

# Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 10, 2021  
Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

## Miami Hurricanes

### Jim Larrañaga

#### Postgame Press Conference



Miami 67, Clemson 64

JIM LARRAÑAGA: Well, it was a great win for us. Our guys played their hearts out. Very proud of them. I thought Clemson played fantastic in like the first 10 minutes, and we had to make several adjustments. Our guys did it. We started to clear a whole side of the court to give Isaiah Wong and Kam McGusty a chance to attack. Because with the pressure, we couldn't make any passes. We couldn't dribble hand-off, which we like to do, and we did it very effectively against them the last time.

I just told the guys, forget the hand-offs, forget running offense and just attack their guards. Their guards are very good at pressuring. But when you clear a whole side, it gives Isaiah and Kam a chance to do what they do really well, and that's basically just play one-on-one. As we started to score, our defense improved, and it was a really close game at the half. It was a close game throughout, and we were fortunate enough to finish.

We made a couple of critical errors. I did. I ran the wrong press breaker and the wrong sideline out of bounds and it cost us two turnovers. But thank goodness our players were able to recover from it.

**Q. You've won a lot of games, 200 at Miami now in fact. I'm just wondering how these two victories in a 24-hour period barely with everything this team has been through this season, where this ranks for you?**

JIM LARRAÑAGA: Well, first of all, every season is special. This group of players have been through so much adversity, so many injuries, so many close losses. But in practice the last three weeks, we've had tremendous energy. The attitudes have been great. The guys are having fun. They're enjoying playing with each other. And I think they're enjoying that, hey, I don't come out, I get to play like the whole game.

So they keep plugging away. I'm very happy. This is three in a row. Boston College at home and then Pittsburgh and now Clemson. Who knows what will happen, but we're enjoying this journey in the ACC Tournament.

**Q. You still have the same number of guys as you've had in recent months, and there was always this concern of they're tired, they can't finish out the game because they're tired at the end. Where are these legs coming from? Did you replace their legs when you went to the ACC Tournament? These are the same guys with the same legs; where is all this energy coming from to finish the games now?**

JIM LARRAÑAGA: You want to hear a crazy thing that I believe? I think it's Rodney Miller, Earl Timberlake, Harlond Beverly, Filippos Gkogkos -- the guys on the bench are cheering so loud for their teammates. They're just in their heads all the time, pumping them up. Every time-out they're up there high-fiving, and I think our players are just playing off of that enthusiasm and energy that the guys on the bench are bringing.

I mean, Rodney in the locker room right now, pumping his -- banging his fist against his chest, and the other guys, as well.

You've got to give credit. We always talk about commitment, and commitment has four levels: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. And spiritual is about team spirit, that we're all in this together. If you saw the enthusiasm on the sideline and the team spirit of guys pumping each other up at every time-out, you don't want to let your teammates down.

I think those guys, they're probably exhausted. They're playing on fumes. But they have all season long, and they keep rallying because they're happy and they're excited and they just want to keep playing.

**Q. Were these guys -- was the bench not cheering as much during the regular season? Is this a new phenomenon?**



JIM LARRAÑAGA: Well, I would say we didn't give them enough to cheer for, and the injured guys were oftentimes not even there. Rodney had surgery -- like we don't have two of the injured guys now. Sam Waardenburg had surgery again to take the pins out of his foot. Chris Lykes is still rehabbing his ankles and he's got academic work to accomplish. We really have a shortened bench again, but those guys are doing a great job, and it doesn't do any good if they cheer their teammates on if their teammates don't respond.

Look at the job that Deng Gak did, blocking shots, getting two dunks, getting five rebounds -- was it five rebounds?

**Q. Seven rebounds.**

JIM LARRAÑAGA: Seven rebounds?

**Q. Not seven. Four, sorry.**

JIM LARRAÑAGA: I thought it was five. But he had five rebounds in eight minutes yesterday. So when you have guys who just step up and just add an additional dimension to your team, that's really good.

**Q. On that same note regarding the energy, your thoughts on now potentially a fatigue factor as you go deeper into this tournament, especially as you play every day, which is not normal under the regular-season schedule, and the minutes these guys are playing now and you'll face a team that has a double bye.**

JIM LARRAÑAGA: What do you think? You want me to rest them? I'd have to put it Chris Caputo and Bill Courtney and Adam Fisher. No, they love playing basketball. They'll give it their best effort. I'm not going to worry about fatigue. They've been out there every game giving it their all. Whatever happens happens.

We're just excited about playing tomorrow.

