

Mountain West Men's Basketball Championship

Wednesday March 4, 2020

Jean Prioleau Omari Moore Seneca Knight San Jose State Spartans

New Mexico - 79, San Jose State - 66

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by San Jose State.

COACH PRIOLEAU: First of all, I'd like to say hats off to Coach Weir and New Mexico. They played really well tonight. They sped us up a little bit. They went on like a 23-0 run. So hats off to them. And Vance Jackson played really well.

I thought we started out the game really well. We forced them into 21 turnovers, which I thought was outstanding. We didn't shoot the ball relatively well, especially during that run. But I thought our guys competed. I mean, I thought our team has competed all year long.

And I'm playing a lot of freshmen and sophomores, so I'm really excited about the future of San Jose State basketball. I thought we've taken some big steps forward and the next step is to try to win the conference tournament game, for sure.

Q. Seneca, you made a big jump from your freshman year to this year. What's next for you?

SENECA KNIGHT: Same thing, keep working day in, day out. The compliments I got this year, they were kind of exciting. But at the same time that's in the past. Just get stronger for next year, work on my IQ and work on handle, jump shooting, just keep grinding.

Q. For either of the players, obviously you guys watch films on all of these teams. This Lobo team, from covering them and a lot of people around the league know, has been two different teams. I'm curious what you saw when you're watching film, when it's working for them like it was tonight what they're doing and maybe when they're struggling if you saw something different.

SENECA KNIGHT: I would say for them it just looks like they kept playing throughout the whole game. If they struggled they still played hard. I know you know they are a physical team. They try to pressure the ball



and everything. I think they just stick to their principles and that helped them out. So they worked on consistency.

Q. Seneca, aside from your personal game what do you do with your overall team aspect moving into next season to wipe away what happened here and start fresh?

SENECA KNIGHT: Like Coach said, we're a young team, a lot of sophomores and freshmen. Just encouraging them especially the freshmen, and then the next year, incoming freshmen, knowing that we've been in that position as freshmen last year. And just tell them to grind, don't get too high or too low. Stay level headed and just keep working.

Q. Omari, with Brae Ivey graduating that opens up a guard spot to be filled in. Where do you think you could take your game to fill that spot that's being vacated by Brae Ivey?

OMARI MOORE: I feel like Brae was big for us this year. He taught me personally a lot of things. He did a lot of things for the team. Stepping up for him isn't going to be easy. But I definitely think over the next spring and summer I can take my game to the next level, similar to how Seneca did last year and I think I'll be able to try to fill his shoes.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach?

Q. During that 21-0 run in the first half was that more them? Was that you missing shots? When you look back at that, is that what they did or what you did?

COACH PRIOLEAU: Yeah, so if you guys didn't hear what he asked he said the 23- or 21-0 run, was it more them or us. It was a little bit of both. I think we missed some shots. I think we might have turned it over during that time. We had 16 turnovers for the whole game, so I'm sure we turned it over a couple of times in that moment.

But missed shots and then them in to transition probably had something to do with that. I tried to call timeout. Tried to switch up our defense a little bit. But we just weren't able to capitalize on anything. And that's what happened.

Q. I'm trying to figure out, as a lot of people in

Albuquerque are the good Lobos and the bad Lobos, they had their ups and downs this year. What makes them so dangerous this time of year when they're playing well, like Saturday, like much of tonight, as opposed to some of the struggles they were having? Is it just a personnel matter, where they didn't have some players, or was it something else when you're watching film?

COACH PRIOLEAU: No, I think it's probably personnel. They've had guys in and out. Coach Weir hasn't had his full allotment the whole year.

When we first played them I think they were 15-2 or maybe 15-3. So I mean that's high-level playing. So, I mean they're a very dangerous team. They have a lot of talent. And I think Coach Weir's done a great job of keeping those guys kind of focused. And they're in the moment right now when it's in March when anything can happen. I think they're a very dangerous team. I think they have a lot of talent.

