

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Colorado State vs Maryland

Sunday, March 23, 2025

Seattle, Washington, USA

Climate Pledge Arena

Colorado State Rams

Niko Medved

Nique Clifford

Bowen Born

Jalen Lake

Media Conference



They give me more probably than I give them. Just being around this group every day, it's made me a better coach, it's made me a better person, and I just can't thank 'em enough for this experience.

It hurts, but I know as time goes by, this group will realize more what they accomplished this year and I'm just so proud of 'em.

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Obviously this is your last college game tonight. I don't know if you can put it into words what you're feeling right now, but if you can, just try.

JALEN LAKE: Yeah, I can't even put it into words. I mean, this has been the best four years of my life, honestly, and I wouldn't be standing here, first, without God, and then I wouldn't be standing here without Coach Medved, just the belief he's had in me since I was a freshman. I mean, yeah, I just wish I could wear Colorado State for the rest of my life. I mean, it means that much to me. It's amazing how much I've grown not only as a basketball player, but just as a man.

BOWEN BORN: It's hard, I guess, to explain the emotions that you're feeling right now. I just feel removed from, you know, this game itself, just very thankful, very appreciative of my time here at CSU. These coaches and these guys and everybody in the locker room has made a really positive impact on me, and I just feel -- yeah, I feel very thankful for my time here at CSU.

NIQUE CLIFFORD: Yeah, similar to what they said. Just my time here at CSU has gone by so fast, two years. I wish I was there even longer. It was just the best time of my life. I really can't thank Coach Medved and the rest of the staff enough for what they have done for me. They really changed my life and I'm just so thankful for them.

And my teammates, it was just a fun run that we were able to go on this year, and just the adversity we went through to see where we are now is special. So it's sad that it ended that way and that's the way our college careers are going to end, but we can't hang our heads. We got to soak it all in and keep moving forward.

Maryland - 72, Colorado State - 71

THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and get started with an opening statement from Coach and then take questions for the student-athletes.

NIKO MEDVED: I mean, obviously, it was just an absolutely gut-wrenching loss for these guys. And you know, unfortunately, when you're the man in the arena and you put yourself out there and you compete at this level and you give everything you have to something, you can experience this. You experience the highs of hoisting up a championship trophy. What these guys have done this year is really one of the most incredible things I've been a part of coaching and unfortunately things happen too.

I thought we did just about everything right in this game. It was an unbelievable college basketball game. Both teams going at it, trying to fight to go to the Sweet 16. These guys made a lot of plays. I thought we defended that last play pretty well. It's about all we could ask for, and he made a freaking unbelievable shot. That's what happens in March Madness and sometimes you're on their side of it and sometimes you're on ours.

There's nothing I'm going to say to these guys to make 'em feel better. What I will say is, listen, I've had -- man, I've had as much fun and joy coaching this group as any group I've ever been a part of, and they just keep giving us more. As a coach, you always hope that your players really learn something life-changing being a part of your program. But you know what I learned from this is they teach me more.



THE MODERATOR: Nique Clifford broke the single-season scoring record tonight for Colorado State.

Next question, please.

Q. Jalen, that shot could have gone down as a shot of the tournament if DQ didn't come through. Still it was clutch in the moment. Just can you tell me what it felt like when that went through and just kind of how you view that moment now that you guys have come up short.

JALEN LAKE: Yeah, I mean, we had drew the play up for Nique and he found me right on the wing, and then, yeah, that shot went in. It felt great to see that go in. But just wish there wasn't time left on the clock. But yeah, it was awesome in the moment.

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll excuse the student-athletes and we'll take questions for Coach.

Q. How hard is that given everything this team's been through and got through at that point to see that game-winner go in for them?

NIKO MEDVED: I don't know that I can put it into words. It's just gut-wrenching. It's just a season you never want to end. It's just been an incredible ride and it goes by so fast. I'm still kind of like, man, you know -- again, I felt like we did pretty much everything right to give ourselves a chance. It's gut-wrenching. And, again, time will go by, but I know from being apart of this game as long as I have, that you're going to be on both sides of these. You just are. That's just part of it. You're going to be on both sides of these.

This was on the biggest stage. Again, it was an unbelievable college basketball game, high level. And Queen's a great player and he made a great shot. But, yeah, it hurts. I mean, there was a ton on the line and obviously would have been pretty massive had that shot rimmed out.

