

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Grand Canyon vs Iowa

Saturday, March 20, 2021

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Indiana Farmers Coliseum

Iowa Hawkeyes

Luka Garza

Postgame Media Conference

Iowa - 86, Grand Canyon - 74

THE MODERATOR: We'll start we'll start with questions.

Q. This seemed like a methodical performance. Did you kind of relish the crowd that was facing you a little bit and kind of the upset bid that was coming?

LUKA GARZA: I don't think so. I think they're a really good team with a lot of weapons and they got a great size. They know how to get the ball inside and it's tough to guard when they're raising all the wings and I'm supposed to front. So it makes it hard when they throw that over the top pass. So I think throughout the game, I think for us we needed to do a better job getting stops, but with me getting in foul trouble in the first half, it kind of stopped us from being able to get a bigger lead in the first half.

But we had a lot of guys really step up, but I wouldn't personally call it methodical. I think we definitely got to be able to be better on the defensive end, especially in the second half. I think we got a really, really good lead and I think we kind of relaxed a little bit on the defensive end and it started trading baskets and they started making some shots and we were able to pull it out, but I think we got to definitely do a better job on the defensive end in the second half.

Q. With not having a game for a week and being in the hotel as long as you've been, how do you account for being as crisp as you guys were coming out of the shoot?

LUKA GARZA: I think we have been working really hard. We're really glad that we have the opportunity to be able to get in the gym as much as we are. We have practice every day and we have shooting times and different things like that. So everybody's been able to get locked into getting



our shots out, staying ready. We pushed ourselves to stay in shape and did a lot of conditioning drills this week, because we know, when you take a week off playing and you don't do anything in terms of conditioning, you can lose that a little bit. So I think we did a really good job and you could see none of us were tired at all, even after a week break from games. So that, so I'm proud of our guys for being able to do that.

Q. This was one of the best teams in the country when it came to defending the three, yet you guys were able to hit almost 50 percent, and in your case you were 4-5 from three. Did you see that as a potential matchup going in, that you, something you could exploit, just simply because they were going to want to come out to hit you on the three-point perimeter, and how, across the board, how good of a performance was this shooting from the perimeter?

LUKA GARZA: We definitely talked about it going into this game that we wanted to be able to kind of drag their big man. He's really, really good, but we wanted to be able to put me in pick and pop situation because we know, especially even myself as a big man, it's really hard to guard a pick and pop. So I think I tried to do that early, and I think that kind of messed them up in terms of their ball screen coverage, and then J Bo was allowed to get some pull-up threes and then I think we did a really good job in screening and pushing the pace throughout the course of the game to find our shooters some open shots, and I think we definitely shot it well, and we can shoot it even better and obviously we can clean up some stuff on different things.

Q. When there's a big upset in this tournament it seems that the team that pulls the upset gets off to a solid start. How important was it that you guys did start as quick as you did with the quick 11-2 lead?

LUKA GARZA: I think watching all the games yesterday we got to learn some lessons from other teams, and in terms of not being able to come out as good as you want to. So we wanted to make sure that we threw the first punch tonight, and they're a really, really good team, and they were able to punch back and they have held their own



against a lot of great teams, Colorado, Arizona State, a lot of teams. So, you know, we knew what we were facing and we knew they weren't just going to back down, so we had to continue to keep fighting. I think we threw another punch at the beginning of the second half, but we had kind of a stretch there where we weren't as great on the defensive end and that's what led to this game getting closer than it maybe should have.

Q. The bench helped you guys kind of recover a little bit early. Did you notice anything different from your bench today than you had seen from normal?

LUKA GARZA: Can you say that one more time? You broke up.

Q. The bench helped you kind of recover a little bit towards the beginning of the first half, so did you notice anything different from the bench today than you've seen in normal games?

LUKA GARZA: I think we have had that mentality all year about next man up and I think our bench has been so great for us throughout the year. And I think especially when couple guys started to get in foul trouble, you saw Keegan Murray, Patrick McCaffery, Joe Toussaint, Tony Perkins, so many guys come in and really, really step up and help us get this win. They did a terrific job. They came with a lot of energy and I think we all know those guys can do that and they have done that over the course of this year and you look at our best wins, those guys have great performances off the bench and are helping us out a lot.

So especially when we don't have Jack Nunge, who is another key piece of the bench and you get another guy to step up like Keegan Murray on the inside, it's really great for our team.

Q. What have you observed I guess just in this week in the hotel that leads you to believe you guys are ready to be here awhile?

