

GEICO Players Era Men's Championship

Tuesday, November 25, 2025

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

MGM Grand Garden Arena

Syracuse Orange

Coach Adrian Autry

Naithan George

J.J. Starling

Postgame Press Conference

Kansas 71, Syracuse 60

ADRIAN AUTRY: I thought today the game was a little different, some things we need to work on as far as energy level 5 and the things that are required for us to do it, the things that we work on. I ask a lot of these guys. It's very hard to do things that we are actually going to do with their level and their consistency, and I think that's what y'all are going to see is that we're learning. We're learning a lot of lessons the last two games that have helped us. We've gotten better, but we've got things we need to continue to work on.

These guys are giving me everything they have, and I've got to continue to coach them, coach them a little bit better, coach them a little bit harder and challenge them a little bit harder, and I know they'll respond because we know what we're capable of.

We're not there yet, so throughout the season we've got to continue to work on that.

Q. Nate, what did Kansas do defensively that forced you guys to take a lot of late in the shot clock shots and force some things up?

NAITHAN GEORGE: They just switched and they're a pretty big team, so when they switch, it's just like you've got to be more aggressive. I feel like we got taken out of our things because of them switching.

Q. Adrian, it seemed like consistent offense was hard to come by today. Where can you look to to get more consistent offense? Obviously until Donnie gets back.



ADRIAN AUTRY: For me, it's not about the offense. I think it's truly about us, our energy on both ends of the floor, moving the ball, sharing it. I thought we got good shots. We didn't make them. Like Nate said, they did a good job of switching and those guys did a good job of keeping us in front.

We've got to get a little bit more movement. But it's not about one guy. It's not about the leading scorer. I'll just tell you right now, for the whole season we're going to have different guys lead leading this team in scoring. It wasn't really about that. It was more about the energy that we had some inconsistencies in, and I think that really spilled over to our offense a little bit.

But we got good shots, some that we can make and some that we didn't. But it really falls back on to our concentration and our energy and effort.

Q. Adrian, one of the things I was curious about, you've struggled to rebound the ball the last couple days and I'm curious your thoughts on that.

ADRIAN AUTRY: Well, we didn't struggle yesterday against probably one of the better offensive rebounding teams in the country, so today we didn't do a good job on the glass, and I think that's the things that we have to continue to work on to get better at.

But I think if we can battle Houston who's one of the better offensive rebounding teams and close that margin. Today we can't do that, and I think that impacted the game.

Q. Since you host Tennessee next Tuesday, I was curious if you're going to take advantage of the opportunity for some in-person scouting this afternoon.

ADRIAN AUTRY: I don't play them enough. I don't need to do any in-person scouting. I'm very familiar with Tennessee, Coach Barnes, what their program is about. We've got one more game here. That's all I'm worried about right now, is figuring out who our opponent is and getting ready for that.

Q. What is level 5 energy to you, and where specifically did you see it lacking today?



ADRIAN AUTRY: I think when you talk about level 5 energy, it's about five guys connected, our bench connected, everybody in sync. I think everyone that's followed Syracuse has had a glimpse of that.

I thought yesterday was a glimpse of that, as well, and it's just giving your all, maxxing out, maxxing out effort, giving your all on both ends of the floor.

Q. You guys shot just over 30 percent from the field today. What's your message to the guys to get them back on track?

ADRIAN AUTRY: It's about our effort, trying not to focus -- we don't want to focus on makes and misses, we want to focus on our effort. Everything that we're doing in this program is really good effort. We've shifted the focus on getting energy from making shots. That's the shift that we've made in our culture. It's about level 5 energy and effort because typically when that happens, everything else works itself out.

Q. Coach, obviously the last two days it's Q1 opponents, top 10 defenses per Ken Pom. You mentioned lessons to your learning. How does that caliber of competition help the players, help the team, but still a young season and you've got a lot more basketball left to play?

ADRIAN AUTRY: I think you always pull something from every game, in particular when you're playing in this field with the competition that's some of the best in the country. You get a chance to see where you're at. That's your barometer to see where you're at.

We've played against two Hall of Fame coaches and two great programs, so we get a chance to see where we're at and what we need to get better at. It's November and we know we're still a work in progress. I think it gives you a good barometer as a coach and I think as players to pull from this experience and move forward.

Q. I think I asked you this yesterday, but how do you get your guys ready for a third game in three days in what is really a unique format?

ADRIAN AUTRY: Yeah, we'll get back today and get some food and kind of stick to our routine, hydrate, get our recovery. We've got a great recovery team. That's all you can do.

We know what these tournaments are about. These guys love that. I'm pretty sure they love to play more than they practice sometimes, so I'm sure they'll be excited. We'll be ready to play.

Q. Adrian, last year Nate Kingz shot the ball very well, especially from three at Oregon State. He's been struggling this year, especially the past two days. Can you talk about what's going on with his shot? Is he getting good shots?

ADRIAN AUTRY: You know, I think what Nate has done is he's really competed on the defensive end and rebounding, so he's doing a lot more for us. Again, he'll settle down and make shots. He's one of the best shooters I've seen. I'm not worried about him making shots. I think he'll settle down and make some shots, but he's getting good shots. He's not forcing any. He's getting good looks.

Our guys are doing a good job of getting him some looks and looking for him and they've got ultimate confidence in him and we have confidence in him.

Q. J.J., Flory Bidunga scored 11 early and didn't do much after that. What was the key to changing that?

J.J. STARLING: I mean, our focus was they're going to drive and get in the paint and look for their bigs. I felt like our bigs did a good job of doing their work early so he couldn't get post touches and that allowed us to get him out of the flow of the game.

Q. One thing that I'm seeing from your coach is a huge component of trust. How has that benefitted you guys as players to know that your coach isn't just going to take you out off of a little mistake, he's going to hold you accountable and allow you to get those reps and comfortability on the floor?

NAITHAN GEORGE: I mean, it's everything. That's really what you want in a coach. It just makes you want to go hard for him. Having that support, knowing that he has your back no matter what, through the good and bad, it means a whole bunch to us. It makes us want to run through a wall for him.

J.J. STARLING: For me, this is my third year playing for Coach, so just building that trust is big time, like Nate said, and that's what you want as a player, to instill that confidence in you. It's early in the season, so I feel like we're still working towards that. But having that trust from Coach to be able to play through mistakes and stuff like that is just big time.

Q. J.J., this is your second game back coming back from the injury. Physically how are you feeling and what's the process been for you getting back in the fold coming off the injury the first game of the year and trying to incorporate yourself back with the rest of the



team?

J.J. STARLING: Yeah, I'm back, fully healthy. Now it's just finding my rhythm, just playing with high energy, high effort, and then just allowing those things to take care of itself. I feel like I'm doing a better job buying in defensively and that's what I'm going to continue to do, and then I know I can score, but I'm not focusing on that. I know it's going to come. My teammates have been finding my open looks, so I know eventually things are going to go the way we want them to go.

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