

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

Thursday, March 20, 2025

Lexington, Kentucky, USA

Rupp Arena

Louisville Cardinals

Pat Kelsey

J'Vonne Hadley

Jr. Terrence Edwards

Media Conference

Creighton 89, Louisville 75

PAT KELSEY: I'd like to congratulate Coach McDermott and Creighton. They played very well today. They were the better team today. Played in a very, very tough environment being right down the road from our school. Give them a lot of credit. Proud of our guys. It's been a long journey since June 5th when these guys first came together for summer school. Zero scouting report players.

Built the entire team in a very, very short amount of time. They meshed quickly. We asked them to love each other from day one and these guys went all in with everything they had with everything I asked them to do. For ten months and for the rest of my life and for the rest of my career, I'll remember this group as one of the most special groups that I've ever coached. I know they are savvy, they are veteran. They are smart, hard-working, dedicated.

Just been a special, special group. I told them in there, you know, it will hurt bad today. It will hurt for the next several days. It will hurt for a while. But when they eventually are able to have perspective and get above the trees on what they have done and what they have accomplished, they have done some special, special things.

Q. Whenever you saw the Reyne had fallen down and had gotten hurt, what was your reaction to that, and did you have a feeling that he wasn't 100 percent yet?

TERRENCE EDWARDS, JR.: Our heart goes out to Reyne. We knew he wasn't a hundred percent but what he did today is something I'll remember forever. He sacrificed



his body and put his body on the line tonight for us so we could try to come out with the win. He knew how much we needed him.

I'm his roommate in the hotel, and I see him, how much he's grinding in treatment. He never told me not once he wasn't okay. I always ask him, "Are you good? Are you sure you're good?"

And he always responded above the line. Always told me, even though I knew he was hurting -- yeah, I'm just so proud of him, and he'll get back right for sure. What he did for us today is something that will go a long way outside of basketball.

Q. Seems like at first Creighton commanded the paint and then had a barrage of threes. What were they doing to disrupt you guys defensively?

J'VONNE HADLEY: I would just say in the first half, we got a little bit frustrated. They were physical with us. We just couldn't get to our spots where we wanted to get to, and I think it kind of just frustrated us a little bit.

And you know, as a veteran core, a veteran group we definitely have to do a better job of keeping our cool and taking better shots because some of those bad shot we did take led to the transition because they have the big guy sitting down there getting those rebounds and kicking out for a transition three. Definitely as a veteran core we have to do a better job of just being sound.

Q. You guys have been playing against big teams, Stanford and Clemson and Duke. How did Creighton compare to that in terms of getting ready and the fight down there today?

J'VONNE HADLEY: Yeah, like you mentioned, we have played a couple bigs to his caliber with size and physicality. The thing that Creighton does a really good job of is surrounding him with really good shooters, and you know, they exploited us in our transition.

So you know, they were getting their shots up and they were hitting tonight. And you know, while having a big center like him on the inside is kind of a really good mix, and tonight, they were, you know, hitting those threes.



They were the better team tonight.

Q. What were they showing you that you had not seen on film all season, and how will this season be remembered for the games before this and this game?

TERRENCE EDWARDS, JR.: I can say all the games kind from the beginning. The adversity we faced early in the year with losses, and some of our key players go down in the year. And this team just rallied together and never had an excuse of anything. We went to practice and it was no excuse and it was the next-man-up mentality. I've never been part of nothing like that.

And I'm walking away from this with a good attitude and the things that Coach PK brought to me in my life is going to help me be a better father, and moving forward, I know I'm fine going to this pro thing because of all the adversity that I've faced this year and my life is just going to make me better?

J'VONNE HADLEY: I would say Creighton is nothing we haven't really seen. We've seen bigs to his caliber, Stanford big, and the physicality with Cal. Creighton is nothing we haven't really seen. We let them get open looks tonight, and they knocked them down. So Creighton, just that's credit to them. They were knocking down shots tonight.

