

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Duquesne vs BYU

Thursday, March 21, 2024

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

CHI Health Center

Duquesne Dukes

Coach Keith Dambrot

Jakub Necas

Jimmy Clark III

Dae Dae Grant

Media Conference

Duquesne - 71, BYU - 67

THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon. The victorious Duquesne Dukes are with us. On the dais we have head coach Keith Dambrot, Dae Dae Grant, Jimmy Clark III, and Jakub Necas. After an opening statement by the head coach, we'll go to questions.

Keith, please.

KEITH DAMBROT: Good pronunciation.

I think the score pretty much says exactly why we won. That's a very high scoring team, and we knew that we had to play into the 60s, low 60s, mid 60s, and not much higher than it was for us to win. That's just not the way we win.

I will say this. If you watch them play, back-cuts, slips, all of those, we eliminated them all. The only thing they beat us with was 1-on-1 and at the 3-line some. They didn't get any easy ones. We made them work for everything they got.

Just a tribute to our guys. It's a tribute to our league. Teams like Davidson, VCU, Richmond kind of prepared us for this because they do a lot of similar things, and the great coaches in our league got us prepared for this game.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

Q. I'm going to go to Jakub first. Jakub, first NCAA Tournament game for all of you. As a freshman, you



get a career high in points, rebounds, and blocks. What was going on that you just had such a great game? And then I have a follow-up as well.

JAKUB NECAS: I mean, I just tried to -- I felt like I had good momentum. In the tournament, I'm just trying to keep going, just play basketball and enjoy every moment because nobody expected us to be here.

So we're going to show our best, and I want to just, you know, be best for myself and for my team. I'm trying to help as much as I can.

Q. What's the experience been like? And did you expect to have the kind of performance you've had today?

JAKUB NECAS: I don't really expect it. I'm just starting from the defensive side every time. And for me, offense kind of like goes from my defensive side. So I try to get energy from the defensive side, from the blocks, from the rebounds also. When I'm open, I'm trying to shoot and just make good shots. That's all.

Q. Coach, I have written in my notes Duquesne had done all the little things right today. I look at the end of the box score, 19 points off turnovers, 28 in the paint, 23 defensive boards translating into just 9 second-chance points for BYU. How important were the fundamentals today for your group in order to do everything right to get this victory?

KEITH DAMBROT: Well, we weren't going to win a finesse game. They're very, very finesse-ful. We've really improved with our ball movement, our sharing of the ball, our understanding of how to win.

I think the little -- I don't know what it was, little scuffle at the beginning of the second half kind of showed everything about what we're about. We're going to compete at a very high level in a very clean way, but we're going to compete and make people earn every inch of the court.

It's clear, my dad kind of taught me years ago, that, hey, if you don't play great defense, you're not going to be a good team. And so I've kind of used that throughout my whole career, and these guys really bought into it.



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Q. Felt like at every moment in this game, when BYU made a run, your group were able to finish the first half by 8. BYU down 1, able to go up 54-51. Free throw made it 55-51. How important were those particular moments in the game, whether it was a time-out to calm everyone down or whether the group just needing one another? How important were those moments in the game?

KEITH DAMBROT: Well, when you start the Atlantic 10 0-5 and lose a lot of heartbreakers and people kind of count you out, if you look at our last eight weeks or so, we've been in a million of these things.

So I thought we did an unbelievable job of taking their punches and punching back. They wobbled us for sure. We were wobbly-legged. We had a cut under our eye, over our eye, but we just kept fighting back.

We just made enough plays. Again, nothing has come easy for this group. We've had to do it the hard way. We were running uphill all year, just trying to get to .500 in the league. We win at George Mason and VCU, win a squeaker against George Washington, and then played pretty good basketball in the A-10 tourney. Certainly we were tested in that as well. The more times you're put in those positions, the more you respond.

It also says a lot about how tough a guys these guys are. Like Dae Dae, I'm from Ohio, so I know where he's from. He's from a tough area, tough guy. Jimmy Clark, nothing's come easy for him. Jakub's a pro. Everybody asks why Jakub played so well. The reason is he puts time in every single day.

These guys will tell you, him and Matúš are the first ones in the gym every single day, an hour ahead of time. He didn't shoot well most of the season. When you put time in and have that kind of ability, good things are going to happen.

Q. Jakub, how comfortable have you become embracing that 5 and being that force? To both of you, what has it been like seeing him and Fousseyni do that dirty work? It was a huge difference today.

