

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

Thursday, March 20, 2025

Denver, Colorado, USA

Ball Arena

VCU Rams

Coach Ryan Odom

Zeb Jackson

Jack Clark

Media Conference

BYU 80, VCU 71

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by VCU. Coach?

RYAN ODOM: I thought we got off to a decent start. Midway through that first half, it was kind of back and forth. The guys were playing pretty well on offense and defense. Thought we were generating some quality looks.

Jack in particular was getting inside the defense, kicking it back out. We needed him to do that.

Certainly a key time in the game was the last three minutes, 30 seconds, somewhere in there, where I think four minutes is a one-point game, something like that. We had four really bad offensive plays. I think we had three turnovers right in a row. We had a couple of breakdowns on defense.

What ended up being a one-possession game turned into 11 points or 9 points, whatever it was. We tried to get a two-for-one there at the end. Joe got a good look with 40-some seconds in the corner over there. Just didn't go in. Had that gone down, maybe would have felt a little bit better going into halftime.

But that's what happens in these games. The runs are so important. You have to minimize the runs. I think they led for eight and change, we led for seven and change in the first half. That certainly ended up being a difference maker there.

They obviously went on a run in the second half to get it to 20. Our guys fought back, tried to make a game of it. Got



it to 10. Then obviously an unfortunate play there to get it back to over 10.

But proud of these guys. Proud of the season that they've had. They brought a lot of joy to a lot of people in Richmond and beyond, CU folks. They certainly brought a tremendous amount of joy to our coaching staff and administration. 28 wins. We can talk about this game all we want, doesn't feel good, but the season that these guys had was really impressive.

Really playing elimination basketball from January on. There was a lot of pressure with that. These guys were competing, certainly with George Mason who had an awesome year in our league as well, for the title. We were able to get a share of that.

Then to win the conference tournament in a pressure situation like that, it takes special kids with tremendous character, and a connected group in order to do that. Really proud of everybody in the locker room that has spent countless hours to help this team become the best that it can be.

Like I said, credit to BYU. They played very well today. Made enough plays to be able to hold us off.

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

Q. Zeb, this is your senior year. What do you want the people of Richmond to know as you're exiting VCU's basketball program?

ZEB JACKSON: It is my third year here. I just want them to know that each year has been super special. Each year I've been surrounded by a group of guys and a group of coaches that have helped me grow in every single way.

Their support has just been amazing. Yeah, I just think this has been like the most fun I've had, for sure. This year was definitely extremely special with the group of guys and the coaches that we had. I loved every single moment I spent with them.

Q. Jack, it seems like this group has truly loved competing with one another. How do you put into



words the relationships you have built and how that will stay with you?

JACK CLARK: I mean, 100%. I mean, these are my brothers on and off the court. We just love to go to battle for each other. We hang out off the court or like we did today, go to battle with each other. Three wins in a row to win the conference championship, it's amazing.

I'm going to cherish these friendships, not only my teammates but the coaches, as well. It's been a great year, not only for me but my teammates. It's been a great year.

THE MODERATOR: We'll dismiss the student-athletes at this time. Thank you, guys.

Questions for Coach Odom.

Q. They ended up with a 38-20 edge in the paint.

RYAN ODOM: They did a really nice job of getting it inside the paint off the bounce. Certainly they do a good job of what we call punches. They'll pass it into that big. They put us into some tough spots. That's why we started trying to trap the ball screen a little bit in the second half.

They did a nice job of clearing out that side and still getting it to Traore in there. They just made timely offensive plays in and around the rim.

Obviously when you play against BYU, that is a tendency to worry about the three-point shooting. Certainly they made some in the first half. Then the second half it was just kind of they were on the glass on us. That's where a lot of the baskets came from, tipping it, getting an extra.

All of a sudden there's a foul. You can see the foul discrepancy. They were 19-20 -- my eyes are bad -- 28. We're 4-6. It's hard to keep up when you're in that situation. Not saying anything about fouls, no fouls. It's just they impose their will on the game and did a nice job.

Q. Throughout this entire season, you've had a lot of ups and downs. Could you give an overall message of how you felt the season went in its entirety. I know you don't have too much time to think about it.

RYAN ODOM: I did right after the game in talking to the team. I kind of said it in my opening statement.

This team has given me personally, everybody involved in our program, a tremendous amount of joy this year. Limited distractions. Collective focus. Determination to improve. They would come in every single day and laugh.

I talked to them about the amount of laughs that we had over the course of the season.

Every team that we're fortunate enough to coach or be a part of has one life to live. This team lived a great life. The seniors had a lot to do with that, the upperclassmen, the two that transferred in, the three that stayed and finished it out here. They brought championships. They brought fun times. They brought exciting plays. They brought character. They did their job in school. The group had a 3.29 GPA in the first semester.

Just a lot to be proud of. I'm certainly blessed to have been a part of it, to coach these guys.

Q. Obviously your name has come up quite a bit in other jobs. Are you open to those conversations? Have you had any yet?

RYAN ODOM: I'm happy to answer any questions about the game or this team or anything. I'm not going to answer any questions about that. Thank you.

Q. Do you have any kind of comment that you want to say to the people of Richmond about this team this year?

RYAN ODOM: Yeah. We just want to thank everybody for their support. I mean, we talked about that after the game, the joy that they brought us. You have to play well in order to get fans to really engage with you and be a part of it.

Certainly VCU has had a tremendous tradition and will continue to have a tremendous tradition over the years. The connection between Ram Nation, The Peppas, everybody that is a vital part of making VCU basketball what it is, it gave us a ton of joy. They gave us a lift.

We talked about after the game what DC was like, playing in DC, being able to cut down the nets together, the confetti is falling, you have the chance of VCU going on. The Peppas are playing 'Devil Went Down to Georgia'. Okay, this is a pretty cool moment here (smiling).

I'm thankful to be at a place where people care so much. It's not like that at every place. Clearly BYU has it. They care about their place. VCU care about their place. We're thankful for that.

Q. Aside from the last four minutes of the first half, first four minutes of the second half, this was a close game. What did you see in those sequences that enabled them to create separation?

RYAN ODOM: The turnovers got us. We had a few



turnovers there, empty possessions. In a game like this against a stellar team, can't afford to have those. Unfortunately the way that we finished it, it just didn't go well down the stretch of that half. It began to separate even more at the beginning of that second half.

I think we scored first possession, then they answered right away. So if you're going to try to get back in the game, we needed to go on a run. We did. We got it back down to 10. I don't know what's number was. But we got it back to 10.

This team has done that all year. We were talking about that at the timeouts. It's like don't put it past us to go on a 17-2 run. We have to have the look of that right now.

They began to snap out of it and really compete a lot harder down the stretch. Certainly when you make some shots, that can give you a little bit of energy.

But you got to give credit to BYU. They played a very good game.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you for your time, coach.

RYAN ODOM: Thanks, guys.

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