

# NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Colorado vs Marquette

Sunday, March 24, 2024

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Gainbridge Fieldhouse

## Colorado Buffaloes

## Tad Boyle

## Tristan da Silva

## KJ Simpson

## Luke O'Brien

### Media Conference

Marquette 81, Colorado 77

TAD BOYLE: Well, another good game in March. Unfortunately we came up on the short end of it tonight, unlike the other night. But give Marquette credit. They played well.

We didn't have much of an answer for them defensively all night. I would just say that when a team shoots 61 percent against you for the game, almost 62 percent, and you've still got a chance at the end, it means you're doing something right.

For this team, what that means to me is they've been competing their tails off the whole year because you don't give up 61 percent and stay in a game. But we rebounded the ball well, we fought, we battled, we just came up a little bit short.

I thought we had our chances at the end. Had some good looks, didn't go in. It's disappointing. But I've got a lot of respect for Marquette. They're a hell of a team, hell of a program. But I love this team, I love these guys. I love those guys in that locker room. They've got nothing to hang their heads about. They competed their tails off, not just here in Indianapolis but in Dayton the other night, in the Pac-12 tournament, since basically the middle of February.

Great year, 26 wins. Something to be proud of.

**Q. What was the talk at halftime? Obviously you're**



**down 11 but came out red hot and made a game of it. Within two minutes --**

TRISTAN DA SILVA: Yeah, I mean, we knew we weren't playing our best game. It kind of felt like we were supposed to be down 20 or 25 the way we were playing. We kind of had a sense or had a feeling that it was in our hands to kind of turn this game around, and we had all the confidence to come out in the second half and battle the way we did.

KJ SIMPSON: The talk was pretty much just we've been in this position before. It's nothing new to us. We just have to go out there and keep doing what we do. Credit to Marquette; they were hitting almost everything it seemed like. But you look up and you're only down 11 when it feels like you're down a lot more, like Tristan said.

We just all had the mentality of I'm not giving up. We've done that throughout the whole year. We've shown that throughout the whole year. That was just the mindset, that we can go out there and we can still come back and never give up and never give up on the effort.

We did that, we just came up short.

LUKE O'BRIEN: Yeah, what they said. It was just basically there was no panic at halftime. We knew we were missing a couple shots that usually go in, and we just say we've got to come out aggressive, and we did that.

Obviously we fell short in the end, but really proud of how we came out that second half.

**Q. Tad, what makes Tyler Kolek so hard to account for, and what difference did he make in the second half when he got rolling?**

TAD BOYLE: I thought he was terrific all game, not just the second half. He's very crafty. He doesn't make a lot of mistakes. I was surprised when I was looking at the stat sheet that he had six turnovers. It didn't seem like he turned it over at all. He made a couple bad decisions, but he makes the right decision in ball screens almost every time. Not every time but almost every time.



He's a dual threat because he can really get to that left hand. He was 4-for-4 at halftime and every one of them was to his left hand and that was part of our game plan was to try to take that left hand away. He's very good at getting back to it, they're very good at changing angles on the screens.

But he's a terrific player. You appreciate him on film, then you appreciate him with his numbers, but then you play against him, and you're like, holy cow, that kid is special. He's a good player.

**Q. KJ played I think all but four seconds in that game. How big was he for y'all, getting y'all back into that game in the second half?**

TAD BOYLE: KJ has been like that all year. He's the ultimate competitor. I wouldn't trade KJ Simpson for any point guard in America. Tyler is a hell of a player. There's no doubt about it. But what KJ has done for us defensively, offensively, leadership-wise, the growth that he's shown from his freshman year to now his junior year has been phenomenal.

I've sung KJ's praises all year long. I'll continue to do it because he's a hell of a player, and I told him in the locker room after the game, I'll go to war with him every day of the week, twice on Sundays, because he's a special player.

To me, Tyler Kolek is an All-American but KJ Simpson is, too. Just look at his numbers.

**Q. Tad, you've said for years all you can hope for is an opportunity. You got it to get in the First Four. You had opportunities down the stretch. Is this one that's going to come back and sting you, or is this something you can more be proud of, the fact that you guys won 25 games and fought through this game?**

TAD BOYLE: It's a combination of both. You can be proud of your guys and still -- like, ah, this was a great opportunity that we let slip away because we gave ourselves chances. Again, I told our team in the locker room after the game, we had chances to win that game. Had good looks, good wide-open looks, just didn't make them. Sometimes that happens. Sometimes basketball becomes a make-miss game.

I just keep going back to the 62 percent field goal percentage defense. And again, credit Marquette, they run their stuff, they run it with pace. They've got good players. They've got good one-on-one players, and they've got good actions that they run.

Our guys competed, and the way they came out in the second half, you saw it, we've done that before. We've come -- we were down 16 at -- USC came back and won. We were down to a really, really good Marquette team tonight, came back and took the lead twice, but we couldn't ever string together enough stops to really -- when we took the lead to expand on it.

But we had looks. We had looks. That's all you can ask for as a coach and as players.

Again, I'm proud of these guys. Their competitive spirit and effort is second to none.

**Q. Tad, it seemed like this season kind of presented some unique challenges for you. You had the preseason expectations. You had the injuries. It wasn't like it was just one guy going down and you adjust. It was this guy is out, then that guy is out, then you managed to get hot at the end to get here. From your vantage, in your career, what were maybe some of the unique challenges for you to keep this team on the right track and obviously finish the way you did?**

TAD BOYLE: Well, I think injuries are part of the game. Everybody has got them. Some schools, some programs have more of them than others based on the year. So that's part of it. We never use it as an excuse.

We've had injuries before. A lot of times they've been season-ending injuries. But this year we didn't have -- other than RJ, which was unfortunate, early there in the season, we lost him for the year, but everybody else when they were out, they were just out for periods of time, sometimes three, four, five games, whatever the case might be.

But to answer your question, how do you overcome that, it's guys like this. It's the leadership. It's the no-excuse mentality that these players played with all season long.

Part of the pride that I have in this year's team, in winning 26 games, is overcoming the things that we had to overcome as a group. Not just individually. The individuals who got injured and came back and had to rehab, but the guys that didn't, that were around for -- and had to pick up the slack for some of these guys when they were out. That's what a team does. That's why I love this team.

A guy like Ruf didn't play tonight but he was a critical part of our team this year at certain junctures. I just use him as an example. But I love these guys, but it's a no-excuse mentality, and the leadership from guys like Luke O'Brien and KJ Simpson and Tristan da Silva that kept this team

afloat when things got tough.

**Q. When your guys defend as well as they could on the perimeter and Chase Ross still knocks down a three-point shot, what's your reaction to something like that, that you did everything you could and a guy like that just hits a shot like that?**

TAD BOYLE: Yeah, look, it's tough. Players make plays, and I thought Ross coming off the bench -- because Jones got in foul trouble, and Ross was, to me, the key for Marquette in terms of the way he played coming off the bench, just looking, 5-for-6 from the field, 2-for-2 from three. Cody was tagging on that play, and he made a really good contest, just the kid made a shot.

Sometimes good offense can beat good defense on a given possession, and we understand that. The way you react to that is, hey, good defense, come down, have a great offensive possession. But we had way too many breakdowns defensively in the first half and the second half that we gave them some opportunities that, again, we could have prevented.

Our guys battled, but we just weren't consistent enough on that side of the ball. We scored enough points to win this game. You score 77 points in an NCAA Tournament game, you can win. We scored 60 and won the other night, but we weren't good enough offensively.

But Marquette had a lot to do with that. They're very, very talented and very good.

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