

# NCAA Men's Frozen Four Semifinal: St. Cloud State vs Minnesota State

Thursday, April 8, 2021

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

PPG Paints Arena

## Minnesota State Mavericks Coach Mike Hastings

Postgame Media Conference



St. Cloud State - 5, Minnesota State - 4

MODERATOR: We have Coach Hastings with us here.  
Opening thoughts on the game?

COACH HASTINGS: Not a great start. A good middle of the game and not a great ending. I thought -- we discussed previously about trying to get off to a good start. And again I thought we were a little tight for whatever reason. But then again I think you've got to give credit to St. Cloud. They're a really good hockey team, well-coached.

They came out and took advantage of a couple of mistakes that we made. They scored a power-play goal early. But I didn't think we went away. And I think that says a lot about the group that was in our locker room.

And came back, ended up getting it tied, and actually get a lead. And we've had a pretty good year when we're playing with a lead. And so to see that evaporate and they make a push to get it tied up 4-4 and then make a play to score with 50-some seconds left. And we don't find a way to get a puck to the net and try and get it tied up.

So, heck of a hockey game, as far as both teams going and battling. There's peaks and valleys on both sides. And congratulations to St. Cloud State on moving to the national championship game. All the best to Brett, his staff, and to SCSU.

MODERATOR: Questions?

**Q. You've mentioned it a minute ago that you guys have been really good when you've had a lead, especially in the third period. Did you see anything today that made you a little tentative again to give them some chances?**

COACH HASTINGS: Well, on the tire, I thought, just watching it back, just in the locker room, we just lost body position. Puck was up a wall, they find a way to get it to the net. And you know what? Mistakes happen.

And after that, I didn't think so. We wrapped a puck really not under a lot of duress. And they find a way to get a puck back up to the point and make a really good play on a tip.

And we had some opportunities, I think, over that last four and a half minutes ourselves. They found a way to capitalize. I didn't think we backed off. I just thought that they made a play. And at that time of the game that's the difference.

**Q. Talk to us about what it was like when you talked to the players after the game.**

COACH HASTINGS: Hard. One thing you don't want to do as a coach is disappoint your players. And there's a group of upperclassmen in there and seniors that have helped pave the way for our program to get to where it's at today and they're very prideful individuals. They've done all the heavy lifting. And to walk in there and see them feeling the way that they do and you as a coach know you can't take that away, it's not a great feeling.

But, again, we're going to continue to move on from this. And I want that group to be proud, just like the alumni that are out there and the group that was here last year and the groups that have been before us.

And wounds heal. But they do take time. And so I'm just so proud of what that group has done for MSU, our hockey program, our community. And so that's a tough time to walk into a locker room like that and see guys hurting.

And you know what? It's an opportunity that we earned and now we've got to go back and take it for what it is, learn from it, and start building our process over.

**Q. You mentioned not a great start or whatever. Is that something maybe just the layoff. You had layoffs**



**other times this year. What got you going, or were you flat at the beginning?**

COACH HASTINGS: I wish I could explain it. And so I'll take responsibility for that. We've tried different things to remedy it. And again, when you look at the regional in Loveland, we didn't get off to a great start and found a way to win a hockey game. After not having a great start.

And tonight, I think you're always judged at the end, but we didn't throw the towel in. We kept -- we kept staying with the process, even though we had a poor start. I thought we had a fantastic second half of the game.

And again, when you have two evenly matched teams, a play at the end of the game can make a difference. And they found a way to do it and we didn't. And we've got, as much as it hurts, we've got to own the outcome. So when you're asking about the start, you know, it's something that we've addressed and tonight I thought we fought through it and got ourselves an opportunity to win a hockey game and just didn't find a way to get it done.

**Q. I know it didn't obviously end the way you wanted, but just talk about what this group did paving the way for MSU hockey, so far this year getting so far in the tournament.**

COACH HASTINGS: They wrote history. And last March, a year ago, when that group was on their journey, they didn't get an opportunity to write it. And so this group, I think, picked those pieces up as soon as we were able to and we started this season.

And the responsibility that they showed to actually get to this point where we were able to play, because of the pandemic and how they manage themselves away from the rink says a lot about them. And then finding a way to fight through adversity and win our first NCAA game and then win our first NCAA regional and get an opportunity to be on this stage.

I don't think I can give them enough credit for what they've done for our program. And we're going to remember it. And we're going to learn from this experience and hopefully it will prepare us better for the next opportunity that we have.

**Q. Could you just talk a little bit about what your leadership group did today to get you back in the game. You said on TV that you needed your seniors and upperclassmen to pick that up. What did they do from where it was 3-1 to get you back in the game?**

COACH HASTINGS: You look at it, Dallas Gerads and

Walker Duehr and Shane McMahan, a line that I thought had an impact on tonight's game to get us back into it.

They're guys that have been through a lot of battles. And I just think we needed somebody to give us a bit of a spark.

Now, I think that goes without saying. I thought Nathan Smith was outstanding throughout the entire game. His line. They found a way to get us back into it. And Nathan made some very special plays as an individual.

I thought the power play goal, the second one, was really -- I think you can hang that on his head. And we needed some other guys to step up. And those guys did. And gave us an opportunity to get it back and get a lead.

And again, we've been comfortable from playing in front, and tonight it came back to bite us.

**Q. Talk about Nathan Smith tonight and in this tournament. It just seems like he played such a role for you. Has he really come of age here on a big stage?**

COACH HASTINGS: The steps he made, I think, over the last few weeks are going to serve him well, because I thought that the maturity he showed not only in the production and goals he scored Nathan has been very good at distributing pucks making others around him better. I thought he really asserted himself with the puck and started to shoot a few more pucks to the net. And it just makes him a dual threat.

That and then the maturity away from the puck. He started to take a bit more pride, and that was him stepping up and doing it. And what happens in his own end. And I thought Nathan Smith was outstanding last regional and he was very impactful tonight. And I'm proud of the work that he's put into it and the responsibility that he has shown.

**Q. I'm just wondering, obviously you guys have been so good defensively this year. And a little bit of a tougher night tonight, was there anything that was or wasn't happening tonight that you think contributed to that?**

COACH HASTINGS: I think -- and again, guys, I'm replaying the game in my mind a little bit. I haven't had an opportunity to watch it. But what I can tell you is I thought there were some plays around the net where we didn't give Dryden McKay a lot of help. And usually our positioning of being inside people and not leaving open players on back doors. But I wanted to give credit to St. Cloud. They worked hard to get that positioning. They were rewarded for it, found ways to get pucks to the net.



The game of hockey is -- why I think it's so special is you've got to earn everything you get. And tonight they did that. We probably could have done a better job defending away from the puck and not letting them get to those areas.

But it's something that's been a strength of us throughout the season. And tonight it got a little bit away from us.

MODERATOR: Thank you.

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