

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Regional Final - Miami (FL) vs Kansas

Sunday, March 27, 2022

Chicago, Illinois, USA

United Center

Miami Hurricanes

Coach Jim Larrañaga

Sam Waardenburg

Kameron McGusty

Charlie Moore

Elite 8 Media Conference



And I use the expression, "don't play the score, play the game." But we started playing the score. We looked up at the scoreboard, and we had fallen behind already. And I think that created some anxiety. And what ends up happening then is instead of settling down and executing better, we started to rush it even more. And that led to a lot of run-outs and fouls. We're slow getting back and we fouled them. Put them on the foul line way too often and we ended up with Sam fouling out and Jordan Miller fouling out and other guys with three and four fouls. Credit goes to them. They stayed on the attack and we're not able to slow them down.

Kansas - 76, Miami (Fla.) - 50

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Miami head coach Jim Larrañaga and student-athletes Sam Waardenburg, Kameron McGusty and Charlie Moore.

COACH LARRAÑAGA: I thought we did a darned good job in the first half playing the way we wanted to play, getting back defensively and scoring the ball. And halftime we had a little bit of a lead. And we talked about what we were going to need to do in the second half. But Kansas came out in the second half and really hit us with like a knockout punch. I don't know what the run was, but we were never able to answer their scoring runs.

And as a result, I think we had 36 at halftime and only ended up with, what, 50 points. So the tale of two halves. We did a great job in the first half, and they did an even better job in the second half.

Q. Coach, like you said, this was a tale of two halves. But from a coaching standpoint, what did you see Kansas doing that made them difficult to deal with in that second half?

COACH LARRAÑAGA: Well, everything we've seen from Kansas, throughout the season, is the same thing: They're the best in the open court attacking you. And when you're not scoring, it's hard to get back and set your defense. And we weren't scoring. We weren't making shots. We got a little anxious.

Q. Does it surprise you at all that this team that had been so poised and composed, that kind of was the trademark of this team, not getting rattled, what was different today. Why do you think?

COACH LARRAÑAGA: I think it was the Elite Eight, one thing. That's got to be taken into consideration. The other is Kansas. They are really, really good, and especially in running the floor. They've got so many terrific athletes who all can handle the ball. And then they've got David McCormack on the inside, who had a terrific, efficient game -- 6-of-7 from the field, 3-for-4 from the foul line, ends up with 15 points.

But he put us in foul trouble. We were never able to double team him and cause him problems. Because of the speed in which they moved the ball and moved their players around so we were a little bit late getting to the double team. That was true throughout the game, but especially to start the second half.

Q. I know it's very fresh, 30 minutes, you just lost the game, the season ended, could you take a moment to think big picture, if you've done so with your team, whether it was after the game, what this team, what this run meant to you and this program?

COACH LARRAÑAGA: I told the players afterwards -- and I really mean it -- they accomplished so much, not just in basketball, but they ignited a community. We had so much support throughout the season and especially in the NCAA



Tournament. And I think generating that kind of enthusiasm for the University of Miami in a basketball program that you have to remember didn't even exist from 1972 to 1985.

And so now we've been to the Sweet 16 three times now and to the Elite Eight once in this decade. And the we think we're heading in the right direction. And we think we'll have the tremendous support of our administration and our community.

And it's all a credit to these guys, what they accomplished this year, being chosen 12th in the preseason, but being one of the final eight teams in the entire country. My hat's off to them. I love working with them. They're a great group of kids. And they're always going to be part of our Miami family.

Q. I know the faces, great careers, how much has it sunk in that this is the last time you'll be putting on the jersey?

KAMERON MCGUSTY: It's definitely very frustrating. More than anything, it just hurts, because this is a close-knit group of guys. We've dealt with injuries over the years. We get Charlie and Jordan and we just have a special season. Just being able to accomplish the things we did this year, to lose, it just hurts, you know what I'm saying? We've done a lot. We've gotten so close. I'm going to miss playing with these guys.

CHARLIE MOORE: Like Kam was saying, special group of guys we have here, including the coaching staff. Really haven't hit us yet. I mean to lose a game but just knowing it's the last time on the floor, probably take a minute after we settle down and everything. I just love these guys. I'm happy for the season we had. I'm just excited for the season we've had, to be honest.

Q. Sam, you've been through a lot with this program, and Coach has talked so much about your decision to stay committed to this team. For it to end here, what are your emotions?

SAM WAARDENBURG: Coach has built a family environment for us in this program ever since I got here. And that's something that has held true for this season for sure. I want every one of our guys to be super proud. I think it's not going to be a couple weeks or so that it really hits us, that we made Elite Eight and we made history for this program. Super proud of these guys. I want them all to be proud and hold their heads high. I just love them.

Q. Kam, what was the difference, do you think, for you in the second half? It seemed like you were really

locked in early on. Did they do anything specific to kind of take you out of your game? And how comfortable did you feel early on?