Q. In the previous conference, Coach Willard said CSU is one of the best teams Maryland has played all year. How do you hold kind of the good and the bad when it comes to a game like this?

NIKO MEDVED: You know, I appreciate him saying that. I think by the end of this season here, we were pretty dang good. You know what I mean? We were a pretty dang good team. I think we proved that every night. Again, our guys came in this game and I thought we played -- man, we battled defensively. We out-rebounded this team by

10. We fought, we moved the ball. Maybe just a couple more shots, right, go in.

I'm not surprised that we battled the way we did. I believe that we would. I believed we were going to win. And those guys did too, and that's the way that they played. But unfortunately that's the way it goes sometimes.

Q. Take us through the final timeout there after Jalen hits the three. What were you guys expecting and kind of was there any thought of sending a double at Derik? I know Nique kind of comes over at the end, but just how did you approach that play?

NIKO MEDVED: Well, we're up one, right, so obviously you can't just play three-point field goal defense, you got to play defense. We wanted to switch everything if they came together. There's really, there's no opportunity to double there. They ran through, they just ripped and he just caught it and put his head down on an iso. Again, I mean, I thought we extended the catch outside the three, he caught it and drove it, he was driving left, I thought we angled him off, forced him going left off the wrong foot, step back from whatever it was, made it. It's a heck of a shot. I don't really know what else you do to defend that. Hindsight's 20/20, if you knew exactly what it was going to be we would have done something. But again, I had no beef how we defended that. He just made a great shot.

Q. I think there was a time and a day when that would have been a travel at the end of the game. I wonder how you feel about that.

NIKO MEDVED: I haven't seen the video yet. It's going to be hard for me to watch. I'm sure I will at some point. I don't know. I don't know. Maybe it was, maybe it wasn't. But it doesn't matter, they didn't call one (laughing). So whether it was or wasn't, they didn't call one and they never go back and change the call. But again, he made a really difficult shot, guys. I mean, he made a really, really difficult shot and they just made one more play than we did.

Q. Nique mentioned that this isn't the way he wanted the run to end. But here we are, five games into the post-season, playing on one of the biggest stages in college basketball, is this something they're still going to remember?

NIKO MEDVED: Oh, I mean this is something that they're going to remember for the rest of their life. This is something that no one will ever be able to take away from this team and what they accomplished this year. People who know our story and program story, it's going to go down as one of the best seasons ever for what they did.

You never want it to end. When you're in this mode and the mojo's so good and you love coming in every day and working with each other and being together, those moments don't happen all the time and you never want it to end. So it's hard to process right now, but when they look back on it, this team will have an unbreakable bond with each other for the rest of their life. And I know this, they learned so many valuable life lessons through all of this and what it means. That's what it's about as a coach, man. And I stand by what I said today, they taught me just as much, you know what I mean. And again, just an incredible journey, and they should be very, very proud.

Q. You guys obviously proved you can hang with some of the best teams in the country, you were right there. When you look at the lower seeds for the most part in this tournament it's gone pretty chalk. Do you feel like with the shift in the college sports landscape, NIL and all that stuff, it's going to be harder and harder for the lower seeds to make runs or is it just one of those years?

NIKO MEDVED: That's a great question. I mean, if I'm being honest, it's probably a little bit of both. Sometimes years happen the way that they are and all that stuff like that. But, yeah, it's getting more difficult. I think what's changed in college basketball is there's not as many old Mid Major teams as there used to be all the time. Where you got guys who played together for two, three, four years at the Mid Major level. There's not as much of that. Because older guys who played together really are pretty good. So I think there's some of that, but sometimes it's just the way the year goes, you know what I mean, people win. And so again I think it's hard to generalize, but the honest answer is it's probably a little bit of both.

Q. Things obviously move very quickly in college basketball, how much will you just take tonight to kind of sit back and reminisce on this year with the guys and just kind of the run you've been on as a whole with this program the last seven years.

NIKO MEDVED: That's what we'll do. We're going to fly back tonight, and it's going to be a hard plane flight. But, yeah, I mean, I think everything happens so fast. It happens so fast in our world and in our business here. Sometimes you do, you know, just take tonight to really let it reflect and, again, it's been an incredible ride with this group.

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