

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Regional Semifinal - Miami (FL) vs Iowa State

Friday, March 25, 2022

Chicago, Illinois, USA

United Center

Miami Hurricanes

Coach Jim Larrañaga

Sam Waardenburg

Kameron McGusty

Jordan Miller

Sweet 16 Postgame Media Conference

Miami (Fla.) - 70, Iowa State - 56

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Miami.

COACH LARRAÑAGA: What the heck just happened? First of all, Iowa State is one heck of a basketball team. T.J. and his staff did a fantastic job. They played so hard and so well and the game was in the balance until these guys just stepped up and made one big play after another at both ends of the court.

And I haven't looked at any stats. But just looking at the stats, we had 21 assists today. We did have 14 turnovers, and you guys will probably have to run suicides tomorrow by turning the ball over too much. Oh, my God. That was a joke. No one laughed. Does the media not have any sense of humor?

All right. But, no, the guys did a great job from start to finish. And I'm very excited for them. They're an amazing group. And they earned that today because they beat a very fine opponent.

Q. Those of us from South Florida understand the road here to get to this point with this team and develop them to the point where they could perform like they did tonight. As the game's going on and it's evolving late and you're getting the lead, what is going through your mind as you watch the level at which these kids were playing at?



COACH LARRAÑAGA: As you're coaching the game, you're looking for what the opponent is doing and what they might do. So they went to a 1-3-1 zone early in the second half. They hadn't shown it -- maybe one possession in the first half. But they hadn't really shown it. And they went to it four, five possessions. We got good looks but we didn't make a shot.

And then we ran a play where we were going to lob, dunk, hopefully, and they deflected that. And it ended up in Isaiah Wong's hands and he made a 3. And when you're the opposing coach and you give up a 3 against the zone, the tendency is to say, okay, maybe we can't stick with this. So we did a good job of fighting that off, being able to continue attack, whether it was a man or 1-3-1 zone and we kept the lead. We were out in front, I don't know how many minutes of the game, but -- 38 minutes and 38 seconds. Great job from start to finish.

Q. Sam, yesterday you mentioned how you had complete trust in Coach L and the coaching staff and the game plan that they were going to draw up for tonight. Why do you and Kameron think that game plan was ultimately successful against Iowa State?

SAM WAARDENBURG: Because Coach is the G.O.A.T. He knows exactly what he's doing. He's got an amazing coaching staff around him. And as I said, we have full trust all the time. He's done a great job all season long making sure we're prepared for any opponent we have.

Iowa State's great team we knew they were going to come out and pressure us. We had the most turnovers we've had this tournament but we kept our identity and forced 18 turnovers as well. Did a great job executing the game plan.

Q. Kam, can you talk about what it means to you personally and for the University of Miami basketball program to reach the first Elite Eight in school history?

KAMERON MCGUSTY: You said it there, to reach the first Elite Eight in program history. That's it's amazing. It still feels unreal. This is a crazy feeling. We got picked to



finish 12th preseason in our conference eight months ago -- it's a long season, but at the beginning of the season if we would have told you we were going to the Elite Eight, everybody would laugh at us and look at us crazy. Even three weeks into the season if we told that everybody would look at us crazy.

It's just amazing to be here. I love these guys. We've created a bond that can never be broken. And I'm just proud that we were able to pull it off.

Q. Kam, the message all week from Coach was to smile, keep having fun. Was anyone having as much fun as you were on the court tonight and what was that like being in that?

KAMERON MCGUSTY: I'm an older guy. I'm a lot more laid back and chill. But my younger guys and everybody else, they get me hyped before the games -- Woog is dancing, Bensley's dancing.

The same energy that we had in the tournament, being the loudest team in warmups, yelling and screaming before we're on the court, doing our dance moves, kicking the ball -- it's all the little things we do to get us going. I've got to give thanks to my teammates, you know.

Q. Three ACC teams in the Elite Eight. What does that mean for the league?

COACH LARRAÑAGA: Probably that we had a down year. Normally we would have four or five. Okay. Somebody laughed at that. But honestly, all during the season I tried to explain our league is really really good. And everybody recognizes that Duke and Carolina, those programs are traditionally very, very strong.

But the other teams in our league are very, very talented, very deep, have great coaches. And our games -- we played like 17 or 18 games decided on the last possession. There's a reason for that. That opponent that we were playing was really good too. But very proud of being a part of the ACC. It's always been my favorite league. And it's going to continue to be.

Q. The team official Twitter account just posted a video of you walking in and the guys spraying water on you. What was that like? What was the dance move that we got to see in celebration?

COACH LARRAÑAGA: The water was cold. And I don't know -- did I dance at all? I did? Was it any good?

KAMERON MCGUSTY: One of these.

COACH LARRAÑAGA: One of my dance moves from the '60s. Most of you were probably not born yet, but that was really good dancing then.