Q. When do you think you guys will fully appreciate what you've done for the program to bring the program back to where it's expected?

TERRENCE EDWARDS, JR.: It's going to take time for sure. We didn't finish how we really wanted and feel like we worked for more. We've just got to take a couple days off and get with family or whatever, like what anybody do after the season.

Like he said, we've got vets that's been through this before. It might take a week, a month, you just never know, just depending, because this was just something special. It's hard to just shove it off and move on to something that's next.

J'VONNE HADLEY: It's definitely going to take a little bit of time. But right away one thing that we really can appreciate without a doubt is just our fan base. Just I've never seen a send-off like that. I mean, just at our hotel we have a couple thousand of our fans waiting there to send us off to our first March Madness game. That's next level. I've never seen that. I'm not sure any other team has, either. That's just a credit to our amazing fan base.

We definitely appreciate that and want to make sure we

show our gratitude to our amazing fan base. They showed up tonight at Rupp Arena. It hurts our hearts that we could not come out with a win for you guys.

Q. I know you touched on this a little bit in your opening statement but just what this team meant, not only to the foundation of this program, but just the special group of guys, what do you think this did for what you want to set the foundation and build upon it for the future of Cardinal Basketball?

PAT KELSEY: Yeah, it hurts really bad when it ends, and it end so abruptly. You prepare so hard. You work so hard every day. You never think it's going to end. And when it ends, it's really, really hard. When you're looking at those guys in the locker room, and they are distraught, emotional, this flood of emotions comes through you, too, and you just start thinking back to all the stuff you've been through with this group.

And you know, you realize how special it's been and how special they are. We have the best fan base in the country, and in my opinion, it's not even close. You saw, they packed this arena tonight. There were thousands of fans at our hotel before we left, and they have really, really rallied around this special group of young men.

I hate it for our fans. I hate it for our fan base that we weren't able to get it done today. These guys wanted so bad to give these fans what they deserve, and that's to put Louisville in the national spotlight in the national tournament, advancing in the national tournament. We just came up a little short tonight. The disappointment of today is not going to take away from the special season they had, but like we said earlier, it's going to hurt for a while.

Q. Can you talk us through the situation there at the end of the game? You seemed to be frustrated. What led to the technical and what were you displeased within that moment?

PAT KELSEY: I got frustrated and said something I shouldn't have said and he teed me up, you know. Far less than an ideal time to get technical, I realize that.

So it is what it is.

Q. Tremendous year, you carried yourself with grace and integrity, and I just loved it. I appreciate you being a Cardinal. Continue doing what you're doing.

PAT KELSEY: Well, that means a lot coming from a legend like you. We talk about the great fan base we have but this history we have this crazy. I mean, you're part of a National Championship. We have All-Americans galore.



I came in as this kind of outsider that nobody really knew who I was, and to get a compliment like that from one of our former greats, means the world to me. So thank you. These guys worked their butts off every single day to make you guys proud. Thank you.

Q. It went from 3 to 15 in the first half, and the rest, I don't want to say they dominated but they were pretty comfortable. Everything they threw up in that stretch just went in, four straight threes. Obviously you knew they could do something like that.

PAT KELSEY: That was a huge stretch. I know it was early in the game but that was a 12-0 barrage that we, at the end of the day, struggled to recover from. They got them in a bunch of different ways, but I think first and foremost it started with transition. They binge score, as I like to call it. We tell our guys, like you can be on transition for five, six, seven minutes, and you relax for one second, and ball gets out of the net or off the rim, gets in their hands, pitch ahead, they get threes. When they missed them, they were getting second shots and got a couple kick-out threes, as well.

That was a big stretch. Our guys continued to battle. They are a very good team. They are very well-coached. They have one of the best centers in the country. They have a terrific point guard. Big kid. I always say numbers, this isn't a disrespect, but I always say if we were playing the '96 Bulls, I would say 23 for Chicago but 11 is a load. Makes you make some really, really tough decisions on what you're doing with pick-and-rolls, because he's one of the best lob threats in the country, and the shooting that they have around him forces you to make tough decisions.

