

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

Thursday, March 21, 2024

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

CHI Health Center

BYU Cougars

Coach Mark Pope

Spencer Johnson

Jaxson Robinson

Media Conference

Duquesne - 71, BYU - 67

THE MODERATOR: BYU is next. Head coach Mark Pope, Spencer Johnson, and Jaxson Robinson. We'll take a statement from Coach Pope.

MARK POPE: Tons of congratulations to Duquesne. They are on a great run, and they earned the win. Certainly fought like crazy and earned the win. So congratulations to them.

Just a devastating day for us for sure. It's devastating because we lost. It's devastating because we won't move on. And mostly it's devastating because we don't get to get in the gym together again.

So major congratulations to Duquesne. And so proud of my guys. This is incredibly painful. But I know how this goes. It will dissipate to some degree and will be replaced with an insane amount of gratitude for these guys sitting here, what they've dedicated to each other and to BYU, and the things that they were able to accomplish this year.

And that will stay with us forever.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

Q. This question is for anybody. Spence, what prevented you guys from being yourselves today, especially early on?

SPENCER JOHNSON: I don't know. I don't know. Do you have a good answer for that? It's just kind of how the game went. I don't know. I felt like we did a good job of



battling back and we put ourselves in some good situations, and then we hurt ourselves sometimes. Yeah.

Q. Jaxson, the start of both halves were your undoing. I don't need to tell you that. But why do you think you guys come out so slow out of both halves?

JAXSON ROBINSON: I mean, I'm not really sure what the answer is to that. I think it's something that we've as a team, not just the coaches, but the players, have, like, reiterated over the season, trying to get better at it. It's unfortunate we couldn't start the game how we wanted to. That's all I have to say about that.

Q. After you made the nice run, Jaxson, down the stretch, I don't think you got any shots the last four or five minutes. Did they just take it away from you, or what was going on there?

JAXSON ROBINSON: Just playing within the offense, taking whatever the defense gives me. My teammates were finding me open shots. Dallin did a great job of just being a facilitator. He's been there all season for us.

Q. Mark, what was your message to the guys in the locker room after? Can you share that with us?

MARK POPE: Not a lot. It's a terrible time. Just seeing the locker room universally devastated, and there's nothing to do to fix it, and there's not another game to go make it better.

And so just very briefly expressed, you know, how much I love these guys and how grateful I am for them and everything that they've done for each other this year and grateful for the ride that they've taken us all on.

And it's been beyond incredible, and just profoundly sad that it's over.

Q. Mark, was it something about the stage that was maybe too big for the guys that caused them to come out tight?

MARK POPE: I don't think so. You know, I mean, you think about the environments these guys have played in throughout the year, and it's a lot of credit to Duquesne.



I mean, they are playing great, and they played great. And they played themselves, and they were really, really physical, and kind of punched us in the mouth early.

And, you know, our guys battled back and responded and it turned into a terrific, you know, NCAA Tournament game, and we came out on the short end of it. But not for lack of togetherness or effort or competitiveness or trying or poise. We just -- we just lost.

Q. You have a relatively young roster. I know nothing is guaranteed in this sport. But maybe the resolve this program has to try to get back here next year.

MARK POPE: We understand what a multi-year process it is. From year one last year to year two was epic growth and progression.

I think our program is hungry to continue getting better. We've made massive strides in that area. And at some point, you know, we'll be progressing in this tournament, and Jaxson and Spencer will be a big part of that because they opened the door to this first season in the Big 12.

Q. Jax and Spencer, for you, Jax, if it was your last game, what's it meant to be at BYU and this experience? And, Spencer, your thoughts for your last game.

JAXSON ROBINSON: Speaking specifically for this dude right here, I mean, he's my brother. He's the ultimate leader. He's led this team the whole season. And we wouldn't want anybody else to do it. I can speak for everybody in the locker room when I say that.

And, I mean, Coach Pope has been a great coach. He's helped me so much, mentored me. I couldn't be here without him. He took a chance on me, and I'm forever in debt for that.

This loss sucks. Like Coach Pope said, want to be back here next year. I'm already thinking about it. But.

MARK POPE: We can make that happen right now.

SPENCER JOHNSON: For me, it's been an absolute dream to be able to play here for four years. To see the growth that we've taken as a program, as individuals. It's been incredible. So grateful to everybody, our administration, our athletic directors, coaches, Coach Pope and his entire staff. So awesome.

They have taken all of us kind of from spots in our lives where things weren't going super great, you know, for

whatever reason, whether that be in life or in basketball, and they've given us a chance and a new place and an opportunity to go and take a new future.

To watch all of us grow through the course of this year and through the course of these four years that I've been here is -- there's no words for it. But it's been incredible. So grateful.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, gentlemen. Best of luck in all your futures.

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