

American Athletic Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Saturday, March 16, 2024

Fort Worth, Texas, USA

Dickies Arena

Florida Atlantic Owls Dusty May

Vladislav Goldin

Postgame Press Conference



Temple - 74, Florida Atlantic - 73

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

DUSTY MAY: First of all, hats off to Temple. They played with great physicality, they were determined, they were together, and they made some big-time plays and there's a reason they will be playing tomorrow, because they came out here and played really, really well for four games in four days. So I wish we had a little more time, but like I said, hats off to Temple.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

Q. It's known that in those last late type of possessions there, you don't usually call a timeout, but in this scenario, is there any wish in your mind that you would have, considering Vlad was off the court there in that last moment?

DUSTY MAY: It was a lot like at UAB, where the plan is to call a timeout and then you see Nelly find a crease, and he's so good getting to the rim, in my mind, I thought they would lead B-Lo and he would get a tip-in. Obviously, in hindsight, I wish Vlad would have been in the game, but I wish we had a lot of possessions back.

Q. Then the follow-up, so the play there was to B-Lo and it wasn't --

DUSTY MAY: No, no. It was to Nelly in the open court to try to get to the rim. If he got stopped, then we were going to call a timeout and run a side out.

Q. Were you surprised at all that Johnell didn't go up on that first take there and passed it off to below?

DUSTY MAY: I trust these guys, man. Everyone in our locker room we have a high level of trust and respect for and we got to the rim down one and just -- it's one possession in an 80-possession game.

Q. A lot of people will talk about the seven-point play as a turning point in the game. In your mind, does it go beyond that, anything prior to that that kind of set the stage for it or was that crucial, in your mind?

DUSTY MAY: It was obviously crucial at that point in the game to have seven points in one possession, and not only that, but it gives them momentum. But when we don't shoot well -- and I thought we had a lot of really good looks against the zone, maybe they're out of rhythm, I'm not sure, but when we don't shoot well and then our defense is as -- I won't say soft, but it needed to be much more physical, and we give up the percentage we did from three, it's not a recipe for success.

So we got to clean some things up, but we knew coming into it. Temple has really, really good players and they have guards, they have the Philly-type guards, that they're banging in stepbacks. We tried several different coverages. In hindsight, probably should have gotten ultra-aggressive a little earlier, like we did the last five to eight minutes. But we tried a lot in the second half and they made plays.

Q. You played this Temple team a few weeks ago in the middle of January in Florida. Just kind of take me through what you saw differently from this Temple team here in the tournament.

DUSTY MAY: They just played better longer. They hung around in the first half when things weren't going great for them, much like last night against Charlotte, and then in the second half, they knocked down a few, and when their centers make a few threes, then defenses have a tendency to overreact at times, and then their guards were able to get to their spots, stepbacks, shoot from deep. They played really, really well and they made big plays.

Q. The offense got a little one dimensional at times tonight. How do you guys look to try to ignite that in games going forward, God willing there are any more?

DUSTY MAY: What do you mean one dimensional?

Q. In the first half, 1-8 from three, and then that continued a little bit into the second half. I don't know the exact stats to start the second half. 3-7 final.

DUSTY MAY: 3-7 total. Yeah, like I said, when they're in the zone -- towards the end of the game we were able to get it to the elbows and get some high lows, but it's tough to not shoot threes when they're packing in and almost daring you. I believe in our guys. Obviously, I wish we had a couple of those back, but if we go an entire game and we shoot that poorly and we get two offensive rebounds, not one player on our team got an offensive rebound. I thought they played with great physicality. I thought we just -- we weren't quite as I guess determined as they were.

Q. Vlad, you got a lot of looks in that first half, converted on a bunch of them. Take me through what you saw out there from the Temple defense and the looks that you were able to get in close.

VLADISLAV GOLDIN: Can you say again, what you're asking, please.