DAE DAE GRANT: First off, just high appreciation to him and Fousseyni, because if you don't have that on your team, you don't see that type of tenacity and fight, it's hard to gain that just out of yourself. So you see that, you see your brother doing that on the floor, that makes you want to even go harder the next play and the rest of the game.

So just kudos and big thanks to them and appreciation to them because it's a blessing to have them on your team.

That's one of the main reasons we're winning.

JIMMY CLARK III: I'd have to say the same. Just seeing these guys come in every day, put that time in. Always told them that even when they wasn't getting what they wanted at the beginning of the season, or we all as a group wasn't getting what we wanted, these guys stuck through it and did it every single day. Every single day. And it's showing up today.

JAKUB NECAS: I just felt like when I'm playing 4, 5 with Fouss, I need to help my teammate. I just felt like that I am like helping the position when Coach give me the opportunity. So I'm trying to give my best, basically. So that's all. Just be tough.

Q. Going into this game, Jakub, your career high minutes was 20. You hit nearly a half hour. How did you prepare for this moment? And, Coach, did you plan on or expect him having such an increased role today?

JAKUB NECAS: I was kind of tired after -- in the end, to be honest. I felt like I don't really prepare for these type of games from day to day. I just was putting work out, working out every day, basically, and that's how I get to the shape like that, and I could play 30 minutes. That's all.

KEITH DAMBROT: So, you know, really Jakub shouldn't be able to play 30 minutes. I thought he got a little tired today. But he didn't get a lot of playing time throughout the season.

But, again, if you ever watch him work out, I've never seen a guy work out as hard as he does. So he's prepared for this. He's a professional. He's been around professional teams. He knows what it takes to be a winner.

And you add that to Fousseyni, who is an absolute beast. Man, he's the most competitive -- I mean, that guy alone, just competing, and then he's been to the Elite Eight. He helped the rest of our guys get ready for this thing.

Nobody is going to out-compete Fousseyni. I'm just proud of how all our guys have adapted. Like Jimmy and Dae Dae are really the main reasons that we've won because they've made sacrifices in their game for us to win, and I don't think we could have done that without them.

Q. Dae Dae and Jimmy, you've been with Coach now for a couple of years. Yesterday, Jake DiMichele said him retiring was a little more incentive for you guys to win today. How gratifying was it to get that for Coach knowing what you've been through with him over the last couple years?



DAE DAE GRANT: It's very gratifying and just exciting. It's a blessing and high appreciation to be under Coach's wing and be here for a couple years and be under the legacy, learn so much. Build that love and relationship means a lot. We're trying to keep it going. We're not satisfied.

JIMMY CLARK III: I'll have to say the same. It's definitely a blessing playing for Coach. He gave me an opportunity along with other guys. Just learning so much from him, day in and day out, whether that's with basketball or in life. So I feel like those things helped us come together more and built this team together.

KEITH DAMBROT: They just won't let me retire, man. I'm trying to retire. We keep winning games, they'll make me an old man.

Q. Keith, yesterday you talked about BYU's toughness, and said you wanted your guys not to back down from that. How do you feel you did in that regard, and what factor did that maybe play in you guys winning the game?

KEITH DAMBROT: I think it's the only factor. Our toughness level was high level. We stressed with them in order not to have dips in the game, you have to communicate at the highest level that we ever have. And I thought, you know, guys were getting bloodied on both sides. It was a tough game.

They're super physical. Like people think all they talk about with them is their 3-point shooting. But they're super physical. They hold. They grab. They play very similarly to us. They're big and strong.

And, you know, we just -- we got out of the gates good, which was important for us. We've been down 14-2 in games too and come back and won.

I think the biggest thing is our toughness is on display, and if you're a tough team, both mentally and physically, you have a chance to win. I think these guys' toughness over the year has really improved, which has made us a good basketball team.

Q. Jimmy, yesterday you told me you wanted to show today that you could guard some of the best players and the best teams in the league -- or in the nation, I should say. They have seven guys that averaged 9 or more. You held three of them under those averages. I'm sure you'd have wanted the other four. Can you walk us through your defense? Are you happy with your performance today?

JIMMY CLARK III: Defensively, I'll say yes, you know, with the help of my teammates, you know, them talking to me, telling me to be in the right positions.

And then with my natural ability on defense, I feel like that's going to help me every time. So I feel like I did show that today.

KEITH DAMBROT: Pittsburgh Stealer.

JIMMY CLARK III: Definitely.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, thank you for your time today. Good luck in your next game Saturday.

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