

NCAA Men's 1st and 2nd Rounds: Buffalo

Saturday, March 18, 2017

Buffalo, New York



Bob Huggins Tarik Phillip Daxter Miles, Jr. Jevon Carter West Virginia Mountaineers

West Virginia - 83, Notre Dame - 71

THE MODERATOR: Joined by victorious West Virginia University head coach, Bob Huggins, and student-athletes Jevon Carter, Daxter Miles, Jr., and Tarik Phillip.

Congratulations, guys, on advancing to the Sweet 16. We're going to go right to questions for the student-athletes and then we'll release them and have questions for Coach Huggins after that.

Q. Can you talk about this back court that you guys form and what you thought about in the beginning of the year and what you showed today?

JEVON CARTER: All year we've been telling ourselves that we got the best group of guards in the country, and we truly believe that. So, when it's time for us to play, we go out there and give it our all. Sometimes it worked. But we going to put forth 100 percent and we're going to live and die with it.

THE MODERATOR: Other comments on that?

TARIK PHILLIP: He pretty much said it all. We believe that we put in a lot of work in the summertime. We came in believing that we were a tough group of guards, and we just got to go out and show it.

Q. Just wondering how important was you guys getting off to that huge start right off the bat and smacking them in the mouth right away. How much did that do for your confidence and what did it do to get you in the game?

DAXTER MILES, JR.: It was great flow from the start, and we've been having some really good practices leading up to the tournament. I don't know, man, that was just great flow on both sides, offense and defense.

JEVON CARTER: I wouldn't say it's a confidence

booster because whoever steps on the court, we feel like we can beat them. We just got hot early and we just kept going from there.

Q. Jevon, obviously, you guys are known, especially in the back court, for your defense, but today your offense was impressive as well. Do you guys carry a little bit of a chip on your shoulder because you don't get as much attention for that as you deserve?

JEVON CARTER: Definitely. We keep that chip on our shoulder. A wise man once said, remember where you come from, and we always keep that in the back of our mind. All three of us up here, it wasn't an easy path to get here to West Virginia. We had to grind it out every step of the way, and when we get on the court, that gives us a chance to show it prove that other schools missed out on us.

Q. To jump on what Dana just said, Tarik, if you could talk about that, you just said big chip. It's almost like there's a notion out there that you guys can't play offense, but you have some good, really good shooters, on this team.

TARIK PHILLIP: Yeah. We do. First couple years here, they thought of us as defensive players, you know? But Coach, the coaching staff instilled a lot of confidence in us and helped us develop our offensive game and we became pretty good offensive players.

Q. Daxter, for you to start, and I guess Jevon, Tarik, you can follow up. They were known as a team that didn't turn it over a whole lot. You got ten the first half and sort of set the tone. Did you feel your press was good against them no matter how good they are normally handling such pressure?

DAXTER MILES, JR.: The Irish, that's a great program, you know, great coach. Today, like I said, it was a great flow, defensively and offensively. I think all five guys was on the same page early into the game. That gave us extra confidence leading -- you know, as the game went on and we just took it from there.

Q. Guys, did you feel out there that they were wearing down the -- you know, bringing in a bunch of people? Did you feel that they were starting to wear down?

JEVON CARTER: Yeah, definitely. That's what we

pride ourselves on. We go 11, 12, deep, 13 sometimes, and other teams only play six, seven, eight people. So, we was always told that our 15 is better than their 15, so we get into that bench, that's a bonus for us.

Q. Any of you guys can answer this because you all were on the perimeter. Were you surprised how much room that you had on the perimeter, whether or not they respected your outside game enough?

JEVON CARTER: Yeah. I guess you can say that. We just play, man. We knew they was small, trying to get inside to our bigs a lot, play inside out. And we knew they was going to have a hard time guarding us.

Q. So, Tarik, do you guys ever get tired of hearing about foul shooting? Obviously, again tonight, like yesterday, you guys were really good at the line to seal it there?

TARIK PHILLIP: Coaches always said turnovers and free throws is going to determine ball games with us. So when we go to the line, we just got to step up, man up, and hit free throws.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, thanks very much for your time. Congratulations. We'll now open up for questions for Coach Huggins. Questions?

Q. Coach, I was just wondering, I know you expected this from the back court, even before the season, but is this the best you've seen of the total back court all year?

BOB HUGGINS: There was a sportswriter in West Virginia who put a poll out: Are we top 20, are we top 50, are we top 100? And I shared that with our guys, and our guys goes, top 100. And we used that as kind of a source of motivation. Did I know they were that good? I know this, they put an enormous amount of time in. They're in the practice facility 12 months out of the year and, you know, it's great when you don't have to kind of tell people to go in there. They go in there.

