

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Nevada vs Dayton

Thursday, March 21, 2024

Salt Lake City, Utah, USA

Delta Center

Nevada Wolf Pack
Coach Steve Alford
Jarod Lucas
Kenan Blackshear

Media Conference

Dayton 63, Nevada 60

THE MODERATOR: We are joined on the podium by Nevada.

We'll open up with an opening statement from Coach.

STEVE ALFORD: Yeah, congratulations to Dayton. I thought they outplayed us in the first seven of the game and the last seven of the game. Up 17 with seven to go, we get beat 24-4. Great credit to them. They battled. They competed.

Appreciate the effort that our seniors have given us. They've had a lot to do with our winning, our regular seasons the last two seasons, which have been outstanding. These two guys have done a lot. It's unfortunate we weren't able to do anything in the post-season. It's the brutality of March Madness. We say that all the time.

Really, really poor offense the last seven minutes, very poor defense. When you do that on this stage, you're probably not going to win very many games. That's really what happened tonight.

I thought in the middle of that, I thought we played really good basketball. Hunter obviously is hurt, not a part of this. He was another senior who has really battled through a lot of injuries. He and Kenan and Jarod have had so much to do with the 48 wins that we've gotten over the last two years.

They're great individuals, great young men. Very much



appreciate the efforts and the work that they put into it. I know they're going to have very bright futures, bright careers in basketball and outside of basketball. They've meant an awful lot to our program.

Great credit to them for getting us to this point over the last two years because they put in a lot of work.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions for our student-athletes.

Q. What was it about the game that produced those runs? You had some big runs. They had a big run. What was it about the game that had that back and forth?

JAROD LUCAS: They're a good team. They outplayed us down the stretch.

KENAN BLACKSHEAR: Just March Madness basketball really. It was just electric in there. I'll never forget this. It's crazy.

Q. Jarod, obviously this is not how you wanted to see your career come to an end in Nevada. What are the emotions and feelings you're going through right now?

JAROD LUCAS: Hard to really speak on it right now. Yeah, it's been amazing.

Q. Kenan, in your words, what do you think happened in the last seven minutes?

KENAN BLACKSHEAR: Just a meltdown really. Can't really put it into words really. I take responsibility for it. It's on me.

Q. People watching the game at home seemed annoyed that the net didn't let the ball come through. As you were playing, does that disrupt anything at all? Does it matter?

KENAN BLACKSHEAR: No, it don't really matter. It's basketball at the end of the day. We played on many nets. It was similar nets like that growing up, so it happens.



Q. Jarod, I'm sure it's hard to remember what happened during the 24-4 run. From what you saw on the floor, what do you think happened?

JAROD LUCAS: They played better down the stretch. We didn't do what we were supposed to do.

THE MODERATOR: We'll excuse our student-athletes and continue with questions for Coach Alford.

Q. When you came into the tournament, you said that March -- I don't recall the exact word, it can be brutal. How do you put it in your own words?

STEVE ALFORD: Yeah, we didn't play very good basketball the last seven minutes. When that happens, this can be the result.

I thought we did a lot of good things after we settled down to start the game. I thought we really played good basketball, had a really good flow. From that seven-minute mark on, it just steamrolled the other direction. We couldn't get a stop and we couldn't get a basket. When that happens...

We had some crazy turnovers, two guys take the ball out of bounds, makes no sense. We had a DHO that was a reverse handoff, which I have no idea. We threw the ball in the backcourt. We just did some things that were a little bit out of character, and it just steamrolled from there.

Q. I know you briefly touched on the two guys siting next to you, this senior class. It's hard to speak about what they've done. Could you give more context, what this group has meant to you?

STEVE ALFORD: Yeah, they've been outstanding. They've been leaders on the court, leaders off the court. They've done a great job, classroom, otherwise. That senior class, and others, the whole team. But that senior class has had an enormous amount of success, and they've done a tremendous job of building this the way we want it built.

It's unfortunate that it's got to end like this. Again, that's what this tournament is. We just didn't do enough good things down the stretch. But doesn't take away from what the two that were up here and Hunter have meant to this program and will mean to this program.

Q. You played in a tough league. Had a great finish in the league. Is an ending like that the last thing you expect to see?

STEVE ALFORD: Yeah, I mean, I don't think I expected to see a 24-4 turnaround. For the majority of the game, we were handling the game, so I wasn't expecting it. I know Dayton is very good. They're very explosive because they can make threes. We did a really good job of defending the three ball. The three line was defended extremely well until the last six minutes, then they made everything. We didn't defend it very well. We didn't handle their runs. We called timeouts as much as we could.

We had zero flow to us offensively. Didn't like what we did offensively at all. Then defensively we got no stops. I mean, first-four minute game, we held them to four; second four-minute game, four; third four-minute game, six. And then it went 11, 13. If you're going to give up 11 and 13 in the last two four-minute games, stuff like this can happen.

Q. Was there a side to going up 17 that almost hurt your team, got a little bit relaxed? Do you feel guys were feeling like they were just going to cruise, got caught by surprise?

STEVE ALFORD: No, I have no idea. That's a player's question. I'm a former player. No, I want to go up 17. I don't want to go up 14. I'd like to have been up 17, 20, 25.

From that timeout on, we didn't play good basketball. Like I said, we did uncharacteristic things. We didn't rotate the way we got to rotate defensively. We had breakdowns defensively. I thought offensively we were brutal in that time.

Brutal offense, brutal defense in an eight-minute NCAA game is probably not going to result in a very good finish, and it didn't for us tonight.

Hats off to Dayton. They played extremely well that last seven minutes.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach.

STEVE ALFORD: Thanks so much.

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