

NCAA Men's Frozen Four: Quinnipiac vs Minnesota

Saturday, April 8, 2023

Tampa, Florida, USA

Amalie Arena

Minnesota Gophers Coach Bob Motzko Aaron Huglen Rhett Pitlik

Finals Postgame Media Conference



Quinnipiac - 3, Minnesota - 2 (OT)

COACH MOTZKO: First and foremost, congratulate Quinnipiac and Rand. It's his third trip to that game, and he does a heck of a job. And you tip your cap to Quinnipiac.

For us, that is -- we had it. We had it. That one's going to sting. That's a crusher.

Q. We know this is the last place you want to be right now. Can you just express your emotion right now going through the agony of defeat?

AARON HUGLEN: Like you said, the last place you want to be. Proud of our group and we played well tonight and all year. And it's tough to come up short.

RHETT PITLICK: I just think through this game it really showed how connected we were and just feelings of love for each other and connection. So I'm just really thankful to be a part of this group.

And just the level of God, any outcome, all glory to God. I'm thankful for this team and this group. We're all supporting each other, and lots of love.

Q. Quinnipiac limited your shots on goal in the third period. What the they do specifically during that period that made it hard to play offensively?

RHETT PITLICK: I mean, obviously they're a older, stronger group -- not necessarily group. I think our group is insanely strong. But obviously they shut down and they're a very systemized team. We stuck to our game plan. But it was just a tough game. It's hard to comment

on this right now. I'm sorry.

Q. Only one team can win the last game of the year. Win or lose, this is the last game that some of the guys on your team are going to play. Can you talk about the group you had this year? And, Rhett, you talked about how connected you were, how together you were. Just talk a bit about the guys.

AARON HUGLEN: We really did have a special group. Obviously with the talent we had, but it was much more than that, just a lot of really nice guys. And that's what makes it so tough. Like guys moving on. We really had a good nice group of guys.

RHETT PITLICK: Through this experience, I think it's only going to make our group stronger. Of course we would have loved to have come out with the win, but thank goodness something like that allows us to drive forward.

And for the guys moving on, I think it's going to allow them to have more motivation to become the great player that they're meant to be.

Q. Aaron, it's been said that frustration is a wasted emotion. But when there wasn't the ability to make some of the plays you made in the past, how do you think your team did controlling the emotion? And what did Quinnipiac do to kind of disrupt, I guess?

AARON HUGLEN: Quinnipiac, obviously they were coming out hot. Second and third period, they were making a push. And we did the best we could to keep it under control. But they're a good team and they played well, too.

Q. Aaron, what was said between the third period and overtime in the locker room? What was the message?

AARON HUGLEN: Just keep going. We were confident with where we were at. And we just wanted to keep playing how we were playing, and just didn't turn out.

Q. It appeared, I could be wrong, in the third period you were dumping and chasing to get behind them and

hanging a forward back so they wouldn't get an odd man rush. Was that the case?

COACH MOTZKO: Not by design. We changed our neutral zone in the second period, and it worked. We stopped their zone entry. They were making a push.

Tip your hat to Quinnipiac. They're very difficult. But we were in the right spot. Turned the puck over for one. Second one never should have went in. That was the unfortunate situation right there.

We had a chance. I'm crushed. We just have a wonderful group. The love in that room for that group, I'm just crushed for them and for all of us. Our fans were fantastic. We were in a good spot.

Q. You talked about how close this team was. But for you, you've obviously coached a lot of teams and players before. What would you say about this team and where it ranks?

COACH MOTZKO: I don't really rank teams. You know, I kind of got into it yesterday. When you get in this profession, you get so close to your players.

And the program I left, I had tremendous love for that program and all the players that came through. When you get older, they all played on the same team. I can't differentiate what year they were; they're all on the same team for me.

And this group was special for -- we had no hiccups all year. Like not one. We just went through the season, great leadership. You always had a little adversity. I don't think we had any. That doesn't happen very often.

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