And you can see -- I mean Tarik came in not a very good shooter. He's a pretty good shooter now. J.C. came in and was not real consistent. He's pretty consistent now. And I think, you know, Nate, Elijah's put a lot of time in, a lot more time than what he once did. So they deserve a lot of credit for it. They want to get better. They want to get better and they want to win. They get tired of people talking down about them, honestly.

Q. Coach, congratulations.

BOB HUGGINS: Thank you.

Q. After the first two days of the tournament, the prevailing fan sentiment about the tournament is

there haven't been a lot of big upsets. I'm sure in this case you're pleased with that. I wonder if you can speak generally from someone who's been involved in so many tournaments how important it feels this year and how important that is to a good tournament?

BOB HUGGINS: I think the TV people would tell you, if they're honest, they'd rather have West Virginia and Notre Dame than they would a smaller school, because the numbers are going to be better. I mean that's pretty much a fact. I mean, you have an upset, so they have to play it and they play it and they play it, and then they have a meeting on Monday and they say, what the hell just happened? I mean, that's the reality of it all. So, does it make it a better tournament? I don't know. I don't know if it does or it doesn't.

Q. You guys take obviously so much pride in your defense. Do you ever quietly kind of laugh to yourself because you know what this team can do offensively when there's so much attention paid to the defensive side. This team's really good offensively.

BOB HUGGINS: We just today broke the school record for points in a season, and we're averaging 82 a game. I did the pre-game radio show and Tony said, you know, there's people saying that you can't score with them. And I said, we're averaging 82 a game. Now, there's days, honestly, I don't know how we get to 82, but somehow we do. And our guys play so hard, I think it forces other people to play harder, but I think it also -- people aren't used to playing at the pace that we play at.

Q. Coach, just your ball movement. What can you say about your ball movement? You had some stretches nine straight possessions scored. First half, you have seven of eight and eight of nine. What did you think of that?

BOB HUGGINS: Thank God. Because we threw it away four straight times to start the second half, which we're prone to do as well. When we stay in our stuff, when we get -- our whole deal with them has been do what you can do. Don't try to be something you're not. And, you know, we've got post guys now that have turned into really good post guys because they don't go in and shoot three-pointers for 20 minutes before practice. They actually go in and work on shooting jump hooks. And that's been a process; quite frankly, it's been a process.

Q. And then just your defensive plan against them. I mean, to start the game, both teams were missing, so there wasn't -- you didn't have a ton of makes real early where you could put the press on, but it seemed like you didn't throw the full weight of the half-court traps at them as much as maybe

you did against Bucknell. Thoughts on that?

BOB HUGGINS: Well, we just wanted to wear them down. We wanted to make them work really hard at advancing the ball. They shoot the ball so well, it's -- you know, if you trap them and you don't do a good job or you don't make the right rotation, they're going to make shots. And so we were a little bit concerned about that. I didn't want to turn them loose. I thought against Bucknell we did a horrible job of stopping the ball, and so they constantly were attacking the rim and I didn't want Notre Dame to attack the rim. I wanted them, quite frankly, to shoot threes, rather than turn them loose in the pressure.

So that's what we do. We try to make people play the way that kind of the way we want them to play. It's hard. Mike's a great coach. He's not a good coach, he's a great coach. And to do what he's done is just phenomenal, and I've got just a world of respect for him as a coach and as a person.

Q. Congratulations, Coach.

BOB HUGGINS: Thank you.

Q. In the first game, kind of to piggy-back off this question, you gave up, I believe 45% from the three-point line, and you did also early in this game. In the second half you only gave up 30 percent their behind the arc. Did you credit the traps for that like you were talking about. I know you said you wanted to shoot threes and were missing them?

BOB HUGGINS: I don't know. That's probably a better question to ask them. I don't know. I thought in the first half we didn't really -- we didn't contest as well as we did in the second half but, you know, I don't know. People tell me that it would -- it's just the constant having to work hard to get the ball up the floor, work hard to get open, kind of takes people's legs. But that's a question really better asked to them than me.

I have a hard enough time trying to figure out what these three knuckleheads up here were doing rather than worry about what Notre Dame was thinking. I struggled at figuring out what they're doing, you know?

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you.

BOB HUGGINS: Can I say this? Listen. I love Buffalo. I came here in '93, World University Games, we won. Played Canisius in '07, and we won. Came here in 2010, and we won too. And we just won two now. I love Buffalo. Anytime you want to invite us to come back, we'll come back. Thank you.