Q. Just, I guess, evaluate how Temple was defending you around the rim tonight.

VLADISLAV GOLDIN: They were doubling sometimes. I tried to shoot as quick as I can, so not face double and don't shoot over two people. But my goal was just to get as deep a position as I can and just shoot hooks and lay-ups and floaters.

Q. Did you feel like that contact on that Picarelli shot was just kind of incidental?

VLADISLAV GOLDIN: I mean, they were playing physical and that's what you expect to play. During the tournament, once everything is on the line, that's how you expect to play, so I wasn't shocked. I knew it was going to be physical game. That's how it was, so...

Q. But on the three-pointer where you got called, was that a little poke?

VLADISLAV GOLDIN: I didn't mean to touch him. I was trying to raise my hand, and then I was, like -- I didn't pay attention at him. I didn't mean to.

Q. I know it's a process after a win or a loss, you go through the tape, and then you clean up what you have to clean up. Does that process change now whether you win a conference tournament or lose? Is this one just better off forgotten and you just move into what's coming Thursday or Friday?

DUSTY MAY: Well, we'll have a little bit of time before we know our opponent, so I guess the answer is no. Every game, every practice we want to critique ourselves, we want to find ways for us to be better, and so, no. We'll learn something from this game, we'll try to grow and improve and be better this week when we're able to play again.

Q. Obviously a tough loss tonight. Guarding Hysier Miller, obviously, he was frustrating, but can you evaluate how you were able to approach guarding him throughout the game?

DUSTY MAY: We tried several different ball screen coverages. He commands the game, just like he did last night. He has done that much of the season. We trapped him late. He got it out of his hands. I thought that was probably the most effective, but also it was when our defensive energy and intensity was increased as well.

Like I said, if I had to do all over again, if we could rewind it, we would have started trapping him more aggressively earlier. But we also didn't have the energy we needed throughout, and so it's tough to get a really good player stopped when he's capable of doing it off the bounce, off the catch, and with the range he's able to do it. Like I said, he made plays. What a performance by those guys.

Q. First of all, what's the next 24 hours going to be for you in terms of -- I know you got to travel back and whatnot, but how will the team be spending the day as you build up to the selection announcement?

DUSTY MAY: We're not sure yet. We'll try to find earlier flight home and then get back and rest and regroup, and then not forget that a lot of work, blood, sweat and tears have put us in position to still be playing. It's an honor and this group is special. So we have another opportunity to compete for a championship. I think every single team in the country when they start their season -- and usually the season starts almost as if, as soon as the other one ends -- then your goal is to make the NCAA Tournament. There's, whatever, 360-some teams now. 68 get in. So we're confident that we're going to be one of those teams that have a chance to compete for the biggest championship in our game, in our sport and in college basketball.

Q. Secondly, please, earlier just a few minutes ago Coach Fisher talked about his team being loose and locked in. They're kind of a team that's basically enjoying the ride, discovering how good they can become. Is that a trait that you recognize from your team last year at the same time?

DUSTY MAY: I think their journey's much different than ours. I just think 1 through 14 the teams in our league are all capable of winning this tournament. I thought Wichita State had a really good team and just didn't find ways to win close games. A lot these games come down to one or two possessions, and Temple was in a lot of those as well this year, where they played teams tough. And it comes down, just like our game yesterday, it came down to a couple possessions and we found a way to win. The records, the standings can look a lot different when there's this much parity. So, no, did the staff overlook? Absolutely not. We respect their team, their program, everything about them, their staff. So we knew it was going to be a tough game, and there's a reason they have been able to beat four of us is because they're good.

Q. I'm sorry if I didn't command my question correctly, just the looseness that they're playing and the fun that they're having at this time of the year. That seemed to characterize your team last year. Every game was a new discovery of how good you can become, and they seem to be experiencing that right now.

DUSTY MAY: I misunderstood you. I'm sorry. Yeah, it looked like us in the NCAA Tournament, where we were just consumed with finding a way to win. I thought they looked like that the last couple days.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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