We were trying to drop the pick-and-roll and fight over the top and really be physical with the roll, and they were screening us and really turning the corner and getting to the rim. So the adjustment we made was start trying to be aggressive with the pick-and-roll and hedge more. No. 1 is a surgeon; he can really pick you apart. If you stay in the low position to take away the roll, he does a good job of throwing back and finding shooters. They got loose a couple times.

But our guys continued to fight. We cut it to ten or 12, whatever it was, when the knucklehead head coach got technical, that didn't help.

But again, give them a lot of credit. They were the better team today.

Q. Coach, if you could, I know you say this is a no-excuse program, but you lose players, when you

think back, all the adversity is that this team faced, does it make it special what you guys were able to do this year?

PAT KELSEY: All I can think about right now is that loss and it hurts really, really bad. I wanted it so bad. Our players wanted it so bad. Our fan base wanted it so bad. They answered the call. There was so much red there. There was so much passion. There was so much noise.

All I can feel right now is just that, and it hurts really, really bad. There will come a time when we will look back and you kind of appreciate it a little bit more. But now is not the time. We've got a bunch of hurting guys in the locker room. We have some guys that will never put on a jersey again ever again. We have some guys that will go on and play professionally.

I really like to think, and maybe this sounds cliché and coach speak, but I really mean it. I think being a part of this journey for the last ten months, even if those guys were only in a Louisville uniform for one year, genuinely learned life lessons that are going to make them better in every facet of their life moving forward, and that's something I'm passionate about and something my staff is passionate about.

Q. You guys did a pretty quick job of putting together an impressive roster before the season started, finding the right transfers and making sure that you found the guys that could love each other. Moving forward, with some of those guys moving on, can you speak about your roster build for next year?

PAT KELSEY: Right now is not the time.

We're excited about what we have coming back. We'll do a great job in recruiting, and in the transfer portal, and put a great team together that's going to compete for a championship. I have all the confidence in the world that that is going to happen.

That's not for this press conference. Just not for right now.

Q. Chucky had a really big first half. What were they doing defensively in the second so that he couldn't get involved?

PAT KELSEY: You're a Cincinnati Bengals beat writer, right? Big fan.

So their defensive scheme is based around putting one of the best rim protectors in the country at the rim, and he doesn't move much. What they try to do is really funnel everything to him, whether it's an off-ball screen or whether



it's a ball screen. It's like, they just play on top of you and force you to go there.

In new age basketball analytics, the mid-range shot is one of the lower percentage shots in the game. Although No. 5 for them defied all human nature when it comes to basketball metrics today because that young man was shooting it in from the mid-range, and I give him a ton of credit. Tip the cap. He had an amazing game. I mean, he had 29, 12, six assists, and many of them were tough, tough shots.

I would say that about Creighton overall, too. Every time that we got a little momentum, it was like a dagger shot, whether it was No. 11's deep three, whether it was No. 1's three from, like, seems like from, I don't know, another county down the road. That was a big, big one.

And No. 5 was hitting tough dagger middies that every time you turned around, you're like, gosh.

They have a lot of movement on offense. Chucky exert a lot of energy chasing No. 1 around. He never stops moving and neither does Chucky, either. That was a really, really good matchup and a good battle.

Tried to do a little bit better job with our ball movement, people movement the second half, because in the first half it was much more dribble, dribble because we were setting middle pick-and-rolls, and they were forcing us down to the giant. And we were attacking him, getting some middies and getting some at the rim.

So I thought we did a better job and our percentages reflected better in the second half of having more fluidity and movement and cutting and screening to our offense.

Q. What was your thought process when you saw that water bottle was thrown on the court towards Creighton's team?

PAT KELSEY: I didn't see it to be honest with you. I just had gotten the technical and I'm talking to my team and they kept cleaning something up at the other end and I was like, what the crap is going on, and somebody said, throw a water bottle on the court. It's unfortunate. You know, it happened.

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