

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Xavier vs Illinois

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Fiserv Forum

Xavier Musketeers

Coach Sean Miller

Media Conference



have some teams, UConn, very physical on the offensive glass. That will be a huge challenge for us as well.

Q. Sean, you look at your roster, you have a lot of experience, but you don't necessarily have a ton of NCAA Tournament experience. Can you speak to the benefit of a guy like Marcus Foster, who, after the game last night, said that's not the biggest NCAA Tournament game he's played?

SEAN MILLER: Yeah, I think he's lying, by the way. I think he definitely -- that game right there, because of how he played and how the game went. But I understand at Furman, they beat Virginia and that was their school's, I believe, first NCAA Tournament appearance. Marcus was obviously out there playing, so I get his answer.

We wouldn't be here in Milwaukee if Marcus Foster wasn't at the level of play that he was last night. You think about it, he shot nine times. He made eight. He shot five 3s. He made four. Defensively, he had big assignments both in our switching, but also in who he was covering.

And at times, he might have been the overall best player in the game. The other part about his shots is it felt like every made field goal he had was timely. And you're right, we can call on his experience in the tournament and also experience as a player.

Marcus is, like a lot of our guys, at the final stretch of his career in college.

Q. Just wondering how you're approaching today with the short rest, and I was also wondering if you talked to any coaches who have been through this, going through the First Four, then getting to the round of 64 game, and how you kind of deal with that.

SEAN MILLER: First part of your question is I don't know if there's a choice. There isn't a lot of time. So even if you wanted to experiment or do something different, by the mere fact we're here -- we didn't get in last night until probably about 3:00 Milwaukee time, which is about 4 a.m. our time.

So we really let our guys rest. I think that's the priority, both this morning. And then, obviously, you get into

THE MODERATOR: Xavier head coach Sean Miller is here. Questions, please.

Q. Sean, when you kind of go over the Illinois film, when they have Tommy Ivisic as a playmaker, they have Will Riley as a playmaker, KJ as a playmaker. How hard is it when you have three guys who can generate offense for others?

SEAN MILLER: Illinois is a fantastic team. They're good on defense and offense. I think you start to really fall in love with their offense, watching it, because it's the modern game. They have so many, like you said, playmakers. But I think they're a very good passing team. They look for each other.

They're balanced scoring. Not too many teams really sit there with five players in double figures. And, obviously, we respect the Big Ten as a conference. When you average over 80 points a game in that league, from an offensive perspective, you have a lot of things you do well.

They play with great pace. They're in transition. They play a very fast tempo. They shoot the 3-point shot about as much as anybody in the country when you think about the percentage of shots they shoot. And they can do it not with a couple guys. It just seems like they have five, six, seven different players on a given night that can make 3s, which is always really dangerous.

I think the other thing they do exceptionally well is they offensive rebound. And they don't do it like people used to do it where your bigs crash the glass. Their guards from the corners and just their team in general, they have a relentless nature of going and getting second shots.

We faced that a lot in the Big East. Teams in our league, like St. John's, Marquette does it a little bit, Seton Hall. We



Illinois. We've been working on them, and we, from a staff perspective, really started on them even last night on the travel over here.

So we're focused on them. We're focused on recovery. And I do believe this. By the time we get into tomorrow morning, tomorrow afternoon -- we don't play until the evening -- our guys will be ready. We'll be ready.

I have not really talked to another coach that has gone through it.

Q. Coach, familiarity with this arena, and the logos will be different, but you've played here before. Your players have played here before. Is there any advantage to that?

SEAN MILLER: I do believe there's an advantage. Marquette is in our conference, obviously. We play them every year. This year, for example, we played really well in this arena, and we left with a hard-fought victory. We're familiar with the travel here.

So we also experienced that last night at Dayton. A long time ago, we scrimmaged Dayton in an open forum in front of a crowd, traveled to Dayton. We had played in UD arena. So I think for any player or coach, familiarity is a good thing. We'll look at that as a plus.

Q. Sean, I notice Illinois dorks a lot of guys offensively. Have you had those conversations with Dailyn about what to expect with that? How can he attack them when they try to not guard him on the perimeter?

SEAN MILLER: Dailyn is a really unique player. He can impact the game in a lot of ways. The experience of a variety of teams that have tried to go under his pick and roll game or give him space or guard him with another player, at this point we've seen it all. He has seen it all.

I think we have a good recipe of what to do when that happens. But the biggest point that I would make about that is that's all well and good if we just stood in the half court and played five-on-five. When the game gets going fast, there is none of that. You know, who stops the ball, where is he, does Dailyn have the ball? Is he rim-running? Is he wide?

His gift, as much as anything, is to ignite our transition and fast break, and I think it's very difficult. It doesn't matter as much who's guarding him when we're in that. And that's the key for us, to play our game and be in transition.

Q. When you have a quick turnaround like this, how

much of Illinois are you trying to watch? Is there a fine line between watching too much of them or how do you delineate the amount that you watch an opponent with a short turnaround?

SEAN MILLER: I'm probably speaking for every coach that's in the tournament. You start to work on the next game, and because we've known who we would play if we advance since Selection Sunday, right then and there.

So we don't just start watching Illinois the minute we beat Texas. We start watching Illinois on Sunday. We have multiple coaches assigned to Illinois, and we become as familiar as if we're getting ready to play them sooner rather than later. So that when your game ends, that first game ends and you are victorious, you can seamlessly move to that next opponent.

Like the work is already done for our staff. So, for me, it's about them catching me up on Illinois, making sure that I know what they know, and then sharing that with our team most importantly. So that's the process we're in right now.

But there's no stress point of trying to figure out, you know, Illinois. We've had an opportunity to work on them. Now, I have been Illinois on the other end of it, and I think if you talk to Brad Underwood, probably the madness of what he deals with is, he has no idea with two minutes left in last night's game who he's going to play. I'm sure he's working on both, but you don't know if you're going to play Texas or Xavier, right?

That doesn't become their advantage. So we'll see. I think we have plenty of time to prepare. Most importantly, our guys have to have the energy and be ready to play.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach, good luck tomorrow night.

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