Coast.

Q. Dillon, right before the post-season Coach Pitino was saying he had a meeting with you and he needed you to be more consistent as the post-season was coming and you were playing a lot of games in a short amount of games days. What did you take out of that meeting and how have you used it on court over the last three, four games?

DILLON MITCHELL: Just taking my motor and never turning it off. For me, it's never about scoring or anything like that. It's about defense, just playing with a high motor. Like I always say, figure out different ways that I can help to get the team a win no matter what it is, handling the ball, guarding, whatever it is. So for me personally, I just wanted to make sure I have a high motor at all times and never turn it off.

Q. Joson, first time in the Big East tournament these last two games, and you've shot it well. Can you talk about your confidence and what's it been like for you to be in the Big East tournament?

JOSON SANON: It feels great. When I come off the bench, I told them, We need some threes, and when Coach put me in, I did my thing.

RICK PITINO: Can you tell me that before I put you in? (Laughing.) Just nudge me and say, Coach, I'm ready for threes.

Q. To your point about what you're saying with the history of St. John's, you've been in this league through a lot of iterations and a lot of Friday nights here. What does it mean to get this program to tomorrow kind of where the world is and where this particular league is right now?

RICK PITINO: Well, it gets very difficult because -- I got lucky this year because we have a brand-new team and they're just as good attitude-wise as the team before. We went after character this year. More than anything else, we went after character. And it starts with these two guys. Jo never complains. And I love Bryce and Dillon because they know when they mess up and they come back and

they just go, It's on me, it's on me, and they don't even give me a chance to get on 'em because they're such pros. I've said it all along, Joson's physically the most talented ball player on the team. He's only going to grow. He made a big-time play down the stretch defensively and he's grown as a defensive player, and that's exciting because he's so much better defensively, he's so much better doing other things, but he is a cold-blooded shooter. I got great confidence in him.

JOSON SANON: Cold butter.

RICK PITINO: Cold butter. Excuse me. Okay. Cold butter. I'm learning. I'm learning.

Q. Rick and Dillon, more about your chemistry as a team going into the tournament. You guys have stepped it up a notch. Two games in a row where you led from start to finish. But more, talk about the team overall sort of coming together and the flow that you guys seem to have established in these two games.

DILLON MITCHELL: I think we have been through a lot early on in the season. One of the hardest things, like Coach P said, is playing with a lead and that's something we've learned from. We don't want to get into a position where we're down 15 like we have against Xavier and Seton Hall and trying to fight back. So it's just staying level-headed as a team, coming together, and it really starts with off-the-court stuff for us, just hanging out all the time, chatting, and just being together, it really helps on the court. So when we get to those positions, we know to trust each other and have each other's back.

Q. Being the Big East Coach of the Year last year, what are your thoughts on the job that Coach Holloway has done this year with Seton Hall?

RICK PITINO: I coached against Shaheen when he was at St. Peter's. I thought he was great back then. Knew him as a player. I love the way he gets his guys to play hard, unselfish basketball. He recruits a lot of no-name guys that aren't on the radar and makes 'em name guys. So he's tremendous. He deserved Coach of the Year by far. I know that he does so many great things. Defensively, offensively, he runs really good sets. So he's tremendous. He's a terrific coach. Seton Hall's very, very lucky to have him.

Q. Dillon, you almost played 37 minutes tonight. How do you get your body ready for another game tomorrow.

DILLON MITCHELL: Just take care of it, hydration, working with the trainers. We got the best trainers that I've

been with. So just working with them keeping my body right. And then, honestly, just keeping my mind right, too. Understanding what I got to do, and like me and coach joke all the time, make sure you get your rest. So I get my rest.

RICK PITINO: Five assists, no turnovers, six rebounds, 13 points, and playing all those minutes, didn't turn the ball over at all. Pretty special.

DILLON MITCHELL: I got some sleep.

Q. You guys kind of set the tone early on with a sense of physicality with 20 points in the paint off the bat. That physicality, was that something you guys were able to use down the stretch when Seton Hall was making a run?

RICK PITINO: Yeah, we've gotten people in foul trouble the whole season, by creating movement and going inside first, and Zubly he only made one bad play at the end of the game. He had the ball, you got to go score. He was looking to pass it. Outside of that, he's great going back door, they look for him. So our offense works inside to out, and when you do that you are going to get fouled. So it was a great performance offensively tonight. I thought defensively we were, both nights we came out like starving dogs, ready to play, and that's a good sign for us.

Q. Regardless of whatever happens tomorrow night, what do you do to get your team prepared as you head into the tournament?

RICK PITINO: Well, there's no tournament, it's tomorrow night. It's just the opposite of what you just said. It's tomorrow night. This is a championship. We're playing for a championship. We played for the regular season as if our life was on the line. We're going to play tomorrow as if our life is on the line. Then we'll worry about the tournament. But we're not thinking -- we're just thinking of beating either Connecticut or Georgetown, whichever one wins, and focusing on them. We know it's going to be tough. They're both excellent teams. Georgetown's playing great right now. So we'll be ready. We'll get our rest, we'll be ready. We'll watch the second half together.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports...