

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Grambling State vs Purdue

Friday, March 22, 2024

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Gainbridge Fieldhouse

Grambling State Tigers

Donte' Jackson

Tra'Michael Moton

Kintavious Dozier

Media Conference

Purdue 78, Grambling 50.

DONTE' JACKSON: Tough game tonight. My hats off to Coach Painter. Does a phenomenal job with the Boilermakers. I knew they would be super ready to play tonight, and I knew they would come out of the half and be ready to compete after we kind of kept it close.

Man, hats off to Zach Edey, man. Just an incredible player. That was the difference.

Q. What did you tell your team after the game?

DONTE' JACKSON: I just let them know there's nothing they need to hang their heads about. This has been a great season for us. The unfortunate thing about it is there's only one team happy at the end, and that's probably going to be the national champions. We hope we just lost to the national champions tonight at the end of the day.

But I told them this has been a historic year for them. Win the SWAC regular season title, win the SWAC tournament title, win the First Four play-in game. For a low to mid major, that's all you can ask for. You can't ask for much and then you go play one of the best teams in the country and you put up a good fight for about 20 minutes. After that, life kicked in.

Q. Kintavious and Tra'Michael, have you ever seen anybody like Zach Edey?

TRA'MICHAEL MOTON: No.

KINTAVIOUS DOZIER: I don't think nobody has seen



anything like Zach Edey. That's kind of unreal. What they say he is on paper, he's exactly that.

TRA'MICHAEL MOTON: Yeah, he's a big dude. It was kind of hard trying to get shots up on him.

Q. What would you say to other teams that have to play Purdue during this tournament?

DONTE' JACKSON: I would tell them to figure out how they're going to handle Zach Edey, and the reality of the situation is I hope you're equipped for it. We're just not equipped to play -- we don't see Zach Edey. We don't see anyone as physical or as dominant as him.

The tough part about it is that when you run two people at him, then he's good enough to kick it out for threes, and it's one of them things that you've got to pick your poison, and hopefully you've got enough bigs that can kind of battle with him and have enough fouls to give and hope he's having a bad free-throw shooting night.

Q. It was 31-27 with a couple minutes to go in the half. What was running through your mind then?

TRA'MICHAEL MOTON: Same thing run that through our mind in the beginning of the game. We can do this. We know we're going to fight and we ain't never going to give up.

KINTAVIOUS DOZIER: Just a lot of hope, man. We fought as hard as we could.

Q. From being in the First Four and being in this atmosphere and arena, playing a team like Purdue, what was this experience like over the three days?

DONTE' JACKSON: The experience has been amazing. For us, it's the first time in my career that I've been to a Division I NCAA Tournament. I've been to Division II NCAA Tournaments, but I haven't been to the Division I NCAA Tournament, and to actually get here and get a win in the First Four in a really, really intense game and make it to the next site, it's been an amazing run.



Like I told our guys, this is something you can cherish for the rest of your life because this doesn't happen for everybody.

Q. Secondly, there's been a lot of conversation about potentially either expansion or potentially replacing some of the low to mid majors with power conference teams. What would that do for teams like yourselves and other low conference squads who are automatic qualifiers, who maybe get squeezed in a potential scenario such as that?

DONTE' JACKSON: I think that's a tough situation because I think you take the beauty of the NCAA Tournament out. Look at last year with FDU. If you replace some of the smaller schools, then you don't -- you kind of lose that Cinderella story. Either with the fact of I look at the NIT, you replace a lot of the -- what is it, the regular season title holders and you replace them with teams that don't really have great records or didn't have a great season and then you've even got teams opting out, opting not to play. At the end of the day reward the guys that worked for it and give our student-athletes something to look forward to, because the reality is the big schools get a lot to look forward to.

Q. Y'all were the first team, obviously northeast Louisiana, to make the tournament since ULM and they lost to Wake Forest in '96. Having a team go to the tournament from north Louisiana, what does it do for high school basketball throughout the region?

DONTE' JACKSON: You know, for us in northeast Louisiana, it's a good brand of basketball that's being played. From us winning our regular season title to LA Tech have been a great year, Northwestern had a solid year and ULM had a solid year. I just think it helps the brand of basketball in the area and just lets everybody know that there's very competitive basketball going on within our region.

Q. After the play-in game you were very complimentary towards Purdue and Coach Painter. Talk a little bit about Coach Painter and what he's built and how he's been trying to help so many other schools help build up their programs, too?

DONTE' JACKSON: I had a chance to have a brief conversation with Coach Painter before the game. I just told him, hey, Coach, man, you run some great stuff and I'm always stealing from you. Then he turns around to tell me, hey, don't worry about it because I'm stealing from somebody else. He was like, that's what the best coaches do.

Even walking off he just said, hey, you're a hell of a coach, man, keep working at it, keep doing what you're doing. Coach Painter has been -- from a couple years ago I met him at the Florida clinic and we were -- it was kind of an invite-only clinic type deal for coaches at the University of Florida. Just an incredible guy. Take you under a wing, give you advice, talk to you about all different type of things.

I have nothing but the utmost respect for Coach Painter and the program he built here at Purdue. It's, in my opinion, one of the top 10 programs in the country year in and year out. Coach Painter is one of those guys that you look up to and that you want to emulate when you're talking about coaching.

Q. Being a Shreveport guy, putting the area on a national stage with the many performances you've had in the SWAC championship game and up to this point, what did it mean to put the area and you being responsible for the area on the map?

TRA'MICHAEL MOTON: It means a lot. I know came out, did my best, and I know I made the city proud.

Q. What's it been like to represent Grambling on a national stage and to get that victory that put you in the game like you were in today and to give the opportunity to show the world what Grambling is and what you're all about, just what that means to you.

KINTAVIOUS DOZIER: It means a lot, man, especially with this group of guys. We've been through a lot this season with each other, and just to see our hard work pay off, it's unbelievable. It's a one to one feeling.

DONTE' JACKSON: It means everything for me to represent Grambling, to come up here. It was a dream for me to be here, coach Division I basketball. This is where my opportunity came at.

You just want to come out here, do your best for everybody that you're representing. The Gram family has been highly supportive and just want to come out here and showcase our basketball and make sure people are proud of us.

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