

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Regional Semifinal - Maryland vs Florida

Thursday, March 27, 2025

San Francisco, California, USA

Chase Center

Maryland Terrapins

Coach Kevin Willard

Julian Reese

Derik Queen

Sweet 16 Postgame Media Conference

Florida - 87, Maryland - 71

KEVIN WILLARD: Extremely disappointed that the season's over and it's a tough loss, but thrilled what this group of guys was able to come together and do and the season that we had. Just proud of them. They fought all year long.

Starting off in conference play 1-3, and finding a way and battling and ended up with 14 Big Ten wins and making the Sweet 16 with only two guys that ever played in the NCAA Tournament before.

So extremely proud. This was by far the best team I've ever been around. Proud of Julian. He's going to go down as one of the best players to ever play at the University of Maryland. We're going to hang his number one day because of just what he did for this program.

And really proud of my young big guy here to kind of go through the Big Ten the first time and play the way he's played all year, these two guys have been great. So, disappointing.

Florida is really good. They're deep. I think their bench was what really wore us down. But proud of the season.

Q. When you look back, obviously the sting is still fresh, but when you look back at your career, all you contributed to Maryland, what pops into your mind?

JULIAN REESE: I'm just kind of grateful I was able to be a



part of a program like this. This is a blessing to be a part through the ups and downs. And I feel like I kind of came out, even though we lost, I came out with my chin up and we fought hard and we just weren't able to get it done.

Q. Derik, I don't know if you know you set the freshman record for points. I know it came in a loss. But when you look back at a season, as a freshman and all you accomplished, what comes to mind for you? Have you thought about what the next step is going to be for you in terms of going to the NBA or coming back to Maryland?

DERIK QUEEN: I'm not sure yet. I have to talk to my mom, my agency, Coach Willard, all the coaches, see what I'm doing.

Then, throughout the season, it was growth for me. I just kept getting better. I didn't let the game before us before I played affect me, just kept on getting better.

Q. Florida obviously a really good offensive rebounding team. They kind of dominated the battle of the boards again tonight. What was so difficult about stopping them on the glass?

JULIAN REESE: They come from kind of a physical conference, the SEC. They're really deep. They have a lot of, like, 6'10" and taller guys coming off the bench whereas, we've got a little bit shorter guys. They just kind of outthusted us and rebounded better.

DERIK QUEEN: They've got two 6'10" guys or taller on the floor at the same time -- physical guys, big bodies. And they just went in there, flying in and trying to get the rebound.

Q. Derik, can you talk about the evolution of your game being an inside guy to now being pretty much an excellent point forward?

DERIK QUEEN: Just me consistently working on my game all day, every day. And then my coaches and my teammates just having that faith in me to help me expand my game and to trust me to do the stuff I can do with the ball.



Q. Juju, can you explain how became such a fantastic foul shooter in your senior year?

JULIAN REESE: Just locking in, watching film, just working at it, consistent reps.

Q. How hard was it to withstand their run in the second half? You guys took their run in the first half and then made your own. But was fatigue an issue? Obviously they were playing a lot of guys. They had six or seven guys in double figures. How hard was it to do that again in the second half?

DERIK QUEEN: I mean, it was just -- we had a lot of defensive lapse, but they were capitalizing off of it. They were making their 3s, their shots. If they didn't make it, they got the offensive rebound and repeated. Just kicked it out for 3s, layups. They just scored.

Q. I know you guys both said you're very proud to be part of this whole team. But especially the starting five, the Crab Five, as it's been called, what are you going to remember about that group? And what do you think the lasting legacy of that group will be?

DERIK QUEEN: We only get this opportunity once to be together as a team, build relationships. I mean, unless you go to like a prep high school.

But even then you still build relationships, but from like since they're all seniors, I don't think they've got an extra year -- it's going to be hard to make relationships like this.

But we're just going to remember each other and remember all the memories we did and just keep on being a brotherhood.

Q. Apart from the wins, what would you say is the most gratifying part of having coached this group? And the follow-up, what is your future in terms of returning to College Park, have you made a decision whether or not you'll be back?

