

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Lipscomb vs Iowa State

Friday, March 21, 2025

Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA

Fiserv Forum

Iowa State Cyclones

T.J. Otzelberger

Milan Momcilovic

Cade Kelderman

Joshua Jefferson

Media Conference

Iowa State - 82, Lipscomb - 55

THE MODERATOR: Like to start, please, with a statement from Coach Otzelberger.

T.J. OTZELBERGER: First, like to recognize the Lipscomb program, Coach Acuff. Those guys are a tremendous team. We had to be at our best in preparation. I think they're very well coached, very disciplined. They play winning basketball. So a lot of credit goes out to them. We knew how well we would have to play today.

But proud of our guys. Proud of our guys, how they stepped up, felt like defensively we kept our focus through the full 40 minutes, which was important to us being successful. And really proud of our team.

We'll take some questions.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the student-athletes, please.

Q. Milan, that first play looked like you got an open look. Big gain, the homecoming. You don't get that shot to fall, but a lot of them do. What was your mentality in this one?

MILAN MOMCILOVIC: Got a great look that first possession, didn't fall, but got to keep shooting, got to have that mindset. Kept shooting, and good things happened.

Q. Joshua, with the importance of defending and not



fouling, did you feel like there was some intentionality with that today? How do you feel like you did in that area?

JOSHUA JEFFERSON: I think I did a good job just staying locked in on the ball, staying square. We preached staying square, guarding the ball this whole week. I think we all did a good job of that collectively.

Q. I know you guys are roommates and, Cade, you assisted Milan on an early three. You guys seem to smile at each other and give each other a high five going back on defense. How cool is it to have that moment for the two of you on the NCAA Tournament stage?

MILAN MOMCILOVIC: Shout out to Cade because I go shoot with him every night a lot of times, and he's one of the hardest workers I know. To have that moment, and I'm roommates with him and a very good friend of mine. He hit me early for that three. It means a lot. I respect him as a person and a player.

CADE KELDERMAN: I thought it was super cool. Milan is my guy. Like he said, we're always in the gym together. A lot of good memories together. We room together in Ames as well. It was a pretty cool moment.

Q. You talked a lot about the late-night shootings that you guys do. Can you take me to any good stories of playing horse, games you play inside of there?

CADE KELDERMAN: I don't know about horse, but we've done some competitions. This week I got the best of him. I'll leave it at that.

Q. Milan, to have the game you had today, is it as simple as just being back home? If so, what was it like playing in front of a home crowd?

MILAN MOMCILOVIC: It was just do what I do every day and the daily habits. Don't get too high because I'm back at home and a lot of fans are watching me. So have that same mindset and good things will happen. Obviously, came out strong and knocked the first couple down. My game started rolling.



Q. To follow up, Milan, it seems like the whole city of Pewaukee seemed like they were out there today. What's it like to perform in front of them, and does it feel like home court advantage for you?

MILAN MOMCILOVIC: I think it's a home court advantage for our team in general because Iowa State is close to Milwaukee. For me, 20 minutes away in Pewaukee, it's the closest game we've had since I've been at Iowa State. It's cool to have the fans come, and glad I could put on a show for them.

THE MODERATOR: Guys, you're dismissed. Thank you.

We'll take questions for Coach, please.

Q. T.J., how would you summarize your team's physicality in that area of the game for the first round match-up?

T.J. OTZELBERGER: Defensively, we knew they play with their five man on the perimeter for the most part. So the physicality has to come guarding the dribble one-on-one, staying out of rotations, being physical when you guard the dribble and walling up and making sure they finish through contact at the rim.

On the other end, the physical part comes with driving the ball with force, sealing, getting on the offensive glass. And so those were the areas of emphasis we knew we would have to be at our best today and really compete. I felt like our guys kept the focus on those areas for the full 40 minutes.

Q. There's been conversation about the future of walk-ons and not as much opportunity for those going forward. You see someone like Cade do this in March, what does it mean to you?

T.J. OTZELBERGER: Walk-on or not, we don't treat Cade like a walk-on. I just know that he comes every day with a blue collar approach, cares about his teammates, stays consistent with his habits. Everything that he does in his life is with a level of consistency. So you know that when you call his number, you feel confident as a coach he's going to play with that same consistency.

So it's nothing different than what he's done when we've given him opportunities. And I'm proud of him for continuing to work and earn those opportunities when he didn't get them early in the year. He stayed the course. He continued to work. He stayed as a great teammate.

