

Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Tuesday, March 7, 2023

Louisville Cardinals

Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

Coach Kenny Payne

JJ Traynor

Postgame Press Conference



Boston College 80, Louisville 62.

KENNY PAYNE: First off, I want to first commend Boston College on the way they played. They brought great energy, great physicality to the game, toughness. The stuff they did to us around the basket, offensive rebounding, to score 49, basically 50 points in the second half, that was the difference in the game.

I thought they competed. I thought at times they were the aggressor for most of the second half, and they put us on our heels and made us look bad because they played with more fire, more toughness, more fight than we did.

Hats off to them. Hope they go on and shock the next group or whoever they're playing next.

Q. Coach, just what you can say about obviously not the season that of course you wanted, but being back here with the Louisville Cardinals and having your history personally with them, what it's meant to lead this team and what you do see that you can build on.

KENNY PAYNE: I feel very blessed to be at my school. I remember a couple years ago when Juwan Howard and I were talking and he got the Michigan job, and I talked about the gift and the curse. Everybody thinks it's just -- it's all going to be hunky-dory and success. But when you go back to your school, your alma mater, the place you love, where you had your foundation built, there's an uncomfortable feeling you have every single day.

I'm sitting in a position where I'm responsible for all the former players that ever played at that university. I'm responsible for the joy to bring it back to a community that loves, absolutely loves the University of Louisville basketball program, for years.

I'm in charge of making sure that these young men are loved, and I just told them, I feel good, couldn't care less about the wins and losses right now. I never, ever cheated them one day. I pushed them as hard as I could, and when everybody else jumped off the boat or when whoever jumped off the boat, I was with them, with my whole heart.

I love them, but I hope that they learn from this season that in order to be a great team, you have to be connected to one another, and you have to pour your heart and soul into what it is that you want to do. That's whether to be a great team or a great player.

Hopefully that answers your question.

Q. I know it just ended, but now that it is done, what is your feeling? Is it one of those things where you're relieved it's done so you can get to work on building for next year, or is there a sense that I wish we could keep going and growing? What is the feeling right now?

KENNY PAYNE: Right now the feeling is I'm still a little disappointed. I never thought we were losing this game. For me, it's dealing with the realization that your season is over.

Now, I have to take the next few days and gather my thoughts and see how do I do this in a way that I bring back Louisville to where it needs to be.

It's unfortunate that when I got the job -- the timing of the job, people don't talk about it a lot, I didn't have a choice in a lot of things. Everybody was saying that we would get the death penalty, that they would do away with basketball. When you're out recruiting and you're hearing kids are apprehensive and nervous about coming to you, and then the ruling came out, I think, the end of October or November, so now I have to -- for me it's probably the first real chance I have to equal the playing field without preconceived notions.

Q. Just wondering, as you guys got to this point in the season, have you had talks with Josh Heird about your

**future here, and if so, how did those talks go?
Anything that he was saying to you as you now look to build?**

KENNY PAYNE: Really don't understand the -- have I talked to Josh about my future?

Q. Yes, like have you all had conversations about this is where he wants to see the program headed, and also just things he wants to see here moving forward?

KENNY PAYNE: I don't think that's a good question, my friend. I don't know how to answer that. Of course I have not had one conversation with Josh Heird about my future. I don't know if there's a reason to have a conversation with Josh Heird about my future.

I go to work every day. I love Josh. Josh says he loves me. There's nothing to talk about. I've got a job to do.

Q. I believe it was a 69-60 game and you guys had the ball, and from that point on, they kind of pulled away. What happened over that final stretch? What was different for you guys that helped get this game -- it got away from you?

JJ TRAYNOR: I would say in the first half, we had more energy, and we were playing harder and getting in the lane. That was working for us. In the second half, we didn't get in the lane as much, and at the point you're talking about their energy just exceeded ours, and they just started getting in the paint, getting on the free-throw line, and that led to the lead.

Q. You said you're going to take some time to think about how to move forward here. When you think about --

KENNY PAYNE: A few days, two days.

Q. When you think about the coaches on your staff, how do you go about talking to them about taking stock of how they did this year in coaching with you and just building that staff and continuing to move forward?

KENNY PAYNE: Still don't understand the question, but I can tell you I have one of the best staffs in college basketball. I can tell you that they're unique individuals that have had so much success in this game. I can't believe you just asked that question because you're looking at guys that have accomplished more in their life as players -- forget coaching. Their experience in life is why I hired them. They are great coaches, and they gave these kids love every day.

I mean, I don't even understand the question. Like what is there to evaluate? I asked them to love the young men. That's why I hired them. To adopt their dreams, that's why I hired them. Nothing else. They did their jobs. They did a great job. I love my staff.

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