

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Creighton vs Louisville

Thursday, March 20, 2025

Lexington, Kentucky, USA

Rupp Arena

Creighton Bluejays

Greg McDermott

Jackson McAndrew

Steven Ashworth

Jamiya Neal

Media Conference

Creighton 89, Louisville 75

GREG McDERMOTT: Obviously very proud of my team. Our execution was terrific. We beat an incredible team, and I couldn't have been more impressed with them in our preparation. We felt like we had to win the three-point line battle, so we did what we do to try to force them into twos, and if they were taking threes, they were going to be challenged.

And I think for the most part, we were able to do that. But they are hard to guard because they have so many weapons and Chucky, besides being an elite scorer himself, he sets other guys up. We felt in this game it couldn't be a game where he had 18 points and 14 assists. Only ten assists, under 30 baskets, that's how we tried to make them play, and fortunately, it worked.

But my guys did a great job, offensively, defensively, Jamiya was terrific, Jackson, big shots in the first half, and then Steven throughout the game running the show for us. It's a really gratifying win because of who we beat and how good I thought they were.

Q. Steven, I think after a couple of your threes, you made the motion for the crowd to settle down. How much did you feed off the environment you knew I guys were going to be facing today?

STEVEN ASHWORTH: Yeah, obviously it seems like it's been our third road game in neutral sites this postseason, playing in Madison Square Garden out on the East Coast



against UCONN and St. Johns, and here in Lexington, Kentucky against Louisville.

So we knew that there was some things in those other games that we could learn from, and personally, I felt like it was my job as the point guard to make sure that when they were going on runs, when the crowd tried to get into it, I tried to settle things down.

Some of that was either feeding Jamiya or finding underneath and a couple times it was me getting my own shot. It was one of those moments where you could feel the momentum trying to swing their way and just one of those things that you try to stop it.

Q. You had a huge game today, a lot of clutch shots. What was going through your head when you were hitting those that helped you get that momentum?

JAMIYA NEAL: Through the season, especially late shot clock, I had to be pretty aggressive. That was no different today. Just making the shots, I guess.

Q. Talk about Louisville and how you all defended them today, and Hepburn did get a few points, but you made him work hard for whatever he got and same thing with Edwards.

STEVEN ASHWORTH: Yeah, I think that coming into it, knowing that those two guys were their primarily ball handlers and really ran the show for them, and then you also had Smith that was coming off that ankle injury that added some different matchups for us, and the way they started the game shifted a few things, and just the responsibility to make sure that they were uncomfortable as they were handling the ball. And then at the same time, you have a four-time Defensive Player of the Year at the basket waiting for them. So really trying to funnel all of those lane line drives or base line drives off the three-point line and into Kalkbrenner, and he did a phenomenal job, as he always does, protecting the basket for us and making it difficult for them.

At the end of the other floor after he got stops, you kick it back to Jackson McAndrew, and he's going to knock it down.



Q. I think your wife and son got a good amount of face time. How many games has your son been to?

STEVEN ASHWORTH: He's been able to come to quite a few. A few are a little past his bed time but he was almost at every home game this year, and he loves the crowd noise. He loves the JumboTron. He loves the games. It's fun to have him out here in Kentucky, and it's something that not every college basketball player gets to do is play in front of their kids. It's been an honor.

Q. For Jamiya, how much did Steven and Jackson kind of open things up for you to really take charge, and keep things at a comfortable cushion in the second half?

JAMIYA NEAL: Well, those guys are knock down shooters. They space the floor for me. Obviously I'm a guy that I like to play in space and that's part of the reason why I picked to come to come to Creighton because I knew I would play with guys like Steven and Andrew, and the rest of the guys; and Kalk down there taking up space, and people don't want to leave him on the flip-ups, and leaves me a lot of opportunity to go out there and do my thing.

Q. Again, you guys hit four three-pointers in a row, and it was a three-point game and you dominated. Can you talk about that stretch and what you all did? Everything went in like a blur.

JAMIYA NEAL: Early on we had a lot of good looks that just weren't dropping, and during that stretch we got four great looks and we knocked them down. From there, we were just in a groove and we just fed off that.

JACKSON McANDREW: Yeah, we were making shots and all feeding off each other. There was a lot of energy in the ball and I thought that helped us a lot, also, getting stops on the other end and we were able to push it and get a lot of great looks.

Yeah, it was a lot of fun.

Q. Obviously this is your first time in March Madness playing a game like this. What was it like to be on a stage like that?

JACKSON McANDREW: It's been a dream of mine to be playing in March Madness ever since I started watching college basketball. It's a blessing to be here and a lot of credit to my teammates and Coach Mac for putting me in positions to get those shots and those looks, because they are all off of them. And so it was my time to step up and knock it down.

Q. You took the three nonshooters and forced them to shoot the ball. Was the scouting report to have them shoot the ball?

GREG McDERMOTT: It's a little tricky with Waterman because that's kind of been his reputation. But when they went small, we just felt until he made a couple, that the positives that we took by having Kalkbrenner back at the rim outweighed the fact that he might throw in a couple.

And then as the game went on and he hit a couple, we had to adjust a little bit. Teams have done that to us throughout the season, and we've had to adjust to it but we keep him back there in drop coverage.

In my opinion, he's one of the best in the country at that drop coverage because he's so intelligent, and does it without fouling and his verticality at the rim is really good.

If you haven't played against him, it's really hard to simulate if practice what he does because he's not leaving his feet every time and some shot-blockers, you shot fake them and they are gone. He picks and chooses his spots to leave his feet and when to wall up, and makes it difficult to score at the rim.

Q. How much easier does it make your job when you have got a point guard like Steven? This is the first time I've seen him live, and he's just a perpetual motion, and just seems to be in total control.

GREG McDERMOTT: Yeah, that's hard to prepare for, too, because you don't understand how hard he cuts and the change of direction and change of speed that he plays with.

And you know, besides being an elite shooter, he's a very willing passer. So he can beat you in a couple different ways.

So you know, you get to this point of the year and you see teams that you haven't seen before, and you think you kind of know what they are about, but until the game starts, you don't really get it.

So you know, you're going to be tired if you guard Steven Ashworth for 40 minutes, and he's in condition. He's been doing it every day. He's just been a godsend for our program. We lost Ryan Nembhard two years ago, decided to move on to Gonzaga, and we had a lot of pieces and we had to bring someone in that was going to fit. He's been an unbelievable fit. Just an absolute joy to coach every single day.

Q. You never trailed more than three points. What



was such a big factor into calming the crowd and the environment with the start that you guys had and asserting control in the first half?

GREG McDERMOTT: As I told the team before the game, the start of the game was really critical defensively. They scored on two of their first seven possessions, just to keep the crowd kind of at bay. I think Jamiya said it. We had four pretty good looks from the three-point line during that stretch and didn't make any of them.

But we were able to stay within arm's reach until we got that little run where we made four threes in a row, and we took it from 3 to 15 and then we traded baskets for the rest of the game.

As Steven mentioned, we just played in an unbelievable environment in New York. You play in Madison Square Garden against UConn and St. Johns, it prepares you for anything you're going to see in the NCAA Tournament. Our league has been terrific all year. We weren't great in November and December. But I think a lot of teams had new pieces, but I think by the end of the year, our league was playing pretty well and Xavier's win yesterday and our win today, I think that shows the BIG EAST pretty good.

Q. At what point did you realize that a water bottle had been chucked on the court?

GREG McDERMOTT: I felt a splash when it landed. I don't know what happened on the other end, and that led to the technical. But it ended up, obviously, a couple free free throws was nice at that point in time.

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