**Q. After the game was tied right around the 10-minute mark, Isaiah scored eight of the final 17 points of the game. At what point did you know that he was special enough to take games over down the stretch for this basketball club?**

JIM LARRAÑAGA: Honestly, when I saw him in high school. The way he scored the ball -- when he played at the NBA top 100 camp, he led the camp in free throws. Look at his free throw numbers compared to everybody else in the league. He's a tremendous free-throw shooter. He's very good at driving and making an assortment of

lay-ups and acrobatic shots. The area of his game he needed to give some attention to was his three-point shot.

I don't know this for sure, but check; I think he's made more threes than any player in the ACC. Anybody know that? I think he's played more minutes than anybody. I think he's made more threes than anybody. Is that true or not? Steve, do you know the answer to that?

**Q. Not sure whether that's correct.**

JIM LARRAÑAGA: Okay, so I'm exaggerating. Who cares? The guy is a terrific player.

**Q. What you can say about the way the season has gone and everything that you've been through that you get to 200 in this way, seeing the team with literally almost no bench get you to the next round of the ACC Tournament, just how sweet No. 200 is knowing that it's coming from these guys at this time in this situation.**

JIM LARRAÑAGA: Yeah, well, as I said, I'm just very proud of them. Every young man goes through college differently. They're all on their own journey. They have their ups and downs. There's always adversity. There's always things that you don't control. You have no control over. And what we try to do -- my coaches do a fantastic job with this -- is just try to let our players know, hey, this is what life is all about. When you graduate from Miami and move on, you're going to have adversity. You're going to have bills to pay. You're going to have a family that you're going to want to have a great relationship with, and you're going to be concerned about your children.

The adversity we went through this year will only make our players stronger in the long run because they'll know, hey, they can overcome it. They can keep striving to be better, and this tournament is a good example of, hey, pulling together and getting some critical victories so that you just feel good about yourself.

**Q. You touched on the confidence of your team, just feeling good about yourselves. Going into the next one against Georgia Tech, that's one that obviously didn't go well for you guys last time. Avenging the two losses against Clemson, do you feel like this team is gaining confidence each game here?**

JIM LARRAÑAGA: Oh, I think our confidence is as high as it's been at any point in the season, but Georgia Tech is a great team. They're an NCAA Tournament team. They've got the Player of the Year in Moses Wright and they've got the defensive Player of the Year in Jose Alvarado, they've got Michael Devoe, who's a tremendous scorer at the 2

guard position. So they present a lot different problems for us than our first two opponents.

**Q. Playing against Georgia Tech for probably the third time this season, how difficult is it to play somebody three times in one year?**

JIM LARRAÑAGA: I think we've only played them once so far. And they crushed us. We played terrible, they played really well. We're going to have to do a much better job tomorrow than we did at our place a month ago.

**Q. Talk a little bit about when you cleared those sides out for the guards, Isaiah Wong and Elijah, Kam McGusty, their creativity in proliferating numbers that you had 40 points in the paint, 54 percent shooting on the afternoon.**

JIM LARRAÑAGA: Yeah, crazy. I mean, we've been shooting the ball so badly all year long, and now to have Kam and -- I will look back on it. Kam was not 100 percent for a very long time. He missed seven games. He had a pulled hamstring. He was not in great shape when he came back. He needed time to play not one or two games but a dozen games to get himself back confident and shooting the ball well.

And then Isaiah, he's had to make the adjustment of being our 2 guard and our leading scorer to being our point guard and getting other guys involved.

And then Elijah, he's been our best defensive player. We put him on whoever has got the hot hand, and he normally can cool them off.

Those guys have really found a good rhythm with each other, and part of it is they're being asked to play all three positions. Isaiah will start at the point, then Kam will go to the point. Then Elijah will play some at the point, and they're very, very comfortable and confident with each other and playing multiple positions.

**Q. You've been in a situation on the other side of things where you've had the double bye. Can you just speak a little bit to the advantage that is and kind of how you counter that tonight?**

JIM LARRAÑAGA: Well, obviously the double bye means you didn't play for two days, and they'll have to prepare for us starting now. Now that Georgia Tech knows they're playing Miami, they'll go back and look at the tape from the first game, what worked well and what didn't. Josh has his team playing at a high level. And my staff and I will go back, we'll meet tonight at 6:00 -- it's 5:00 now, so this is going to be the last question I answer -- and then I'm going

to go get my COVID test and then I'm going to go start preparing for Georgia Tech.

But they're an outstanding team, and I think having the double bye certainly helps because you've got to win three games to win the title instead of five.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