KAMERON MCGUSTY: They did a good job in the second half kind of adjusting the way they were guarding me. They tried to deny me. It almost was like a box and one, but they were just denying me, not letting me catch. Not letting me get any clean looks. Credit to them, they came out with a great game plan the second half.

The first half I was very comfortable. I was able to get to my spots. My teammates were looking for me. They know when I see a couple go in that I can have a big night. So they just kept feeding me the ball. The coaches kept calling plays for me. And it was all working out.

Q. Kameron, all you guys are definitely disappointed today but a couple days ago you said you look at making the Elite Eight as a foundation for Miami basketball, a school traditionally known for football, and you said you're looking for future teams trying to beat the 2022's team's record. So just how much does this fuel the fire for future Miami basketball players to try to reach those even greater heights, like you said?

KAMERON MCGUSTY: I told all the younger guys in the locker room, I told them I loved them. I told them to take care of this place for the next three years that y'all are here.

Just being able to accomplish what we accomplished this year, now teams coming in or new teams, two, three years down the line, that Elite Eight is going to be the goal. That's what we were able to do this year, and I'm so happy for us. I love these guys. I loved playing with them. It's been a crazy up-and-down season, but it's good to be able to, like Coach L said, get the community involved, get all the school involved.

They had a watch party on campus at one of The Rack (phonetic), so little things like that, being able to bring together a group of guys, a community, coaching staff, it's just amazing what we did. And hopefully teams can go to the Final Four.

Q. Sam, can you talk about what do you think happened in the second half? There were some mistakes from your team right away, kind of like three or four. And what do you think was different in the second half?

SAM WAARDENBURG: Coach already hit on that. We started to play the score, not the game, like we'd been -- we've been playing the game, not worrying about the



score, even when we were up for the first few games of the tournament.

But that's where we really went this game. Started looking at that score and started rushing things, what not, not really playing to our game. But full credit to Kansas as well. That's a great team there. I wish them luck in their games coming up.

Q. You shared a nice embrace with Charlie and Kam when they came off the court. Couple seconds, felt like probably five minutes. But can you share your message to them, to those two guys and what they mean to this program?

COACH LARRAÑAGA: I spend a lot of time trying to bring the right coaches and players to the University of Miami and our basketball program. Certain characteristics in those individuals. My staff is great. They go out and recruit players who they think fit.

Kam was a transfer student. Charlie is a transfer student. A lot of times those guys have a mindset of their own, and it's not normally about the team. But unlike some transfers, these guys immediately became friends on the court, off the court. They played well together. They shared the ball.

And from a coaching standpoint, what you're really looking for is togetherness, guys who are going to pull together, not pull apart. And that's what these guys have done all season long.

And as a coach, kind of as the surrogate parent, because they're both so far away from home, you fall in love with that attitude. They have a great attitude, a great work ethic, and they behave in a first-class manner. They are great role models for our program, for our university and for any other student-athlete, whether you're in high school or college. They're great people. And you can throw Sam in there as well. I didn't get to hug him. He fouled out.

I will say this, can I add something to that? You know, we lost by 26 points. But to try to explain the value of a Sam Waardenburg, when he was on the court for his 27 minutes and 38 seconds, we're minus-3, meaning that if we could have kept Sam on the court a lot longer, into that 35, 37, this might have been a two-possession or one-possession game at the end.

But he's such an integral part of what we do at both ends of the court, that my coaching staff will be putting together an instructional video on how to play at both ends of the court with Sam Waardenburg being the featured illustrator.

Q. I know this is a tough moment right now but what are you most proud of?

KAMERON MCGUSTY: I'm proud of our togetherness and how far we came. Looking back in our tournament in Orlando, UCF, lost. We could have easily went our separate ways. Been mad at each other, argue, complain, but instead we grew from that.

We all took that whooping together. And we all agreed that we gotta get better. We've got to do something different. We don't want to end our season like this. We don't not want to make the tournament or not a team not over .500.

I'm so proud of the fight we've had. We had so many games where we were down by 15, 20 points with less six, seven minutes left and we come back and win. That just goes to show how together we are, the bond we have. This is a bond and brotherhood that I'll never forget. That's what I'm most appreciative for this year.

Q. You've had some great point guards in your tenure in Miami, Shane Larkin and Angel Rodriguez, where does Charlie Moore rank in that list?

COACH LARRAÑAGA: You're talking about degrees of greatness in my mind. Those guys that you mentioned, really great point guards. And Charlie is right there with them. I wouldn't single out anybody, because what they were able to accomplish -- I mean, Charlie nudges ahead for one reason. You know what it is, Charlie?

CHARLIE MOORE: We got the farthest in school history.

COACH LARRAÑAGA: That's exactly right. Those guys finished their careers in the Sweet 16. Charlie took us to the Elite Eight.

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