

Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Tuesday, March 7, 2023

Notre Dame Fighting Irish

Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

Coach Mike Brey

Cormac Ryan

Marcus Hammond

Postgame Press Conference



Virginia Tech 67, Notre Dame 64.

MIKE BREY: What a great ACC Tournament game, amazingly physical. I'm proud of our guys. We came down here with a clean slate after a really tough regular season, and we emptied the tank to try and get over the hump. I think Virginia Tech is really good, really good.

And yeah, I'm disappointed for them because it's been a great group of young men, even though we haven't won like we've wanted to. They've hung in there. This guy here has been an unbelievable leader. Anybody can lead when you're winning. When you getting your butt handed to you a lot -- he just was fabulous. I'm thrilled for Marcus Hammond. Finally got him healthy, and we had our chances, but Tech made big plays.

Q. How do you process everything that's gone on the last 15 minutes?

MIKE BREY: I've got to digest it a little bit. I'll be very honest now that I'm not in the league anymore, I think that last play, if you have an A officiating crew, and that was not an A crew, you say, basketball play, and we shoot the free throws and we play basketball.

I think we got a little over analyzation on that part of it. Look, Virginia Tech made plays, but I don't think that was handled right.

Now, we had some turnovers and made mistakes, too, but I think you go, basketball play in a great game, and you shoot the free throws and let the game play out. That's a big-time crew.

Q. Mike, it's been a long road here at Notre Dame for you. You've got to be feeling so many different emotions and having so many thoughts at this time, and would love for you to share what it's been to wear that Notre Dame on your chest.

MIKE BREY: Well, I appreciate you asking that, especially after I'm talking about refs, right? Relax, fellas. We're all good.

Unbelievably honored. Been unbelievably honored. 23 years I've been able to be the coach at Notre Dame. It's been a flat-out honor. My bosses are here tonight, Father John and Jack Swarbrick. They've been amazingly supportive.

Even though this year didn't go well, I'm proud of how we've run the program, and I think we are going to get a heck of a coach, and I'm going to help our administration recruit the next guy.

To walk around for 23 years and a guy goes, hey, that's the Notre Dame coach, man, that's awesome. Can you make sure they say, hey, that's the former Notre Dame coach? That would be all right if they say that.

Q. Both of you told me yesterday that you wanted to leave it all on the floor regardless of what took place today. Do you feel like that was the case today?

CORMAC RYAN: Yeah. As I look back, the thing that I'm most proud of about myself and my teammates is the ability to say, man, that kid plays hard. You know, basketball has got a lot of flash, a lot of flair, but it's not all makes and misses. Trust me, I would have loved to have that -- I could sit here all night and tell you all the shots I would have loved to make that didn't go in.

But one thing I can say is -- and I can say this confidently, is I've always played hard for my teammates, and I know they'll play hard for me. In that regard, make, miss, win or loss, that's the most important thing to me.

MIKE BREY: Nobody empties the tank like this guy. He was my lifeline to talk to the team during a tough couple



months, and he just kept doing it. I'm extremely proud of him. He's going to be an amazingly successful young man. I may be working for him one day.

Q. For Mike, the last play, was it designed for Nate or whoever on the three, and from your vantage point, did it look like instead of shot faking, had he gone up, he would have been fouled?

MIKE BREY: Yeah, well, I don't know if he would have been fouled, but we did execute that. We've never really run that. We drew it up. He screened him great, and Nate wanted to take it. He probably thought, maybe I don't have the window right here, but I thought the shot fake was pretty poised, and he had a feet under him three-point shot after a shot fake, and you live with that.

I kind of trust his judgment there, and we did get -- we got a look.

For him, the one thing I told him, look, 2-point whatever it was is not one second. You have a little time. For him to be poised enough to shot fake and get a clean look, he did have a clean look instead of shooting over whoever it was.

Q. I don't mean this facetiously, but what are you going to do now, tonight?

MIKE BREY: Tonight? I'm going to smoke a cigar. I'm going to go back and smoke a cigar and tonight I'm going to hang out a little bit and visit with my staff. You need time to decompress. When you're in the season, you're just grinding every day. We'll take a couple deep breaths, and tonight we're just going to lay low.