And we tell all our guys, the opportunity will come at some point. You need to stay ready so you don't have to get

ready. Cade certainly does that.

Q. Coach, Milan has 20, goes 4 of 8 from three. Have you ever noticed something within his game that when he's hot and shots are falling, compared to nights when maybe he doesn't have as much efficiency shooting the basketball?

T.J. OTZELBERGER: For us, we want him to stay aggressive. I think there's been times over his first two years where a shot maybe doesn't go in early and maybe that deters him from the next one. To me, we just want to trust the work.

I know with him you can see when he -- when he's ready, he gets his feet set underneath him. Especially like when he's moving on penetration as we drive the ball, and he's communicating that he's pushing away, he's pulling behind, you can just see that energy, and then he shoots the ball with such great confidence.

What we've also seen, which has expanded his game, is his ability to drive the ball all the way to the basket, to attack a close-out, get to the rim. Tonight, he had a few of those midrange turnarounds he's so great with as well.

He's just a very complete, gifted, skilled basketball player, and he's got a lot of confidence. He's been playing with tremendous confidence this last month, so just proud of him because he continues to work. I'd say that we believe he'll always play that way, as long as he stays on the hunt.

Q. You're down 16-15. You go on a 14-0 run. Milan's got 12 of those 14 points there. How important is that to not have your team get caught up? You've got the underdog team maybe getting a little bit of the crowd behind them. You just kind of ran them out of the building after that tight, tight start.

T.J. OTZELBERGER: We knew they were going to have their runs. We knew they could score in bunches, the way they shoot the basketball and they play for one another. Fortunately, our guys had great poise during that moment. There wasn't panic. There wasn't -- we didn't rush or do anything out of character.

And then Milan, truthfully, just took over the game. You could see his confidence going, once he saw it go through the basket. And then credit to his teammates for doing an unbelievable job of finding him.

So that was extremely important because when you're playing on this stage against a really good team, when they get confidence, they can continue to build confidence. And Milan did a terrific job, and his teammates did a terrific job

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

during that stretch, making sure we got back out in front.

Q. You mentioned how they used their big guy. I think he had only five shots in the first 25 minutes. What did you do to deny him the ball and prevent his opportunities?

T.J. OTZELBERGER: We knew they could space us. We didn't want to overreact for shot fakes. We didn't want to overreact on rotations. We felt confident in our ability to guard the dribble so we didn't want to be -- get spread out too much.

Ultimately, we were fortunate to keep a body close enough to him to try to speed up that release or rush the shot. It wasn't in the natural rhythm where he could be successful.

You have to have tremendous focus. It's something we don't see very often in the conference we play. So really credit Dishon and Brandt for doing a great job adjusting to play how they needed to play for us to be successful.

Q. Coach, being from Milwaukee, are you able to take a step back after this win and appreciate getting a win in your hometown? On top of that, seeing a local kid like Milan have the game he had today, what does it mean to you?

T.J. OTZELBERGER: For me, it's a tremendous honor to be in this tournament and to be able to do that in my hometown in front of so many people that have had such a tremendous impact on my life. It's so much gratitude that we have just to have this opportunity.

So to be successful, certainly, that's what you set out to do. When you're fortunate to do that, you're proud of your team, proud of your coaches.

So, you know, as far as Milan goes, when we started to recruit him, when we came in, he was a focal point of our recruiting efforts. We believed he could be someone that could really elevate our program and transcend our program. We haven't had an opportunity to get back here until this point.

When we heard our name called we'd be in Milwaukee, I was really happy for him. His family is amazing. They travel all over the country to watch us play. For him to be able to have high school friends, coaches, people that have invested in him to be here to be part of that experience, I'm really proud and happy for him. Glad he really embraced that moment and did an excellent job.

Q. How important were the 24 minutes you got out of Tamin as he continues to tough it out?

T.J. OTZELBERGER: Tamin is as good a winner, as tough as a young man as there can be. You know he'll lay it on the line and give it everything he has, no matter what you put in front of him. I felt it was a really good sign for our team when you saw him come out, attacking the paint and attacking the rim. That gave his teammates tremendous confidence because they know how hard he's worked over the last week to get ready to play.

So it's not just being out there. That helps us. But when he's aggressive to that magnitude, it really elevates our guys, and he came out right away and was attacking, getting all the way to the basket and to the rim.

Talk all the time, I could talk for hours on what a tremendous young man, leader, character person Tamin is. We know that he's going to lay it on the line for his teammates, our program every chance he gets.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Good luck Sunday.

T.J. OTZELBERGER: Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports