

GEICO Players Era Men's Championship

Monday, November 24, 2025

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

MGM Grand Garden Arena

Iowa State Cyclones

T.J. Otzelberger

Milan Momcilovic

Joshua Jefferson

Postgame Press Conference



has great habits and confidence in his abilities because he earns it and works for it every single day. As his coach, you want to do everything you can to show that belief in how you can have his back, and his teammates did such a great job finding him.

He was aggressive early on. It felt like when a mistake was made or miscommunication defensively, we were able to find him, and he was able to make a big shot. And I loved the downhill drive late in the paint, was a huge possession.

So it's what we know Milan's capable of. He works for it. He earns it. Proud of him and happy for him to have that type of performance. He should have great confidence moving forward.

Q. Milan and Joshua, what emotions ran through your mind when you saw Tamin go down like that? How much did that fire you guys up to close things out?

MILAN MOMCILOVIC: That's our guy. He runs the team. So obviously it's disappointing to see him go down, but we have the "next player step up" mentality. We knew we needed to win that game. So we forget about it and just go win the game.

But obviously it's tough to see our leader go down like that.

Q. T.J., for you, that was your 100th win as a coach at Iowa State. Only five other coaches have done that in Ames. What's that milestone mean to you to be part of that exclusive club?

T.J. OTZELBERGER: It's a credit to the guys that we've been fortunate enough to coach and their commitment to what we do every single day. Proud of our guys for that. And we'll get focused, do everything we can to get ready for our game tomorrow. Keep our focus on that.

Q. Josh, your hometown, was that a scenario maybe you had played out on the playground growing up, hitting two free throws to win a game for your team, a big game for your team?

JOSHUA JEFFERSON: Love playing in Vegas, and then just love stepping up there to make free throws at the end of the game. Last year, proved myself being able to be

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Q. T.J., back-and-forth game, high energy. Your takeaways, and do you have any kind of immediate update on the status of Tamin and what he injured?

T.J. OTZELBERGER: First, as far as the game, we knew coming in it was going to be a highly physical game. It felt at halftime we really needed to lock in generate more turnovers off our defense. We were able to do that right away to start the second half, which I think changed the momentum of the game in our favor, and then did it again late on the offensive glass. We had some big offensive rebounds. For us to have 17 offensive rebounds against a team with their physicality, we knew we'd have to work really hard.

So I think those two areas allowed us to get the possessions we needed to be successful. I thought those were the margins that were really important for us.

In regards to Lipsey, we're still evaluating. Training staff, medical staff just told us it's going to be a day-to-day, lower body extremity. So I don't have great detail on it. We haven't had time to really truly evaluate him over time.

So we'll get back to the hotel, check him out, see what that means.

Q. T.J., curious if you could speak to Milan's growth and his ability to impact the game, both making shots, but also just across the floor. Felt like he made a huge impact today?

T.J. OTZELBERGER: Milan is a tremendous worker. He



clutch in those situations. So whenever that situation comes up, I'm confident going up there to knock them down.

Q. Milan, I was curious, who is your favorite shooter of all time?

MILAN MOMCILOVIC: That's a tough question. I would just go with Steph Curry. He's the best in the world, and the way he moves without the ball is pretty cool.

Q. When you're out there, you kind of remind me of a little kid playing on the playground. Looks like you're just having so much fun when you're bombing from deep. Is that what you feel, or are you really locked in, focused?

MILAN MOMCILOVIC: I think that was a big emphasis this year, just go out and have fun, play with joy and just play with emotions and good things will happen when I'm out there.

Q. Coach, in the press conference this morning, Coach McDermott made it sound like you're very tight. How close are you, and what is it going to be like to face them at 11:00 a.m.?

T.J. OTZELBERGER: Extremely fortunate, have known Coach McDermott since I was in high school. He's someone that means a lot to me. He's done a lot for me. He gave me my first opportunity that I knew that I hadn't earned or didn't deserve at Iowa State in 2006.

Had he not done that, I probably wouldn't be sitting here today. So it's with a tremendous sense of thankfulness and gratitude and appreciation I have for Coach Mack and all he's done for me.

And it's one of those games you don't really look forward to playing friends to that extent because I like to see them be successful, except for tomorrow.

Q. Blake Buchanan also had a great game, difference-maker. He had foul trouble. What would you say he means to this team, if you can define that?

T.J. OTZELBERGER: Blake's an elite defensive player, activity level. He's a very high IQ offensive player. He can make plays with the basketball. Tremendous passer and finisher. And then what you saw tonight was just an unbreakable will, especially late. When you have four fouls, there's some challenges that go along with that.

We talked to him consistently about being more aggressive, more physical, more assertive. And he made

so many impactful big plays for us down the stretch.

Challenging dynamic when you have four fouls as quick as he did, but you couldn't have handled it any better. And really proud of him how he persevered.

Q. T.J., you fouled their starting point guard out with a little more than five minutes left. How much confidence does that give you, knowing they're not going to have their go-to guy to set something up for the rest of the game?

T.J. OTZELBERGER: Darling does a tremendous job organizing their team. He's gritty. He's tough. You can tell he's very coachable. He's an arm of the coaching staff.

So that was an impactful play for sure when he got his fifth and went to the bench. Just created a little bit more disorganization and allowed us the ability to create more pressure or generate more turnovers or challenge shots.

A lot of respect for Darling. He's going to have a great season, and certainly impacted the game when he went out.

Q. T.J., what makes St. John's vocal pressure so tricky? How do you feel your team handled it today?

T.J. OTZELBERGER: Initially, the pressure, we probably didn't handle it great. With Coach Pitino's teams over the time that he's done this, they're known for that pressure. They're known for trying to break your spirit over the course of 40 minutes.

And we were fortunate, early, it kind of put us on our heels. We had some turnovers we'd like to have back. But our guys were very intentional and tough as the game continued to wear on in making sure that we cut hard, that we were sure of our passes every single possession. And that was so important because all those possessions mattered.

So it's with tremendous respect we have for them and their program and how they go about doing that job, and proud of our guys for how they rose to that challenge here today.

Q. You touched on Blake Buchanan, but how did you feel your front court overall -- you had some Joshua Jefferson minutes at the 5, but how did you feel like they matched up today against St. John's bigs?

T.J. OTZELBERGER: We won the game, and we outrebounded them. I felt we were the more physical team on the interior. Those are huge credits to all of our guys.



When Joshua's playing out of position at the 5, he's a warrior in there. He does so much for us. And obviously we've talked about Blake, I think he played his most minutes today as a Cyclone. And we trust Eric Mulder as well. So great job by all those guys.

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