

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Dayton vs Arizona

Saturday, March 23, 2024

Salt Lake City, Utah, USA

Delta Center

Dayton Flyers

Coach Anthony Grant

Koby Brea

DaRon Holmes II

Kobe Elvis

Media Conference

Arizona - 78, Dayton - 68

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by coach Anthony Grant, junior Bard Koby Brea, junior guard DaRon Holmes II, and junior guard Kobe Elvis. We'll start with an opening statement by Coach Grant.

ANTHONY GRANT: Proud of our group. These guys did an unbelievable job all season, staying together, growing, putting us in a position where we had a chance to experience this together. This has been the goal for this group, for these guys, for the last three years that they've been together. So to get a chance to experience this, we're grateful for the opportunity.

Obviously, we're disappointed with the loss today. Like I told them, to me, we ran out of time. More than anything else, these guys never quit, they never gave up. We battled all the way to the end, and it's my honor to have a chance to coach them. I'm extremely proud of them. Just got nothing but love for our group.

Q. With Arizona getting out to the early lead and you guys having that stretch in the first half, where you missed 15 of 17 shots, did it kind of force you into doing the press sooner than you wanted to, or did you feel like that the timing was still pretty good on that to try to chip away at the deficit?

DARON HOLMES II: They just had a run. It's a game of runs, and we put the press on them. It was working. So we just did what we did. Credit to them. That's a great



team. But it wasn't really anything we haven't seen before. We just did what we did.

KOBE ELVIS: Yeah, I think we came out initially wanting to press. We weren't as aggressive as we wanted to be at the start, and ultimately, when we started with the pressure, we had some success. I think we did good in that area.

KOBY BREA: Just like they said, I think we were just giving them different looks and see what was working, and I think when we got into that press, I don't think they handled the pressure too well. It worked in our favor, and we got on a run of our own. It was just, you know, hard to maintain, and I guess they figured some things out.

Q. For each of you, what are you going to remember about this season? How would you sum it up?

DARON HOLMES II: Man, everything. All the moments. The wins, losses, getting here to March is something we've dreamed of, especially for the city of Dayton. It's been a minute. Especially getting the win in March.

So that's really what we're going to remember, all the times together, overseas, everything.

KOBY BREA: I agree with him. This is at the top of my list, being in this tournament and being able to compete in this kind of environment with my brothers, my family. I feel like it's a big accomplishment for us and for the university and the whole community of Dayton, because we know that they're behind us. So just unbelievably blessed opportunity.

KOBE ELVIS: I definitely agree with the both of them. I think the thing that's most memorable about the season is just where we all started in the summer to be here now, like the feeling is surreal. I'm still, like, really excited. Like I'm still ready to go right now. I'm still eager and just blessed and happy that we finally got here.

Q. For all three of you, and you may have answered this already, where does this team get this fight? Where does this -- game after game, where does that



come from?

DARON HOLMES II: That's just our culture. That's just what we do. We play hard, we practice hard. We go out there and compete. We love each other. We play for each other. That's what happens when you work hard.

KOBY BREA: I agree with him. I feel like it's a love that we have for each other. That's what keeps us going. The love we have around the room for our coaches and everybody wants to do it for each other. It's not necessarily about yourself. It's more about the people that you're doing it for. And we know that when we're in that locker room, it's a family in there and we're doing it all for each other.

KOBE ELVIS: Just all the sacrifices for sure. A lot of us have not played as much this year. All the sacrifices that everybody put for each other is amazing.

THE MODERATOR: We will excuse our student-athletes. Congratulations on your season, gentlemen.

We'll open up for questions for Coach Grant. We'll start front right here.

Q. Coach Grant, first of all, congratulations on an incredible season for you guys. Just talk about what it came down to today because you guys fought back, cut it to four points. The stat sheet looks just about even, aside from the bench point outscoring 23-2 today.

But aside from that, what did this game come down to for you guys?

ANTHONY GRANT: I thought it started back and forth, it was competitive to start, and I thought, you know, their pressure to start the game was disruptive. We were trying to run offense, and we had a difficult time running offense.

Obviously, in order to press and to play the style of play, you've got to score, and we struggled to score there. We had to figure some things out. Once we figured some things out, it started to go in our favor. We were able to cut a 15-point deficit to 7 at half with the shot to make it 4.

So we felt good going into the half. I think we figured out the way we needed to play the game. In the second half, we cut it to a 3-point game with about 12 to play, and then they went on a 14-2 run to open it back up from about the 12-minute mark to right under the 7-minute mark where we left some things on the table.

We got some good looks, we got free throws. We weren't

able to make the plays. That's basketball. Sometimes it doesn't go in your favor. I thought the run there gave them a little breathing room, made it more comfortable for them.

Some things just -- the basketball just didn't go our way today, and we needed them to go our way to put us in position. Our guys fought. They stayed together all the way through the end. That's a really talented team, a team that spent a lot of time this year, number one in the country.

So some of the things that our guys were able to do, they made some great adjustments. Their staff did a great job of going small. I thought that that really kind of helped them when they went smaller. We had to adjust and do some things differently on both sides of the ball. I think that was a part of the run they went on.