Q. Sam, you had that steal and dunk at that eight-minute mark in the second half. Talk about how that play swung momentum and how you guys were able to keep the lead by double digits the rest of the way?

SAM WAARDENBURG: That's actually funny because Coach Caputo was the one who emphasized us to deny that pass to the big man at the top. And at halftime I had a chat with him about, like, maybe backing off a bit. But he kind of grilled into me to keep up with it. So I give full praise to him.

I was able to get a hand on the ball, get out and dunk it. It's the energy from the bench and the energy from these guys, that's what really swings you, not the dunk, but full praise to the teammates we have. They're amazing and they've been like that all season long.

Q. Jordan, these guys probably knew that this group had potential, but for you to come join this program and now reach the Elite Eight for first time in Miami program history, what does that mean to you?

JORDAN MILLER: I mean, I can't stop smiling. It's just crazy. I love these guys. I love the coaching staff. I just trusted in Coach L and the coaching staff and what they told me. They dealt with a lot of injuries last year, something you can't really plan for or control.

We just want to keep on rolling, you know what I mean? It's incredible, but I'm happy, but I also want to keep going. It's like trying to find the balance between trying to enjoy the moment but also be so locked, in wanting it so bad. But like Sam said a little bit ago, I love the group of guys and the coaching staff. This is a family unit.

Q. In your words, what does this mean for the program? What does this mean for Miami basketball to get to the Elite Eight?

COACH LARRAÑAGA: I think everybody knows that college athletics are really an important part of any university because everybody reads the sports pages. Everybody follows all the teams and there are alumni and boosters, follows it online, they turn on the TV set. There's a reason that March Madness is probably the best sporting event in the world. So many millions of people follow it.

And so to be a part of a great university, a top 50 school in the country, great academically. These guys, master's, two

master's, these guys are great students as well as terrific basketball players. And to represent the university that way, to get that kind of recognition for our brand, for people all over the country to tune in and watch us, I guarantee you, our website is getting a lot more hits than they did before the game.

And that's just the way it is. It's marketing. And we've got a great product that we represent. And we want everybody to know that. And these guys are great role models for future student-athletes.

Q. In that first half, the trio that's with you, Jim, scored all 32 of your points combined. But at the same time your defense forced nine turnovers. I think Iowa State was only 1-of-9 from 3 in the first half. How much did your defense help in allowing Isaiah and Charlie to find their sea legs offensively in terms of finding the basket and finding rhythm offensively?

COACH LARRAÑAGA: If you told me before the game that Charlie and Zai got shut out in the first half, I'd say how many are we down. But because our defense has been so resilient. Because we've made it so difficult for the opponent to score easily, and when we really ratcheted up the pressure, if we get turnovers we're very efficient in the open court scoring before the defense is set.

But my coaching staff knew, Charlie and Zai would step up in the second half and score points. This is a was a team effort. It was Kam's night tonight. He ended up with 27. And Jordan Miller, the guy's amazing, he was 6-for-6 from the field. But if you look at his stats over the last month or so, maybe longer than that, shooting over 70 percent from the field. Who does that? It's hard.

These guys are so good. And Sam stepped up made that huge 3. It wasn't just the steal and dunk, but the 3 that he made as the shot clock is winding down and we're trying to move the ball and find an open man, Sam just stepped up and knocked it down. So great team effort. And it's been that way all season long.

Q. Obviously your fans were out loud and proud. You touched on about what it could mean for the program. But could you elaborate, the three players, especially, coming from a school with such a rich football tradition, what this means for you guys going forward?

KAMERON MCGUSTY: This means a lot. I look at it as a new foundation for our basketball program. I mean, from now on hopefully we can go as far as we can playing into next week. But for now on that's going to be the new goal, get to the Elite Eight or Final Four to beat the 2022's team's record. This is a huge milestone. Like I said, we're

traditionally known as a football school. To be able to do this, not only for the school, for the coaches, for ourselves, but just for the city, as well.

I feel like we've had a lot of good talent come out of Miami, a lot of good basketball teams. Hopefully we can start getting more recognition and hopefully this helps for recruiting. This is just big for us as a whole.

Q. Tyrese Hunter just turned 18 somewhat recently. Two games in the NCAA Tournament reaching the Sweet 16 for a team that won 22 last year, what can that do for him and his career going forward?

COACH LARRAÑAGA: We recruited Tyrese. We know he's one heck of a basketball player. And he's only going to get better and better with experience. And what happens from freshman to sophomore year all that experience that you've gained and a lot of it is so positive because they're in the Sweet 16, his confidence is going to grow and he's going to be able to be a true leader for any transfers or young players that come in because he can share that experience with them. How hard the team worked at both ends of the court to accomplish what they did. So he's one heck of a player.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.