LUKA GARZA: I think we're really focused. I think everything we do, every meeting, every film session, everything, you can tell this team is really locked in and we know what we have to do to be able to move on. This tournament is survive and advance, you got to be able to be focused every single possession of every game and I think to be critical of ourselves, I think in the second half we lost that a little bit on the defensive end and we're going to pick that up and make sure that we don't do that on Monday.

Q. Oregon Monday. They got a bye of sorts. Do you have any thoughts about that?

LUKA GARZA: Honestly, with this COVID year, you got to be able to expect the unexpected. We have seen it all year, conference tournaments, different things like that. This stuff is going to happen. Teams are going to get sick. It's what happens. You have to be able to adjust, you have to be able to be ready for anything, and I think Coach McCaffery has been preaching that all year. So for our group, I don't think this bothers us at all. We're going to come in locked in and be able to go out there and give our best.

Q. You talked earlier about the three-point shooting. As far as your own stats, I believe that, obviously all year you were fantastic, but in your past four games in March you only made 2-14 and then tonight exploded for 4-5. Is it something that teams have been focusing on you recently at the three-point line or were there better looks tonight or were you more confident? What was the difference?

LUKA GARZA: I think, honestly, if you look at all those threes, I didn't take a bad three. I was just missing some. I think that the great thing about being a part of this team and program is they were preaching so much confidence into me going into this game. They were telling me before the game the whole game plan was for me to pick and pop. And for me to feel that after knowing that I've been on a little cold streak from three it gives me confidence. I know I'm a great shooter, I've worked so hard at it, and I think in a couple games, besides the Wisconsin game on senior day, in the conference tournament I think I got a little gun shy from three. I missed my first couple and I let myself think about it. Tonight I went into this thinking that I wasn't going to do any of that, no matter -- I'm going to take a great shot every time down and if it misses or it makes, I'm going to do the same thing. Obviously I missed some shots I could have made tonight, but I kept battling and I kept going and that's my mentality every single game.

Q. Just to jog your memory, I realize you're fresh off the game, but you played Oregon two and a half years ago. They're a very different team now than they were at Madison Square Garden that night. But in terms of initial reaction, do you remember from their matchup zone and how you played them against their defense in that game?

LUKA GARZA: I think for us that was a big weekend for us in terms of the New York 2K Classic as a program. We were coming off a 14-19 year and we were really focused on being better on the defensive end. So when you look at that game, we did a really good job defensively through the game and they had a lot of really good players and some guys that are still there, but obviously a lot of them are

gone now, but we're, we know that the type of style of play they have and we have a couple guys who are back from that team, so we're excited to start watching some film and get ready. We know they have some incredible guys. You talk about Duarte and LJ Figueroa, Omoruyi, who we saw at Rutgers, I played against him and a lot of guys have played against him. So we know they have a lot of really, really good players, so we're excited for the opportunity to play such a great team.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports...



NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: First Round - Grand Canyon vs Iowa

Saturday, March 20, 2021

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Indiana Farmers Coliseum

Iowa Hawkeyes

Fran McCaffery

Postgame Media Conference



Iowa - 86, Grand Canyon - 74

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement from coach and then go to questions.

FRAN MCCAFFERY: I will say this, we just beat a really, really good team. Grand Canyon really impressed me immediately when I started watching them on film and they impressed me even more tonight. They compete, they share the ball, they move the ball, they defend, they rebound. That is a really good team and Bryce has done a terrific job with that program. So consequently, I'm incredibly proud of my guys for how they performed. We got off to a good start. I think that's always important in this tournament and they made multiple runs at us and we were able to continue to be successful at both ends. So really proud of my guys and looking forward to playing Oregon.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions.

Q. This team held opponents to 28 percent from three coming in, yet you guys were able to hit almost 50 percent. You had 10 and then Luka was 4-5. How were you able to kind of overcome what their strength was defensively and was that part of the strategy to bring Luka out to have him shoot some of those shots?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: Well, I think it starts with, they got to focus a lot on Luka when he is in the low post, so it gives you opportunities to drive and kick. We had a bunch of guys make some. But a lot of times they don't come up on ball screens and so we wanted to try to find Luka on the perimeter. But we have done that, as you know, every game and we move him around. We put him on the perimeter, we put him in the high post, we put him in the low post, we start him low and take him high, we start him high and take him low, and that just makes him that much

harder to guard and it creates opportunities for other guys.