KEVIN WILLARD: I really enjoyed coaching this basketball team. From the time they stepped on campus in June, they've just been so much fun to coach, and to kind of see them grow together, have the wins we had on the road, have some of the toughest losses that I've ever dealt with, buzzer-beaters, and to overcome that was huge for me. It was one of those things -- it was just a whole lot of fun.

The staff said it the other day, they're so much fun to be around. And they accomplished a lot. In today's world of trying to put together a roster in three weeks, these guys all made great strides.

Again, only two guys to play in a NCAA Tournament before was Julian and Jordan. So for those guys to be great leaders and for us to get to the Sweet 16, I think it shows you how good a group of kids they were.

So I have not even -- no, I don't know what I'm doing. I'll just be honest with you. I haven't talked to my agent. I haven't talked to my wife.

I made a promise to this team that I was going to just focus on this team and that's all I've done. So I haven't talked to anybody. I have an agent. I'm sure he's talking to people because that's what agents like to do. But I don't know.

Q. Is there something at this juncture you think Maryland can do to bring you back?

KEVIN WILLARD: Right now my biggest concerns in life right now -- I don't know who my boss is going to be. It's the guy that brought me here who I really liked and appreciative of him bringing me to College Park is not here anymore. And I don't know who we're going to hire. In today's day and age, that worries me a little bit. I'm just being honest. My honesty got me in trouble, might as well keep getting me in trouble.

So this is going to be a family decision. I love College Park. I love Maryland. But when you're at this point in your career and you're looking at things, I have to take everything into consideration moving forward. But I have not even talked to anybody, so I don't know what I'm doing.

Q. Is the Villanova, presumably, is that an option for you? Have they offered you a position?

KEVIN WILLARD: I have no idea.

Q. Is there anything that the new administration in conversations they've had with you that would encourage you?

KEVIN WILLARD: I'll be honest with you, my guy, Brian Ullman, deserves a raise, because he's been phenomenal. The only person I've talked about in my job is with that man over there wearing the muscle hat. He has been absolutely phenomenal. But I'm not even sure if he's going to be here. So it's just one of those things right now.

Q. Last 20 games, the team has been incredible in the second half. Even with the five guys who are playing 30 minutes, 35 minutes, and it wasn't like this was a back-to-back game. This was a four-day rest or whatever. What happened in that second half? That has not happened in over a month or almost two

months.

KEVIN WILLARD: Actually, we've been getting off to horrendous starts in the second half. Colorado State, we got down 13. We came out at home against Northwestern, didn't play well. We haven't been playing overly well to start the second half.

I think we've talked about it as a group and we looked at it. When you play a team that can come off the bench with the guys that they can come off the bench with, that was a big worry.

We battled. These guys were battling. I thought the biggest play was the rebound that Condon got and threw it up to the rim. I think it was a seven-point game at the time and pushed it to nine. I thought that was a really big momentum breaker.

But we haven't been starting well for a while. We've been playing well in the second half. We just haven't been starting well. And that start really hurt us.

Q. The rebound discrepancy, it's just odd after all the games this year.

KEVIN WILLARD: It's what they do. They're the number three offensive rebounding team in the country. They're the largest -- they score more points off offensive rebounding than any team in the country. You have to give them credit. They do a really good job of it.

Q. I know you mentioned earlier you can't control Twitter, can't control media, but looking over the past week, do you wish you approached anything differently?

KEVIN WILLARD: No, not at all.

Q. I feel like a lot of times people demand that public figures be honest, and then when they are honest -- to your point -- sometimes you get in trouble. Today, when you left the team hotel, there were some fans that voiced their displeasure. Does that make you think at all about, do you want to be at Maryland?

KEVIN WILLARD: Not at all. I got my guy -- we would not be in the Sweet 16 if it wasn't for Harvey Sanders. Harvey Sanders runs our collective, does all the fundraising. He has been instrumental in getting us back to where we are. And Harvey gave me the biggest hug, so he matters.

I understand fans are going to be pissed because I'm in limbo and this and that. I get it. I'm kind of pissed, to be honest with you, because I didn't expect to be in this

situation. But...

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