

GEICO Players Era Men's Championship

Tuesday, November 25, 2025

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

MGM Grand Garden Arena

St. John's Red Storm

Coach Rick Pitino

Oziah Sellers

Bryce Hopkins

Postgame Press Conference

St. John's 96, Baylor 81

RICK PITINO: I think what I enjoyed the most last night was the devastation in the eyes of our players. And you really know a team with class. I don't mean the way they act off the court, which they act great, but a class team really, really focuses in, doesn't hang their heads and brings it, and these guys did.

I think for the first seven, eight minutes, we could have given the Knicks a game before losing by 40. So it was a brilliant first eight minutes of the game. These two guys were both great.

I haven't begged very often about players shooting the ball, but I begged these two guys to take more shots, and they did tonight. They were both brilliant. We have two point forwards, Bryce and Dylan, who can play like guards in terms of handling the basketball and passing. And that does wonders for you.

So real proud of these guys. It was a good bounce-back game after a devastating loss for us.

Q. Rick, you kind of had a similar -- at this time last year, the double-overtime loss to Baylor, and you came back and beat Virginia to set the tone in a way for the season. Did this feel similar to that?

RICK PITINO: Well, I think this team is much better than the Virginia team of last year. And I thought tonight they did a lot of great things offensively especially.

We still have a long way to go rebounding the basketball. We gave up 26 second shots. So when you hold a team to



37% shooting from the field and 32%, there's going to be a lot of misses and you got to come up with the rebounds.

So it was a good bounce-back game. I think this team has the potential to be a good team as we grow, but they're new to each other. We see a lot of mistakes by being new to each other.

Q. Oziah, these last two games you started to take more three pointers than you had in the previous four games, and Coach said he's encouraged you to shoot more. What have those conversations been like, and how have you been able to fulfill that out on the floor?

OZIAH SELLERS: The conversation has been pretty simple, him just saying shoot the ball, even in times where I might have felt like I wasn't open. But him having that confidence in me makes me want to go out and play free. So when I get the opportunity, I take it.

Q. Bryce, as the season goes along, how much more confident are you in your three-point shooting?

BRYCE HOPKINS: I feel like the confidence comes from the work we put in every day. When we wake up in the morning, we're straight on the court for individual workouts, and then we have a lift and stuff like that. But I feel like it's just the consistency and the work we put in every day. As the season goes on, and whatever the defense is playing me, I'm just going to be that much more confident in taking those shots.

Q. The last couple of years it feels like the best teams are really big up front, the four and five, this year even more so, a lot of teams sizing up at the three. Why do you think that is? Were you intentional in the way you built with this roster?

RICK PITINO: We're not a big team. Our tallest guy is 6'9". Ruben is probably 6'10". I just think offensively we have a big edge because these guys all play like guards. They handle the ball so well. We've been a high assist team every practice, high assist every game.

We just got to work on our rebounding. It's something we're capable of doing a better job. I know they're hungry. Listen, they're a great group of guys. I was hoping that they would be as devastated last night as I was, and they



were. I think that gets a team ready. And they were ready to play tonight against a good Baylor team.

Q. Bryce, Coach told us about the devastation that he saw in your faces. What were some of the conversations among the players about what you guys had just done and what you wanted to do today?

BRYCE HOPKINS: Yeah, the conversation between the players was just we didn't want to feel how we felt last night today. We had to do something about it. We woke up this morning, had a good walkthrough, prepared for Baylor.

And I felt like we did a good job sticking to the game plan for the most part. I think we could have done a better job keeping them off the rebounding, but I felt like we did a good job locking into their scouting.

Q. And, Oziyah, the way you felt after the last game, can you describe how much it hurt to lose that game by one?

OZIYAH SELLERS: Yeah, it definitely hurts when you play a full game and end up losing by a possession. Like Bryce was saying, we were super bought in on moving on and lock in today to get the win today.

Q. And, Rick, I know that the way the tournament is formatted, now you're 1-1 and your point differential is better and maybe you have a shot at something that could look like a big win tomorrow. How do you feel about the fact that where you were 24 hours ago to what you could potentially have now?

RICK PITINO: Even better now. I felt we played a really good game last night. We just got -- with four minutes to go in the game, we got dominated on the backboard.

Now, I will say, watching Iowa State play today, they're a dominating offensive rebounding team. We've got to get better at that because we have the athletes to do it.

We wanted to play in this tournament to get all new guys ready for this incredible competition. Regardless of who we play, I think these guys witnessed today what great preparation is all about. They were really dialed in in our walkthrough about every little thing we need to do.

And we'll get our rest tonight and get ready to go. We're going to practice tonight about 8:00. (Laughter).

Q. Hi, Coach. You talked about the team having so much potential. They're still growing. I was wondering after last night and maybe even today during halftime, is there a specific player who steps up as a leader and

talks to the team about what they need to do?

RICK PITINO: I think Zuby does. He's a vocal leader. These guys are all capable of doing it. They have the... they're such bright people they could lead as well. They sort of defer to Zuby because they're new.

But we did a fabulous job this year of recruiting people that fit what we want as people between the lines and away from the lines. These two guys are the greatest guys you're ever going to recruit as people, and the rest of the team buys into it.

We're excited. We have a tough schedule to play. It was a tough loss last night. It was a really tough loss, but we played a really good game. Against Alabama we fought hard, but we didn't play a great game. Yesterday we played a great game. And sometimes you lose a great game. But you have to give the other team credit.

Q. Oziyah, what did you learn about your team to come back the way you did 24 hours later after yesterday?

OZIYAH SELLERS: That we're capable of it and that when we play together and we truly lock in and know what we need to do scouting-wise, that we're able to get wins like this.

We're definitely capable. I'm excited moving forward.

Q. Rick, you talked about the devastation in your team last night. Was there a moment last night or even this morning that you realized that they turned the page and they were ready to be focused coming into a game like this?

RICK PITINO: I think so. When I was on my 15th martini, I started to realize it.

Q. And for tomorrow, it's a weird and unique position where you don't know who you're going to play.

RICK PITINO: It is tough from a preparation standpoint. I went to bed very early last night, the opposite of a martini, and I just tossed and turned the entire night, couldn't sleep. And then I watched the game, and it bothered the hell out of me, and I was wondering what the guys were thinking. And when you get guys that are just as crushed as the coaching staff, you got the makeup of a good basketball team.

Q. How could you tell they were so crushed?

RICK PITINO: Because at our walkthrough, they were so



... when all is said, we're done.®

dialed in. They're not a group that asks a lot of questions. During the film they were asking a lot of questions. Once in a while we'll get one or two. It was about seven or eight questions last night on the film. The walkthrough was the best walkthrough we had all season, and I told the coaches it's going to be our night.

Q. Did you feel you learned a lot about this group today?

RICK PITINO: I did. They were totally focused in on scouting. A lot of guys, especially Europeans, don't understand the scouting. The scouting is so different than the pros because of the rules of the game. The pros, totally different in scouting. It's tendencies in pros. Match-ups, trying to create match-ups.

In college, you have to be ready for zones. Every underneath out-of-bounds play is tricky. And they were locked in tonight. This other team, they shot 37% from the field, 32%. We didn't turn the ball over tonight, only ten times. We did a lot of great things. We shared the basketball with a high number of assists. 19 assists. Thank you.

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