

Pac-12 Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 11, 2022

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

UCLA Bruins

Coach Mick Cronin

Jaime Jaquez Jr.

Tyger Campbell

Postgame Press Conference



UCLA - 69, USC - 59

MODERATOR: We've got UCLA on the podium. We've got Coach Cronin, Jaime Jaquez. Tyger Campbell will be joining us shortly. Coach, make an opening statement, and then we'll open it up for questions.

MICK CRONIN: Defensively, I thought this was as good as we played in a while, especially in the first half.

Obviously, I got tremendous respect for Coach Enfield and their program. They've had an unbelievable year. Their projected seed is ridiculously low. That's typical of the West Coast bias. So I wish them all the best next week. Hopefully we can all do what we did last year.

But our guys -- like I said, our defensive effort was tremendous. We got multiple contributions on offense. We only got 46 attempts, but we got to the foul line, the most we've been to the foul line in a long time, tonight. So attacking the basket pretty well.

I thought the key to the game was our first half. We could have had a chance to get away from them by halftime, but Jules and Tyger's foul trouble stopped that.

Q. Tyger or Jaime, where do you see the way you guys were playing last year at the end translate to go where you guys are now? Are there things you're replicating now that you were doing last year or things you want to replicate?

JAIME JAQUEZ: I mean, think about it like this, you try to play that way all the time, so whether it's last year, this year, or even three years ago, you try to replicate the same way. You try to play and play perfect, not make as many mistakes as the other other team, and just keep going and

make right decisions and smart plays.

TYGER CAMPBELL: I say we knew when we went on our run last year, we really locked in on the defensive side of the ball. So coach preaches defense, defense, defense, so got to lock in this year again.

Q. Last week against USC, talking at the end of the last SC game, being disappointed with the way things closed out down the stretch, and 20-point game turns to a 10-point game last night, but tonight holds steady in the last few minutes. How did that feel improving how you closed out on both ends of the floor?

MICK CRONIN: A lot of that is we were able to play the guys we wanted to play. Last night they were pressing Russell, as you know. But at the end of day, we said at halftime, they don't get to 60, they're not going to be able to catch us.

So like Tyger said, the thing about it is when you get to March, you can't rely on shooting to win. There's going to be a game or two where you probably have to score a lot of points to win. But you can control your effort, and if you defend, you always got a chance.

So on a rough night offensively, you still got a chance. So just happy with the way we defended even down the stretch.

Q. You guys won eight of nine. What's been the key to locking in? Obviously defensively you've been very solid. What's gone into that? What do you think led to this nice run you have?

JAIME JAQUEZ: Being healthy is one for sure. Like I said earlier, I don't think we had one game during the regular season where we had everyone a hundred percent healthy. And now that we do, it's great. We got a lot of guys in rotation that can step up and make plays, and defensively and offensively.

And I think just watching film, being very attentive, following the scouting report and things like that, so I think those are all going to why we've been so successful



defensively.

Q. Coach, pretty big impact, couple games, for Peyton Watson, and 12 minutes and 8 minutes tonight. What do you think has gone into things clicking for him?

MICK CRONIN: I think his defense always helps us. His rebounding, length. But good for him. I was happy to see him get a shot to go down. Jaime threw him a great pass. He made a nice cut off the ball and got it to go down.

The thing about Peyton is he kept his head down and just kept working all year. That's what I'm most proud of.

So I would say these guys all know like the expectations. They haven't had to deal with what he's had to deal with. They're with him. He's their guy. They love him. He's on their team, so they get it.

When he plays well, these guys are the happiest, because they see every day in practice the guy's got an unbelievable attitude. Just a young kid that didn't play senior year in high school because of COVID, and he needs to get stronger. And best basketball is probably when he's 23 and his body looks a lot different.

So unlike me, he's gonna get better with age. Right, Tyger? Tyger is like me, that's his problem. He's not going to fill out any more. Other than his hair.

Q. For Tyger and Jaime, I know you guys have bigger aspiration, but to beat your rival twice in a week, how much -- how excited are you for that? How good does that feel?

TYGER CAMPBELL: We're just worried about tomorrow. Got to win tomorrow. Come out, give it all we have. And, yeah, we're not really worried about that.

Q. First time that UCLA has been to the Pac-12 Championship game since 2014. First time since you've been here. How does it feel knowing this is a different stage of big stage that you guys are going to be playing on tomorrow?

JAIME JAQUEZ: Great opportunity for our team. Really gives us a good test for where we are proceeding into March. And it's going to be a fun experience. It's what we all work for, try to get that trophy and cut the nets down.

We're excited and ready to go.

Q. Jaime, you were matched up with Isaiah Mobley a lot tonight. What were you looking to do and take away from him on the defensive end?

JAIME JAQUEZ: I was trying to take away his right hand. I know he likes to get there in the post, get to his left shoulder, right hand hook. I was trying to take that away from him.

And he's a really player. I've been playing against him since we were kids, been on the same team. I've known him forever.

So it was just another great battle I had with him. And he's a great player. Just tried to take away his right hand.

Q. Mick, you may have talked about this a couple times, but with Johnny, how do you keep making sure that confidence stays there?

MICK CRONIN: At halftime -- I worry at times about especially Johnny, with all the draft speculation. I'm a big believer in mental state. And you worry what -- I had a kid go through at Cincinnati. People started talking about the draft. And I may be wrong, but I know if I was him, and that was maybe a possibility, how much pressure you can put on yourself.

And pressure is good thing you embrace try to win. But if you're stressing out about that type of stuff, and that's in your mind while you're trying to shoot the ball, that's a recipe for disaster. So I worry about that for him.

So I was really happy to see him get some shots to go down. And ran a couple iso's for him when we were up ten after he made a couple shots, I thought he could score, get fouled. Because we gotta get him going if we're gonna do what he came back to school to do. I mean, he can't just be a non-factor for us.

I just don't want him stressing about it. Just gotta give your best effort. But that's easy for me to say. I got a nicer house. These guys, it's easy for me to say, man, just do your best, don't worry about your future, when you got my contract. But you gotta try to relieve that stress for them somehow.

Q. You guys obviously last year in the bubble and everything had the thing after every win, you'd slap the name up on the bracket. You're doing a little bit of that now here as you're leaving the court with the fans cheering you on. You had Russell do it tonight. How fun was that? Similar to last year, but different in some ways too?

TYGER CAMPBELL: It's a little different. The bracket is a little smaller. But seeing Russ run down and everybody surrounding him, just smacking on the board, it's a good

feeling.

Obviously it's a good feeling to win, but just see all of us rally around each other, stay together. Those are my brothers, so it's always good.

MICK CRONIN: Before I go, I'll just say, you guys were talking about rivalry, we don't have animosity. We just don't. These guys -- Tyger doesn't, but like I just three years ago -- Andy Enfield is a great guy. I know Eric Mobley. Jay on their staff used to work with Coach Palmer. Those are great guys.

So it's nice to be in a healthy rivalry. Because it should be about basketball. But you see these guys before the clock hits zero, just tremendous respect for each other. It's good for our game. You can have a rivalry like that and it can be about basketball and not about hatred and stuff like that.

Wish them all best next week. Thank you, guys.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

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