Q. Can you detail some of the improvements you saw from this year compared to last year?

COACH PRIOLEAU: Improvements this year as opposed to last year. Well, we have seven wins this year as opposed to four wins last year. I think our team is competing a lot more this year. We defended the 3 a lot better this year. As of a week ago I think we had, like, 300 less 3s taken against us or 30 or something like that, some crazy, astronomical number. So obviously we tried to defend the 3. I don't know about the percentages on that, but I thought we did a pretty good job there.

I think this year's team had a lot more fight in it than last year's team. I think we were in a lot of games. We actually had the league champion, we had them beat on their floor. I don't think last year's team would have been able to do that.

So I think we have a lot of positives. And I think this team has a lot of young guys, freshmen and sophomores, that are playing. Last year we didn't.

We have a freshman who was just sitting here who has had the best freshman year that I've ever coached. Sky's the limit for Spartan basketball and our athletic program.

And to think outside of the box here and not just about men's basketball, I mean our women's basketball team was phenomenal this year. Coach Craighead is an unbelievable coach. He had 19 wins this year. Our football program is moving. Our basketball program is moving.

Marie Tuite is doing an unbelievable job moving our

athletics program forward. Our president, President Papazian, is right there step in step with us.

So I know for many people, many people that might not be in the inner circle, they may not see a fast shift in the progression of San Jose State, but I think it's moving in the right direction. And we're doing it the right way, more importantly. So sky's the limit for us, I think.

Q. You guys came out in the second half 7-0 run, cut it to single digits. And then Vance Jackson scores 14 points in four minutes and nine seconds. He did it last year when he scored 25 and 25.

COACH PRIOLEAU: I watched it.

Q. What happened with Vance Jackson? They call him Vegas Vance in Albuquerque. I'm curious what you see in him as an opposing coach?

COACH PRIOLEAU: Vegas Vance? I like that. I don't think it's so much Vance Jackson. I just think when you're playing at this level, when it's late in March, there's probably someone that will probably step up and have a moment. It could be two, three, five, seven, 10 minutes of a moment that can carry a team. And it just happened to be Vance Jackson.

We have guys on our team that have done it in spurts during the year. So I just think when you're late in the season like this you're playing against people and they can get hot at any time. And that's what happens when you're playing tournament basketball.

Q. During the season, since you have a young team, is it harder to coach a team like that that doesn't have that many seniors to lead, that have been through it? And what do you do moving forward with the young guys that you have? And who are you most excited about?

COACH PRIOLEAU: I'm excited about what you just explained. No, we don't have a lot of seniors or upper classmen that are playing -- we had one, which is our captain, Brae Ivey, who did an unbelievable job for us this year.

But what happens in these moments is that we have freshmen and sophomores that are logging in a lot of minutes. So they're learning this experience.

And as we continue to go, because we have a lot of, like, true freshmen, true sophomores; we don't have a lot of guys that have transferred in. So when we have that, those guys are learning and experienced. And hopefully going into next year they'll be ready to go for next year, and then even the year after that because we're playing freshmen and sophomores. Hopefully Seneca and Omari are up here next year with another

guy.

So I think the future's bright for us. We're competing and we're going to continue to get better.

Q. For the next couple of weeks obviously Las Vegas is the epicenter of basketball, for college basketball. Your general thoughts in getting an opportunity to bring your team here to Las Vegas and play here in this tournament?

COACH PRIOLEAU: I don't think it's so much about Las Vegas. I mean, yeah, it's being in the Mountain West Conference. And we play against top-level competition. The teams are really good in this league. This conference tournament just happens to be in Vegas, which is obviously a great town, great city. There are a lot of other conferences that come play their conference tournaments as well.

I think postseason is an opportunity to show all your improvements and hopefully get hot and have magical moments. That's what March is all about. And our guys are taking all of that in. And hopefully we'll be ready to do that next year.