My comments about Irish whiskey last year after the Rutgers game, I'm not really a big whiskey guy, but man, everybody is sending me bottles. I have got a stash, even in my room here. Georgia Tech assistant, like -- may hit some of that tonight.

Q. Coach, you guys play a 93-87 track meet shootout in South Bend, tonight not so much. What was so different about this game?

MIKE BREY: I thought we really defended well. We had a hard time guarding them. Certainly we couldn't guard Basile. I think they're really, really good. Never in my wildest dreams did I think I'd see them on Tuesday. I knew where we were going to be maybe for the last couple weeks, and we accepted that fate. That's a tough matchup out of the gate, but I think they're physical, they're good, they can score, they know who they are.

We defended better to give ourselves a chance, and it was

an amazingly physical game. Both teams were going at it.

Q. Mike, obviously you had the history in 2015 here. You've spoken about the Notre Dame piece of it, but coaching at Duke and obviously at the Irish, what does coaching in this league, the ACC, mean to you?

MIKE BREY: You know, I never thought in my wildest dreams that I would coach in the ACC for the University of Notre Dame. That's how crazy expansion was a couple years ago.

I remember I came down here with Father John and Jack Swarbrick to Chapel Hill for the announcement and I had to introduce them to the ACC media because I knew all you dudes. I was like the liaison to the ACC. To coach in this league and to win a championship in this league, and of course the thing's playing all day on the network, and it was neat to see it, it was an honor to be part of it. I grew up watching the league as a Maryland fan in Rockville, Maryland; certainly an assistant at Duke, and great memories here in Greensboro.

I'm really proud. You got to be part of this league, and you think back -- and we won a championship in this league. I'm really proud of that. And in our second year. If Bonzie Colson doesn't sprain his ankle in Brooklyn, we may have got two in a row. If we'd won two in the first three years, y'all would have kicked us right back out. We'd be an independent in basketball, too. We'd be dead.

Q. I know that this is obviously a difficult game in and of itself a few minutes after, but what you can say about this road with Mike Brey and what his leadership has meant to you to have him as a coach.

MARCUS HAMMOND: Just want to say I appreciate Coach Brey for giving me the opportunity to play at Notre Dame. When I was growing up -- I'm from New York City so I watched a lot of Big East basketball and was a big fan of Coach Brey and the team. So I just want to say I appreciate the opportunity, and he taught me a lot, so thank you.

CORMAC RYAN: I think what Coach has done for the program and to basically wear the jersey and have Notre Dame basketball mean something is special. We're extremely grateful to have been a part of that.

Notre Dame is a heck of an institution, and in so many ways, but to bring basketball to the forefront of that is not easy because there's so many good teams in this league. There's so much else that you can love Notre Dame for, but to love it for basketball, that's been important for Coach and important for this program.



That's part of the reason why I came here is because Notre Dame basketball means something, and the guys who came before me were high-character, high-quality guys, and that's never changed.

I think that the mark of a true program is not necessarily wins and losses but who's coming through your program, what kind of guys do you have. I can tell you confidently that every alum I've met -- Jordan Cornette is calling the game, he's a quality individual, and I didn't even know him. So every guy to my left, to my right is just -- those are high-character guys. That's hard to find in Power Five college basketball nowadays.

Q. Coach, you mentioned Rockville, Maryland. I know what DeMatha means to you. Talk about coaching against some other younger assistants from DeMatha. Corey from Boston College and Mike Jones, talk about seeing them in the league now.

MIKE BREY: I think I was the headhunter for Mike Jones to get the job at Virginia Tech. Mike Young called me, and he said to tell me about Mike Jones as my associate head coach. I said, I'm not sure you can get him because he loves his role, and then I called Mike Jones, and then I stepped out of it, and a week later I saw it on the ticker. Mike has been a great addition to the staff.

He's a teacher. He's an educator. He's going to be a head coach very soon. He's got a really, really bright future.

Of course Rodney Rice hit a big one down in the corner down there, and I know he's been injured most of the year. He hit a big one on us, a DeMatha guy.

But utmost respect for Mike Jones. He's really good.

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