

# GEICO Players Era Men's Championship

Wednesday, November 26, 2025

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

MGM Grand Garden Arena

## St. John's Red Storm Coach Rick Pitino

### Postgame Press Conference



disappointing, going home 1-2. We'd like 2-1. So, a very disappointing trip. Gotta regroup against a very good Ole Miss team. We're 0-2 against the SEC.

**Q. Talked about the defense throughout the season. (Indiscernible). Do you see some of those defensive issues --**

RICK PITINO: This is a very average defensive team. They are not locked in like last year. Unless you're -- even Davon (phonetic), our guards rebounded. And this is not a locked-in defensive team because they're new to each other.

They're going to get it or they're going to continue losing. It's a matter of wanting to get it, wanting to be a great defensive team. If they do it, they'll get it. If not they won't and it'll be a long season.

**Q. How last night went, did you think that was the catalyst --**

RICK PITINO: I didn't think that Oziyah Sellers would go for 1-for-7, Dillon Mitchell 2-for-7, Bryce Hopkins 2-for-11. I didn't think that would happen. They were good shots, good looks. They didn't go down for us.

**Q. You said you didn't have time to prepare for Auburn. Was not knowing who you were going to play until 10:30 last night an issue?**

RICK PITINO: Yeah, but they didn't know either. So they didn't know. We had a chance to win the game. That's one of the weaknesses of this tournament is not knowing. But you're also getting a million dollars.

**Q. As far as stopping Pettiford [inaudible]?**

RICK PITINO: They made their free throws, they were 21 of 25. We're not a great defensive team. We're not. We're average at best. And we've got to become a good defensive team before we can become a great defensive team. That's something that takes a lot of buying in to every little fundamental defense, from blocking out on.

**Q. I thought they had the four-point [inaudible] didn't get the rebound?**

Auburn - 85, St. John's - 74

**Q. The last five minutes, up six --**

RICK PITINO: The big play was [inaudible] play. We just let them lob in for a layup and missed four free throws in a row. And the momentum swung. Basically overall, our upperclassmen just had a horrendous night shooting the basketball. [Inaudible] and fourth-year players. And we aren't going to win very many games shooting that type of percentage.

**Q. [Inaudible]?**

RICK PITINO: It was hamstringing.

**Q. [Inaudible]?**

RICK PITINO: I have no idea.

**Q. How much does it hurt now having [inaudible]?**

RICK PITINO: We played well without him last night. Again, it was the other guys [inaudible]. It was collectively a bad night by just about the entire senior class. Those nights happen. Auburn took advantage of it and they swung the game around.

**Q. Turnovers are a little atypical for you guys. What do you think is going on there?**

RICK PITINO: It's really not knowing scouting, not knowing they're a slap-down team. We didn't have a lot of time to prepare for them. We told them that they're a team that's going to just go attack the basketball. And this is not a great team with adhering to scouting with little time. And they had nine steals in the game, and that's not good.

We've got to get our assist-to-turnovers better. It's



RICK PITINO: Gotta block out just as much as the other guys. He's not blocking out like he should. They were more aggressive. They were a better team this night. Maybe another night we win but they were a better team this night.

**Q. With all the turnovers, what did you make of them?**

RICK PITINO: Not being prepared for their slap-down defense. Not creating the proper spacing. We are a big preparation team. We were not prepared for the slap-down.

**Q. [Inaudible] making a comeback from the early bad start --**

RICK PITINO: I think the addition of Sadiku, he's the one that spurred the comeback, with great play. The rest of the guys [inaudible]. That out-of-bounds play with five seconds to throw it in, get a layup. That's absurd.

**Q. Where I'm coming from, something out of bounds in the second half --**

RICK PITINO: Look, [inaudible] you're going to go play Ole Miss and Kentucky. If you look that easy, then you don't beat Ole Miss or Kentucky.

**Q. [Inaudible]?**

RICK PITINO: I think that the defense adjusts. I think we can't let this guy score 17 points. (Indiscernible) I think he forced the issue, spin dribbles, but he was trying to win doing the best he can.

**Q. What's your confidence level that this defense can get back?**

RICK PITINO: I just take it one day at a time. I don't buy into it. I take it one day at a time. I've been through this before. I never thought this was a great team from day one, defensively, but we have a lot of work to do on defense.

We can get there, but it's going to take a different mindset by someone like younger players that scoring is not the ultimate, that it's defense, we've got to buy into it. And we've got to make sure our assist-to-turnover ratio is much better.

**Q. There's a proposal out there for NCAA men's and women's to change the transfer portal --**

RICK PITINO: Listen, I'm 73 years old. I'm not worried about the future. That's for another coach, not for me.

**Q. You said a bunch of young guys, I guess you're talking about Joson mostly?**

RICK PITINO: No, I'm talking about all of them. No, not at all.

**Q. You said some of the younger guys.**

RICK PITINO: Some of the younger guys have to buy into the mindset, but some of the younger guys were [inaudible].

**Q. [Inaudible]?**

RICK PITINO: You ask me crystal ball questions, but I can't tell you something that doesn't make sense.

**Q. You have guys have been much better [inaudible]?**

RICK PITINO: Yeah, but I can't say whether we would have won. I don't have a crystal ball.

**Q. The way you guys do defensively especially --**

RICK PITINO: I think he has the ability to get other people shots on offense. But defensively, he's limited.

**Q. Did he come back in because of the emergency --**

RICK PITINO: [Inaudible], yeah.

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