



**Head Coach Wes Miller Press Conference  
Cincinnati 85, Eastern Washington 73  
Nov. 12, 2023**

***Opening Statement***

"Sometimes in college basketball, and this isn't anybody's fault, but with the name on the front of the jersey we put too much value into thinking about who's good and who's not. Eastern Washington may not have that national type of name, but they are a really good basketball team. They are a really good basketball team that has a system and identity. Their system and their identity fit the parts. You look back and they won 18 games in a row at one point last year and won their league. They are a good basketball team. When you beat a good basketball team by double figures, that's a good win. Viktor [Lakhin] had a really good preseason and a really good offseason. He's really improved and I've got to see that most days in practice. I'm glad everybody else that was watching got to see that today. I was pleased with the performance. I thought Jizzle [James] gave us some really meaningful minutes today. There were times in the first two games where I'm saying, come on Jizzle [James], I don't want to play you to give you experience. I want to play him because he helps our team. I am pleased that today he helped our team. He helped our team win today and that was really good to see. I thought it was a good win today. I thought we had a chance to really bust it open into the 20 points plus lead there and just made some silly plays defensively. We couldn't convert a couple shots and missed some easy shots around the basket, so that was a little bit disappointing. We were not great on the free throw line. I hated us on the offensive board tonight. We only had three boards at halftime and all three of those were from Viktor [Lakhin]. I was displeased with that, but I think that this is a new team and young team, and we are without two really key pieces that are not playing for us right now. I was pleased in the short turnaround to come out and put it together for us."

***On adjusting defensively without Aziz Bandaogo and Jamille Reynolds***

"If people have followed the teams that we've coached for a significant period, we've always placed a huge emphasis on guarding the three-point line. You can look at the analytics, I'm not giving anything away. Anybody that just looks at the numbers, can tell we've made an emphasis on that for a long time. It's a lot easier when you have Aziz and Jamil as a part of your front line with Ody Oguama and Viktor Lakhin because when you're running people off the line, it's a hell of a lot scarier with those guys standing down there. I think that's something we value defensively, and we value it in recruiting, which is why we recruit guys with great length, timing,

and size. Not just in the front court positions, but at all positions to be to be quite honest. So yeah, I think it'll be a lot better defensively if Aziz and Jamil were out there."

***On Viktor Lakhin's performance offensively and on all fronts***

"I thought the first thing with him was he finally established himself around the basket early in the game. That's the thing that we all know he can do, he finally did it. He scored around the basket and got the three offensive rebounds in the first half. That's one thing that I've been really frustrated about in the first two games. I called a couple of days ago after our first game against UIC and I said we're having arguments as a staff of different plays we have to call to get the ball inside. I said we don't have time to put new plays in right now. I finally just called him I said, it's a stupid argument we're having as a staff, you need to post harder around the rim, post harder early, and transition, roll, and seal better. There are opportunities to get post catches in our flow. You need to just damn do it so we can get back to establishing you around the basket. He made a concerted effort to work on that in practice this week, and it was good to see that happen. In the second half, I did not tell him he is not playing hard. But I want you to play harder. Like it's time for you to play harder, and I'm talking defensively. Then I thought, Ody Oguama really set a tone with a couple of efforts to get the block. And he's in the timeout, just huffing and puffing and I looked at everybody, and said we all have to play as hard as Ody Oguama. And I thought Vic went out after that, and that's the hardest I've seen him play defensively in a segment in a game this year. Then things really came to life and we pushed that lead out. Obviously, the last part of Vic's performance tonight that I liked was you guys not having them believe in me that he shot it so well all preseason. He finally makes the two threes. I just wanted to be as happy about a defensive stop as he is about making those shots but it was good to see because he spent a lot of time working on that."

***On Day Day Thomas' start to the season after transferring from junior college***

"Day Day is going to be great. Every time I've been interviewed, I've said this we have the right two guys. They're just young and inexperienced. When I say young Day Day Thomas, he's not young in age and maturity, he's just young to this level of college basketball. Jizzle James is young in age. They're young in their own right and inexperienced but they're the right two guys to lead this team at that position. These early games are so important for them to do well and gain confidence and make mistakes so we can learn and teach them. That was what went on there with Day Day fouling and out, it wasn't just a bad defensive play, now he fouled out and we don't have our point guard that's best at breaking pressure. I didn't think it was Day Day's best night. I thought he put the ball in jeopardy a couple of times early in the game. Overall, I'm excited about him and I was really, pleased with Jizzle's play, which I already stated in my opening statement."

