

March 13, 2014



Minnesota - 63
Penn State - 56

An Interview With:

**COACH RICHARD PITINO
ANDRE HOLLINS
AUSTIN HOLLINS
DEANDRE MATHIEU**

COACH PITINO: Obviously hard-fought victory. We knew it wouldn't be easy because they're a good basketball team, and certainly Pat does a great job. We found a way to get it done. We found a way to get stops when we needed to, make big plays when we needed to. Joey made a great pass to Andre at the end and Andre hit a huge shot, so I'm proud of the effort.

We knew it was going to be very, very difficult because they're a good team, and it's so hard to beat a team three times in a row. But I'm really proud of these guys, and top to bottom I thought we just found a way to win when it was sloppy, and really happy with the win, certainly.

Q. Andre and Austin, was there much talk amongst the players that you had to win to have a chance at the NCAA Tournament?

ANDRE HOLLINS: Of course. You know, this game had a lot of implications, and it's hard not to ignore it, but you know it's there. It's a game we had to win, and we came out and we took care of business.

AUSTIN HOLLINS: You know, like Andre said, we know it's there, but our focus right now is really the Big Ten Tournament. We want to win four in a row and that was the first game. So we knew in order to do that you have to win the first game, and that was the most important one for us.

Q. Andre, after they came within three, what was your mindset? Were you looking for a three there? Were you hoping to get a big

shot just to get a little bit of momentum back on the side of Minnesota?

ANDRE HOLLINS: It just happened that way. They were trapping randomly, and Dre did a good job of breaking the tap pass to Joey and then Joey did a good job of sucking the guy in, and I was left wide open. It was wide open and I had to take it. That's how things transpired.

Q. Deandre and Austin, can you just talk about Andre hitting that shot having struggled throughout the game with foul trouble, just in that moment, and he hits the biggest shot of the game?

DEANDRE MATHIEU: He does it all the time. He takes big shots, and he makes big shots, so I mean, we weren't surprised. We knew it was good when it left his hands. He's a big time player, and big time players make big time plays.

AUSTIN HOLLINS: Andre is a confident player and he was wide open, and he had the shot so he took it, and he knocked it down.

Q. Deandre and Andre, fast forward a little bit, you guys have played Wisconsin twice now. I'm curious, you handled them up at your place. What did you learn from the second game in Madison that can help you tomorrow?

ANDRE HOLLINS: Wisconsin is a very good team. They're consistent in everything they do. They don't turn the ball over, and they don't really make mistakes, so we have to limit our mistakes. We can't let them get offensive rebounds. We can't turn the ball over. We're just going to have to play a solid game against them.

DEANDRE MATHIEU: Like Dre said, they don't turn it over, and our style of play is to force turnovers and things like that. We're going to have to really defend and lock down the half court and just try to pull out a big one.

Q. I'm going to bring up the NCAA Tournament. Wisconsin, you beat them -- any of you, what do you think your chances of

ASAP sports

...when all is said, we're done.®

visit our archives at asapsports.com

Minnesota – 03.13.14

making it?

AUSTIN HOLLINS: You know, we're not worried about that right now. Like I said, we're worried about winning a Big Ten championship right now, and whatever happens, that will happen. But right now we're focused on trying to beat Wisconsin and winning a Big Ten championship.

Q. Deandre, about halfway through the second half you made a pretty spectacular lay-up, but it looked like you were holding your hamstring. Do you feel okay?

DEANDRE MATHIEU: Yeah, I feel okay. The trainers did a good job of getting me back. Just cramps from probably dehydration or something like that, but I've been drinking plenty of water, and I'll be fine for the next few games.

Q. Richard, can you talk a little bit about the start you guys got off to, especially defensively? I think you held them 2 for 18. Talk about that start.

COACH PITINO: Yeah, I thought we did a really good job just coming out of the locker room. Some of these games are tough, first-round games. They're not always packed houses, so we talked about bringing our own energy, bringing our own enthusiasm, and I thought coming out of the locker room they had that. They were committed to getting stops. I thought we made every shot they'd take pretty difficult. The only thing -- we were getting stops, we weren't getting rebounds. The offensive rebounds were hurting us a little bit. But certainly holding them to 32 percent, our goal is always 35 or below, so to do that was a very, very good defensive effort. It was tough, too. They went small so we had to go small, but I thought our guys did a really good job of adjusting.

Q. Coach, what do you think was the biggest difference in the second half when they went on their big run?

COACH PITINO: There was a segment, and I'm not positive, I think they made three three-point plays in a row. I think they hit a three, then they hit an and-one, then they hit another three, and that segment got to us a little bit. We calmed down. They were being aggressive, much like at our place, when they cut it to nine.

But Andre hit a big shot, but Joey King made a big time pass at the end. That was a big time play. That was a game saver.

Q. I get the sense you don't like talking about the NCAA Tournament, but do you sense this was really important for the team's chances?

COACH PITINO: Yeah, I'm half kidding. Obviously it's an issue on everybody's mind. I thought that if we won tonight and things went our way, we could be in. You get to 20 wins, you get a top five strength of schedule in the country, I believe that you're rewarded when you play a great schedule. That's normally what happens.

But with that being said, we did come in here to win a Big Ten Championship. That's been our goal. We've never done it in school history. We know it would be really, really difficult, but one down. Certainly we've got another tough one tomorrow.

Q. Is there something in particular you see in games that you're giving up offensive rebounds?

COACH PITINO: They were playing small shooting shots, coming back and getting rebounds checked check. I think, more than anything, our guards just needed to start coming back and getting rebounds. I thought we did a much better job in the second half. Maverick had a couple of big time rebounds. So I thought we adjusted much better in the second half.

Q. You mentioned tomorrow's game. Just breaking down Wisconsin, you've played them twice now, is there something that you learned from the second game? You obviously handled them fairly well at home the first time around.

COACH PITINO: Yeah, it's a rivalry game, and both home courts are great, especially for that game. You know, I thought we actually did a couple of good things at their place, but they're a very talented team and a hard team to beat at home.

We were able to beat them at our place. Just offensively, we were very good that night. But we know it'll be a really, really tough game. They don't beat themselves. It's a game of possessions, and we've got to take advantage of every opportunity we have versus them.

Q. Can you put your finger on Austin Hollins and his resurgence the past four games, the best stretch of his career?

COACH PITINO: No, like I've said before, I think it's just the ball -- you're seeing it go in. We didn't change anything offensively, we're not running anything differently. I think he's just getting really confident, and you see it. 18 points, and I just think it's one of those things where he just needed to see the ball go in. And I've said it all along, he's one of the hardest workers I've ever seen. He just keeps plugging away, and I'm happy for him because he really deserved it. He was going through a slump offensively, so I'm happy for him to see the ball go in.

Q. With Andre obviously struggling a lot with fouls through the game, then having him in there just to be able to take that big shot at the end, a guy who's kind of been one of the leaders all year, how meaningful is that?

COACH PITINO: You know, he made a big-time shot at the end, and normally at the end of a clock, we'll go high ball screen with Deandre, and Andre said to me, I can run a high ball screen, too. He kind of got on me a little bit. I said, all right, relax, because just Deandre is so good at it. But you could see he's so eager to make a play. He doesn't seem like a fierce competitor because he's such a smiley, happy kid, but he is as competitive as it gets. He was dying to hit that big shot, and he certainly did it.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.