

Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 9, 2023

Miami Hurricanes

Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

Coach Jim Larrañaga

Norchad Omier

Isaiah Wong

Postgame Press Conference



Miami 74, Wake Forest 72

JIM LARRANAGA: Well, the ACC Tournament is really like the NCAA Tournament; it's survive and advance. We're very, very fortunate. We played an outstanding Wake Forest team. They made a great run at the end. We were up 17, and all of a sudden it's seven, then it's five, and then it's two, and they're shooting a three for the win.

But that three misses, we win the game, we get to advance. We're happy with where we are.

Q. Isaiah had 17 tonight; how much of a luxury is it for you to have a guy with so much experience entering the postseason?

ISAIAH WONG: It's a great factor for me. I feel like I bring a lot of great experience going into this, my fourth time in the tournament. It just helps. I feel like it helps the team more, being more composed and taking the pressure.

I feel like it's just helpful for the team, and the way that our team plays and we play together is really helpful.

Q. Isaiah, I think during that 17-point run in the second quarter where you guys took that big lead, I think you had five points and three assists. What was working for you during that stretch in the second?

ISAIAH WONG: Like I said, we were just playing together. We were playing hard on defense. We got a lot of assists I feel like, a lot of back doors, a lot of playing together. I feel like that's what got us going.

Q. Jordan Miller really kind of stabilized the team in

the first half. How much has he been kind of the glue of this team when it comes to just his all-around game?

ISAIAH WONG: Jordan is a great player. The way he plays, he plays confident, he plays together, and he's always there, he's always passing the ball, he's always playing great on defense. He's just a -- he's always in the play I feel like, and he always makes the best play I feel like, and he's just a great help to the team.

Q. The resiliency of this team at the top of the ACC, kind of a bunch of different musical chairs this season. What can you say about being at the top of that and what it means to move on here in Miami and keep going into the semifinals.

JIM LARRANAGA: My observation of the ACC is simply this: That the transfer portal has transformed college basketball. Before the season ever starts, you really don't know what the opponent is going to present to you because they're going to have plays you never saw before. They played in different leagues.

In decades past, you kind of knew the team and you knew the style, you knew what they were going to do, and you could prepare for that well in advance. Not so anymore.

With the ACC, we have a lot of teams that maybe struggle early, trying to fit the pieces together. We have other teams that play really well early because they've got returning players.

I see it like -- it's almost cyclical; you have teams that are really good for a while, and then they drop off a little bit. In our case, we dropped off a little bit a couple of years, and then last year we came back strong, and this year even stronger.

I just think the league is very talented. A lot of very gifted players, some of them who played someplace else and then came in and did a great job for their new team.

Q. In the last minute, Wake Forest hit three three-pointers to stay in the game. Was that an

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expectation that they were going to be able to fight back like that, and how is that a testament to a team that was a middling ACC team, that they were fighting against the No. 1 team in the conference?

JIM LARRANAGA: Yeah, I don't consider them a middling ACC team. I consider Steve Forbes, his staff, and that program really in a great place because they're playing extremely well throughout the season. We're very fortunate that we won today.

Tyree Appleby is one of the -- well, he's the leading scorer in our league and leader in assists, one of the best point guards in the country, and their ability to make those threes is really special. That's without Monsanto, who's another incredible three-point shooters.

They're much bigger than us. Bobi Klintman is a stud. He's going to have one heck of a college career. Their size bothered us. We took the ball to the basket, and almost every one of our guys got almost every shot blocked.

The resiliency that our guys showed is that it didn't deter us from continuing to be on the attack, and we did a great job of that.

Q. Chad, Coach was talked about a couple minutes ago the transfer portal and how that's changed college basketball. I think today was your 14th double-double for the season for this team. How have you been able to defend so well and have an impact as a portal player?

NORCHAD OMIER: I would say that I just try to help the team in any aspect I can. Last league I was a great rebounder. And I come here, that's a gift God gave me and I want to keep doing it, rebounding, playing defense, scoring, doing whatever it takes to win. My teammates, I've got to give them credit because without them, I don't do anything. So just that. I love rebounding. I love playing defense. I just want to help the team.

Q. Going back to your comments about the transfer portal as well as NIL, we've seen a bunch of coaches in this conference, a lot of coaches that have been around for a while not sticking around in this era. Do you think that NIL and transfer portal is kind of changing and making some coaches that have been here for a while move out?

JIM LARRANAGA: Well, I wouldn't speak on behalf of any other coach. They have their own journey. They make their own decisions.

My focus is on doing my job as well as I can and coaching

these guys as well as I can and helping them try to play really, really well and enjoy their journey.

The transfer portal, you've got to understand this, there were always transfers, but they had to sit out, and you helped them during that sit-out to adjust to your system. So kids would come in, like an Angel Rodriguez, would sit out, Sheldon McClellan sat out. When those guys got ready to play, they were already Miami players, they knew exactly what was expected.

What the transfer portal has done is the transfers, now they have a brief window to figure out how to complement their new teammates, and a lot of them are older guys. Like Chad has already played two years of college ball, Nijel played two years of college ball, so they're used to their other system.

The best you can hope for as a coach is that they'll come in and embrace the new system, and with Jordan Miller, Nijel, Norchad, we've got three of the best transfers who only care about winning, and that's the whole key. If they buy into your system -- and Norchad said it, it's because all he wants to do is win. So you're going to listen to what the coaches have, the game plan, the practice plans, and you're going to try to help the team be as good as it can be.

Then you have veteran players who return, and boy, it's so important for them to embrace the newcomers. So we had two transfers and four freshmen, and Isaiah and Anthony and Harlan, they embraced those guys. They made them feel a part of the program right away. There was no time where the new guys felt like, oh, I don't belong here, these guys don't like me. Eye say and Nijel were playing pickup ball and going against each other from day one. I walked in the gym and I saw them, they were like best friends after knowing each other for 10 minutes.

Is that true?

ISAIAH WONG: Yep.

Q. Coach, this is the third game where the game came down to the last shot. Is there any kind of sense of maybe disappointment that in games where you guys were essentially in control that it came down to another final shot for you guys?

JIM LARRANAGA: Survive and advance. Lose and go home. We won, we're moving on.

Do we make mistakes? Yeah. But basically Isaiah made a game-winning shot. You put yourself in a position to win.

We could have been behind, and we could have been the

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team down 17. It happens. That's what sports are all about. It's a reality show at its best. You don't really know what's going to happen.

We've had big leads and lost them, we've come from behind and won them. I like these guys; I wish we would have won by double figures, but I'll take it.

NORCHAD OMIER: I will take it, too.

Q. Jordan Miller today with 18 points, nine rebounds, five assists. Talk a little bit about his performance.

JIM LARRANAGA: I said this beforehand, before the season, this guy is the most underrated player in the country. We had three guys on the all-conference team. Zay was Player of the Year and deserved it. But if they had chosen Jordan Miller, he would have deserved it. If they chose Chad -- these guys are terrific. What makes them so terrific is you just see the numbers, they share the ball, they do everything as a team.

So Jordan Miller is a fantastic player, and we needed everything he did today, especially in the first half when we got off to a slow start. He kept us in the lead.

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