Q. Your bench has been great all year, but tonight it seems like they really gave you a big lift, especially in the first half, if you could talk a little about that.

FRAN MCCAFFERY: Yeah, no question they were tremendous, both on the glass and offensively. We got production from Keegan, from Patrick, from Joe T, Tony Perkins. But we got effort defensively, we got effort on the glass, and it really comes down to getting quality minutes and being able to establish depth to win a game like this against a really good team.

Q. You had Luka in foul trouble in the first half. I guess (no microphone.)

FRAN MCCAFFERY: I did not hear that question.

Q. Luka Garza gets two fouls. It didn't seem like there was any panic from anybody. Is that the way you saw it as well?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: Yeah, you know, we went small, we mixed in some zone, but our activity remained intense and connected. We moved the ball offensively and we got a lot of guys attacking the rim and scoring, so we were able to survive with him being on the bench for, what was it, six minutes? So really proud of that bench production.

Q. When you sent Keegan out early in the first half what were you expecting to get out of him?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: I pretty much expect the same thing from Keegan every game. He gives you rim protection, he gives you an athlete that runs the floor, he can score, but he also can make a three, he's not afraid to take a three. But I think he's doing a lot more off the dribble making plays for himself and other people. But most importantly he's just not a mistake guy. He doesn't panic.

Q. Joe Wieskamp led your team with 36 minutes. Obviously we talked to you last week about his ankle. Seems like he and C.J. were full go. Was that kind of the case tonight and how did you think they looked?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: Yeah, and that was kind of the mindset that we had after the Illinois game is to just -- they practiced a little bit, but they maintained their conditioning and they got a lot of shots up, but they didn't go the whole time. They're to the point now where they're veteran guys, they trust their bodies, they know their bodies, and they work very closely with Brad, our trainer. So I thought they were both terrific. I didn't notice anything at all that slowed them down.

Q. Did you have any concerns at all about rust, given it was a week between games and the life-style you're leading and you obviously showed none.

FRAN MCCAFFERY: You know, I think that's a legitimate question, but I will say this: I didn't think we would have it because I thought we practiced really well. It was one of those things where the guys are in the hotel, they're not leaving the hotel, so I think they actually look forward to lifting and they look forward to going to practice and getting out and getting shots up and engaging with each other and then going to meetings and watching film, and I was impressed, and I said just a minute ago, but I was impressed with their professionalism in that regard.

Q. Not sure if you're aware at this point that Oregon has in essence moved on by default through the no contest. Your initial reaction to knowing your opponent now at this point and I know it was two and a half years ago in that matchup at the Garden, and they're a very different team, but your initial impressions of Dana Altman matchup zone defense?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: Yeah, you know, Dana's somebody that I have known and respected for a long time, excellent program he has built, not the first time. So I think both teams are a lot different. Yeah, it seems like not that long ago, but in the basketball world it is. A lot of different players, and we'll go to work on preparing for them. Obviously I haven't really focused on them. I was only focused on Grand Canyon. My assistant coaches have been locked in there. So we'll spend tonight and tomorrow getting ready.

Q. I know that you have to focus on your team and that's obviously reasonable, however, is there a way to kind of get your thoughts on what you originally thought when you heard about the VCU situation and the Oregon game, if you don't mind?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: Yeah, to be honest with you, I just found out about it like right before I came in to talk to you guys. So I didn't really have a lot of time to process it, but I mean, think about it, it's one of those things where for one

full calendar year it's just deal with whatever happens. I feel bad for VCU. In some ways I feel bad for the Oregon players. I bet you they wanted to play. But it's just the circumstances and we'll both move on and we'll play each other in the next game and be happy to be here.

Q. In the first half, well, really in both halves they had between eight and 10 offensive rebounds, but you came out strong after halftime and put together a really good run. What was kind of the message regarding the rebounding because they do have such a size and prolific advantage in some ways there, and then just how were you able to kind of get going in the start of the second half to really extend the lead?

FRAN MCCAFFERY: They're a really good rebounding team. I mean, that's reflected in the numbers. Not many times do you look at a stat sheet and see a team plus 10. And in the first half, you're right, the second shots are really what was the difference in the game. Because we shot it pretty well. So we felt like, we got it to 11. We wanted to have a good start to the second half, and we wanted to do a better job rebounding the basketball on a number of different levels. It gives them fewer opportunities, but it gives us more opportunities to run. So that's a team that has size. We had a little foul trouble so we were smaller. But I thought our guys really fought.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports...