

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Yale vs San Diego State

Sunday, March 24, 2024

Spokane, Washington, USA

Spokane Veterans Memorial Arena

Yale Bulldogs

James Jones

August Mahoney

Matt Knowling

Media Conference

San Diego State - 85, Yale - 57

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement from Coach and then take questions for the student-athletes.

JAMES JONES: First, I would like to tip my hat off to San Diego State. They played a tremendous game today. They're not known to be a great three-point shooting team, but they saw me coming and they figured they would make 'em all today. They played well defensively. We struggled to make some shots early on. I thought that hurt us. Thought we splintered a little bit in terms of our connectivity, which hurt us.

Our guys battled. It just was not our day. I told 'em in the huddle, basketball gives you life lessons and the lesson that we learned today is that everything's not going to be sunshine and roses for you. You have to fight through. And you're going to have a sandwich that you don't want to eat sometimes, and we had to eat this sandwich. It doesn't taste good, had to choke on it. And we also talked about there's only going to be one team standing at the end of this, but I can't be prouder of this team, and every coach says it, but I guess it's true because I know it's true with me. I can't be prouder of this group of young men and especially these two guys sitting to my right. They have been nothing short of brilliant. Matt Knowling is one of the toughest young men that I've ever coached and what he's done for our program has been tremendous. He hasn't gotten enough accolades in terms of all the things that he's done for me and for everybody else. And August Mahoney is going to go down as the winningest basketball player in Yale basketball history. He won four championships in his



years and he's won more games than anybody else who has put on a Yale uniform.

So proud of my guys, proud of our team, and sad that it had to end the way it did.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes.

Q. August, Matt, how do you sort of balance the emotions of obviously it's not the game you wanted to play, but otherwise a historic season and a brilliant run to the round of 32.

AUGUST MAHONEY: Yeah, I mean, it definitely hurts right now. Each and every person in that locker room believed that we were going to go out and get the job done today, so the pain in your stomach is just from the defeat. But, like you said, this past week or two has been the best weeks of my life, winning Ivy League championship, how we did it, and then being the second team ever in Yale men's basketball history to win an NCAA tournament game and spend just an unbelievable last week or so.

And as much as it hurts now, I know I'm going to look back in a week, a month, a year, 10 years, whatever it is, and just be really proud that I was a member of this basketball team and that I was able to accomplish what we accomplished with guys that I consider my brothers and my best friends. I'm looking forward to reunions and being able to tell some stories when I'm back. I know that this program's in unbelievable hands with the younger guys coming up and the junior class below us, and no doubt in my mind that they're going to be back here in this position. I might not be wearing the jersey, but I'll sure as hell be across the way probably being the most lunatic person cheering 'em on.

It hurts now, but I'm just really proud of the effort we put forth over the last week or so and it's been an unbelievable ride.

MATT KNOWLING: Yeah, similar to what August said, it hurts a lot right now. I think we had big expectations and got a little greedy. We wanted more, we knew we could get more, but I'm really proud of our guys and the team and



what we were able to accomplish this year. Like, this has only been done once in the history of Yale basketball, so we have to be proud of that.

But it hurts. This group of guys has been -- this locker room's been super special. We've been through a lot of ups and downs and it's just brought us closer. Like, starting from our trip to Greece this summer, we've been through a lot together and I wouldn't want to do it with anybody else.

So it hurts right now, but I'm proud of every single guy in that locker room for fighting, coming to practice every day and fighting, every game fighting, and just building a closer bond that's going to last a lifetime.

Q. What does your legacy on this team mean to you? You walk into the media room and you see a picture from the 2016 victory over Baylor, y'all have provided a similar experience to the Yale basketball program and have left a similar tremendous impact. What does that legacy mean to you?

AUGUST MAHONEY: It means the world, I guess. Like you said, that Corridor of Champions is named that for a reason and those pictures on the wall are Yale basketball legends, so just to be amongst the few that are up there, it means the world to me just knowing how much work I put in my whole life to get into positions like this. I'm forever indebted it to Coach Jones and the coaching staff for allowing me this opportunity to wear this uniform and it stings knowing I'm not ever going to wear it again, but I can be proud of knowing what we accomplished and I'm going to hold my head really high.

MATT KNOWLING: Yeah, I don't think that's really set in for me yet. Like, I haven't processed the whole season and like what we've accomplished. But when I was getting recruited here, like, walking that hallway and seeing all those pictures, I never would have thought I would be doing something like that here.

So I'm super blessed and I'm super grateful for Coach Jones and all the coaches and athletic trainers, doctors, everybody that helped us get in this position to where we are today.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you, guys. We'll take questions for Coach.

Q. I asked Friday, but with the Idaho band being back up here again, just what that meant for you guys to have them not only help you out, but for you guys to help them out, kind of help them boosted on a national stage?

JAMES JONES: Yeah, it's just the NCAA tournament is one of the most special things that we do in sport, and to have a group of young people come and support us is wonderful and we're very thankful to have them. It means a lot to our program and the players and the fans to have someone rooting for them that don't even really know who they are. I mean, that's something that's really special, that you're going to root for some people you don't even know who they are. But it's great that they came out and supported us and I thanked them before the game, just because I appreciate what they were able to do in being here and being part of this.

Q. You mentioned the three-point shooting from San Diego State. Was that sort of the game plan, was to try and control the inside and see if they could hit some shots from the perimeter tonight?

JAMES JONES: Well, they don't normally take as many threes as they took tonight. They average seven makes a game. They made, what was it, 13, I think, 13-27. I said to the guys in the locker room, well, they can't shoot 7-15 in the second half and they went out and they shot 6-12. So I guess I was wrong.

The game plan was to try to shrink the floor as much as we could to try to take away LeDee at the basket. But the threes that they got were not off of kickouts from the post. They came randomly in their offense and we gave too much space to certain guys and they were able to knock 'em down tonight.

Now, again, they got hot and they felt good, they got comfortable, and they were able to make shots. And that's what happens, when you have a comfort level, you got it going, and every Tom, Dick, and Harry that comes off the bench, they make 'em as well. We ran into a buzz saw with that tonight and that's unfortunate for us.

Q. You've spent so many years leading this program and we have seen a lot of success recently here. What has been the most rewarding part of this journey and why do you feel like we're seeing the fruits of that labor more and more from Yale recently?

JAMES JONES: Well, one of the great things about it is we had a viewing party for the tournament at the Yale Club in New York and there were kids from my 2002 team there, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020, and 2022 guys that all won a championship. Just to see those guys come back and support us is nothing short of brilliant. The reason why we've been able to be successful is that we've developed a culture at our program where everybody gets better, everybody works together, everybody's focused on what it

is that we're trying to do, and it's kind of the three Musketeers, all for one and one for all. That's the kind of mantra we kind of take on as a program, and I think that makes a difference, the culture of your program and what the locker room is like.

I tell every kid I recruit that if you like Yale now in terms of what it is academically and what we've done basketball-wise, you're going to like it even more once you meet the people. It's a great place and they have great young men and I'm fortunate to be around them every day and can learn from them and to try to help them be the best versions of themselves. I have the best job in the world, and I look forward to going to it every day.

Q. You kind of touched on August and Matt on the court, but can you talk about what they meant for your program as a whole on and off the court?

JAMES JONES: Yeah, you know, we try to have our seniors admired within the program. They eat first when we go to lunch or dinner. They're the ones we ask in terms of what kind of gear they want, what kind of sneakers they want to wear. So we try to make sure that we, that they're admired by the younger kids so they look forward to becoming the leaders of our program. And those two young guys are some of the best people in the world. I'm not a yeller or a screamer, but there's certain guys that you can't yell at and -- but those two guys, you could say anything to them. But you really don't have to because they do things the right way. And they're great people, and they're going to be sorely missed, not so much or not only for what they did on the court, but certainly what they did over the court as well.

Q. Both you and San Diego State had the unique opportunity to play all 14 of your guys. Just what that meant for you and meant for the program and meant for them.

JAMES JONES: Yeah, you know, you want to get a taste of it this. Everybody does. So, no matter where you go in life, you know, you can always say you had an opportunity to play an NCAA game. And what's great about a Yale athlete is that the history will change somewhat. So, instead of playing four minutes, I played 24 minutes and had 18 points, and we lost the game by four. You know, so it kind of changes a little bit. So it's great. Listen, no, I love all the kids in the locker room, and if you're a player at Yale on this team and you don't play a lot, it's not an indictment of who you are as an athlete and as a basketball player, it has everything to do with the guys that are playing ahead of you. Can't play everybody. But we have some very good players and we will, they will be seen as the years go on.

Q. I want to give you praise for the job that you've done with Yale, and I know you always was a fighter and you was going to be fighting to the end. So, you know, what happened tonight is just another day, and we look forward to fighting --

JAMES JONES: I feel like I'm in court tonight. Is there a question there, counselor? For those that you don't know, that's my dad and he's been itching.

Q. (Inaudible) So I'll keep my mouth shut.

JAMES JONES: All right, thank you, Pop.

THE MODERATOR: That's a good place to end.

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