Credit to them, their players, and their staff.

Q. Coach, Enoch Cheeks played a great game today and helped establish your full court press. His points per game have gone down from last season to this season. In what areas have you seen him grow throughout the season?

ANTHONY GRANT: The thing with Cheeks, he's going to do whatever he can to help the team. He's all about the team. This is his first year in our program. He transferred from Robert Morris. His Willingness to accept the role we had from him, his role changed from the beginning of the season, with Malachi Smith going down and then late in the season Javon Bennett goes down, and we asked him to change his role.

He's been one of the best defenders in our league, one of the best defenders in the country, and he didn't get credit for it. We always ask him to take the toughest assignment, and he does a great job of being disruptive. He's one of the best I've been around. I think he's done a wonderful job for us this year.

Q. Anthony, you've coached a lot of teams at different schools, at UD, several teams. You're an alum. What stands out about this team? What will you remember most about this group?

ANTHONY GRANT: Well, I think for this group, we're in an era where there's a lot of changes in college athletics, the way that it's been done for a long time. It's different now with the transfer portal, with the combination of the transfer portal and NIL and some of the things that go on, just in the business when it comes to retention of guys and what guys play for and how they do it.



So for this group of guys that have been with us for a while, that have stayed true to our culture, our identity, and what we're about, and then to be able to bring in some guys that were new to us but not new to college basketball, for those guys to buy in and accept the older guys, the guys that have been around, accept their leadership and buy into that.

And then the group of young guys, maybe some of the young guys didn't get a chance to play a lot. They're new to college basketball. Their willingness to buy in and accept what we did. The walk-ons.

To me, just the experience of this group coming together and the willingness of them to sacrifice for each other, like I've said a bunch of times, the willingness to allow the sum to be greater than the individual parts, man, that's what team is all about.

That's what I love about college athletics. That's what I love about working with young people, is trying to put a team together and having them buy into something bigger than themselves.

This team did that. We had to grow through some stuff. When Malachi went down, we had to figure some things out. When we had some adversity early in the year, in terms of losing and trying to figure out what was going to give us the best chance to be successful, we had to figure some things out. We had to handle prosperity when we went on the streak of however many games in a row that we won.

Now the prosperity comes with being ranked in the country and having to handle that and sustain that throughout the A-10, just the gauntlet of taking everybody's best shot because of Dayton and because of the number in front of their name and being able to handle that and staying together with that through the successes, through the adversity.

Sometimes, even when you're winning, you go through stuff, winning mass and stuff. This team, they figured some things out this year. They figured some things about themselves and about each other to get to this point.

I remember the all of it. I remember the all of it. Like I said, I'm proud of this group. You asked the question of them, what is it about this team? I think it's the stock they come from. It's the stock they come from.

We've got great young men. It's their love for each other. It's their pride in putting on that Dayton uniform. They know what it means. They know what came before them. They know what they represent. So I remember the all of

it.

Q. When you look back to the first half, Caleb Love got five of Arizona's first ten baskets, but then he only had one basket the remainder of the game after that point. What did you guys do defensively to really adjust to him and lock him out?

ANTHONY GRANT: To be honest, we wanted to make it hard for all them. They've got a really talented group. It's not just Caleb Love. They have some talented guys. We wanted to make it hard for them.

Early in the game, they're one of the fastest teams in the country, and they're terrific in transition and broken floors. He got away from us a few times early, and we know how talented of a guy he is. You can't give him space.

I thought we made it harder for him. We made them have to work for what they got. They were able to -- some other guys were able to step up and make some big-time shots and big plays against the press, against our half court defense.

They've got a really talented team. Like I said, they were on the 1 line for a while. They were No. 1 in the country for a while. They've got depth, they've got size, they've got skill.

We just wanted to make it hard for all of them. I thought the big guy inside hurt us early. We had a tough time trying to get him under control. But we were able to make some adjustments.

Like I said, give them credit. They made an adjustment at the end that helped kind of give them some breathing room and open it up a little bit.

Unfortunately, we weren't able to make some plays down the stretch that I think could have changed some things in that last four minutes or so, had we been able to make a few plays right before that and right after that.

We were right there. I thought had we made those plays, could have been a little different down the stretch.

Q. What does the future look like for this group and how do you approach the off-season? Some guys have decisions to make.

ANTHONY GRANT: Right now, we're going to get these guys back to the hotel. We're going to make plans to get back to town, and that's about all I know right now. That's about as far as I can see.

Q. DaRon, maybe his last game. He has a decision to make. Do you think he's ready for the next level?

ANTHONY GRANT: Yeah. I'm 100 percent behind whatever decision DaRon and his family makes, man. That guy's been a joy to coach. I wish I could have him for another five years, another ten years.

People ask me -- I get calls from NBA teams and scouts who ask me, Is he as good a kid as it seems? Like just when you read about him, when you listen to him.

Yeah, he is, man. He's about all the right stuff. He's all about team. He's all about hard work. He's all about character. He's all about caring for other people. So whatever is best for him, I'm on that train. Sign me up. Whatever's best for him.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach. Appreciate your time. Congratulations on your season.

ANTHONY GRANT: Thank you.

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