

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Mount St. Mary's vs Duke

Thursday, March 20, 2025

Raleigh, North Carolina, USA

Lenovo Center

Mount St. Mary's Mountaineers Donny Lind

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon. We are now ready to start Coach Lind's press conference.

Coach, could you please give us an opening statement.

DONNY LIND: Obviously we're super excited to be here. Quick turnaround after last night's game.

I thought our guys did a great job last night in getting us here, sticking to our plan, and understanding the need for rest, recovery, and trying to get ready to come out and play tomorrow.

Obviously Duke is a really good basketball team. We'll do everything we can to get ready here the next 24 hours for a heck of a game.

Q. How much have you been able to look at Duke so far? Did you shut down just a little while to try and regroup, or did you dive right back into it?

DONNY LIND: We dove right back in. Not too much time to shut down these days. Thankfully, technology, you can get it right on the plane and watch some games, watched a couple games last night.

I've got a great staff. They've been getting everything clipped up and ready for me to make my life a little bit easier in preparation. We've been able to watch a good bit and get us ready to go.

Q. Obviously it's a huge challenge traveling and making the turnaround. Is there any value in having sort of played the one game and gotten the jitters maybe out of the way and that type of thing?

DONNY LIND: Absolutely. We're kind of used to this. Honestly our travel yesterday to play on a one-day prep is



much easier than traveling from Quinnipiac to Emmitsburg for one day to play a conference game. Even with sitting on the tarmac for a little while last night, our guys are probably more refreshed today than they are on one day play in conference play.

We're used to this kind of turnaround. Obviously the beginning of an NCAA Tournament game is a little bit jittery for everybody. Hopefully we have those jitters out of us a little bit because we've already been able to do that. We'll be settle in ready to go and hopefully our guys are ready for the challenge.

Q. What would you say have been the keys to your team's success at this point?

DONNY LIND: First and foremost, we have good players. They're talented. They're tough. They play together. The biggest thing, though, is that they respond to adversity really, really well. We've built a group that is resilient, and they're okay with just making adversity their friend and choosing to respond the right way.

They know there's going to be highs and lows throughout a game, and they can accept that, they're willing to accept that, and they're willing to choose to respond like a champion.

That's been the biggest thing, the biggest area of growth we've had. It's why we've had so much success the last month or so of the season. It's why I've been able to sustain success through injuries and those sorts of things. It's because these guys, they just believe that they have the solutions to whatever adversity arises.

Q. What do you feel like will be the biggest challenges against Duke?

DONNY LIND: Their size and athleticism jumps off the page when you watch them. Certainly they protect the rim defensively as good as anybody in the country, if not better. So scoring around the rim is super important for any team. If we're going to score enough points to win, we're going to have to get some baskets around the rim.

So with their length and shot blocking, we're going to have to find ways to still get to the rim and score. Then their



perimeter play making, they make shots at a high level. They've got big, long guards that are physically bigger and stronger than some of our guys.

We're going to have to be tough. We're going to have to be resilient. We're going to have to be the team that we've been for the last month, but at a pretty high level.

Q. Obviously Duke is unique, but have you played anyone with anything close to that size?

DONNY LIND: One of the joys of being at this level is we play three or four games a year against high major teams. We obviously play Miami in the ACC who is not the same, but is a lot bigger than we are. We get a taste of that. I think it's one of the reasons we want to play those games is that, when we get to the NCAA Tournament, our guys aren't just intimidated by the size and length and athleticism out there. They're ready for that sort of challenge.

At the end of the day, our guys have been -- the reason that they're at a place like the Mount is because they've got a chip on their shoulder. They went through the same AAU circuit and played in high school against a lot of these same guys and always have felt like they should be on the same floor with a chance to compete.

So when they get a chance in a game like this, that chip on their shoulder is a big reason why they can have a chance to be successful.

Q. First of all, congratulations being here. Talking a little bit about Duke, I know some kind of have this feel of David versus Goliath type situation coming up tomorrow? Do you guys ever think of it that way? I know a 16 seed has beaten a 1 seed a couple of times the last couple of years. Does it feel like a David and Goliath? What's the team's mindset going into this one tomorrow?

DONNY LIND: I think there is a formula -- I'm kind of a nerd. I think there's a formula to win every basketball game that we play. There is a formula that, if we can follow, we'll give ourselves a chance to win. However, depending on the opponent, the margin for error within that formula changes, and in a game like tomorrow, we're going to have play really well. We're going to have to follow the plan and be able to execute it with limited mistakes.

So that's kind of been our mantra all year long is we've got a plan. We're going to try to execute it to the best of our ability. If we can limit mistakes, we'll give ourselves a chance to make plays to win a game.

Q. One more from me. Having covered the MAC at previous TV stations, I know this is a tough conference night in and night out. A team that's undefeated in conference play could lose to a team that doesn't have a win in conference play. How much do you think the MAC has prepared you for the NCAA Tournament?

DONNY LIND: It certainly has. Our league was number 1 in the country in close games this year, so we had to find ways to win in close situations. Our guys learned how to win.

It was one of the things that going into the season I recognized pretty early on that we had good talent, but one of my things I knew we had to learn was do we have what it takes to win in those sort of situations?

We spent a ton of time on it. We tracked all fall and all up until our first game who won every drill in practice individually. Just to have guys learn that we value winning, we value the things that go into winning, and if you can improve and the things that go into winning, you're going to get a chance to play. Those have been things that have helped us win close games throughout the year.

We've won some really close games all throughout our season in the league against good teams, teams that have might have been ahead of us in the standings, might have been behind us in the standings, but we found ways to win those close games, and I think that helps us.

I think the physicality of the MAC helps us. It's a physical, physical league. When we get into these NCAA Tournament games, they're physical games. The refs are going to let our guys play. The fact that we've been through the wringer of that the last two months helps our guys in these sorts of situations.

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