

NCAA Men's Basketball Championship: Second Round - Indiana vs Miami (FL)

Sunday, March 19, 2023

Albany, New York, USA

MVP Arena

Miami (FL) Hurricanes

Jim Larranaga

Isaiah Wong

Jordan Miller

Norchad Omier

Nijel Pack

Media Conference

Miami - 85, Indiana - 69

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by the University of Miami Coach Jim Larranaga and the student-athletes. To my far left, Isaiah Wong, Nijel Pack, Jordan Miller, and Norchad Omier. We'll start with Coach's comments.

JIM LARRANAGA: Obviously I felt like we played a great game tonight. I really felt we would because of the way we played on Friday night against Drake. I think our guys were a little disappointed we didn't handle that defense very well.

We've been a very good offensive team all season long. Sometimes we haven't been quite as good at the defensive end, but we ended up outrebounding them 48-31. It's been my experience that every time we rebound an opponent, we normally win.

Indiana is a terrific team, and Jackson-Davis is unguardable one-on-one. So we basically put our whole team on him. Started with Norchad on him. Then Anthony Walker guarded him, and then Jordan Miller. We just tried to give whoever was guarding him a lot of help from behind by the guards. I thought we did a terrific job of that.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions for the student-athletes.

Q. Isaiah, you've been here throughout last year, this



year, and what is it like to be a part of the most successful run in Miami basketball, making two straight Sweet 16s for the first time in program history?

ISAIAH WONG: It's just an honor being part of this program, with the history we have. We have a great team this year and last year too, and I feel like it's great to see how we came up. My first year we wasn't as good, but for the last two years, we're going to the Sweet 16, and last year the Elite Eight.

Just I'm appreciative, and I just love this team.

Q. Isaiah, you erupted tonight after not exactly erupting on Friday. Did that performance motivate you for tonight?

ISAIAH WONG: Yes, most definitely. I feel like I didn't play to my full potential last game, and really I feel like I had -- or my team gave me another chance to perform, and I appreciate them for that.

We won the game two days ago, and today I performed well. I appreciate the team for that helping me out, getting me passes and getting me in the rhythm.

Q. Nijel, can you talk about growing up in Indianapolis, playing Indiana in a big game like this. What did this game mean to you? It's your first time playing in the Tournament, making the Sweet 16, and especially against Indiana.

NIJEL PACK: Yes, it's definitely a blessing to be here. Childhood dream to be in this tournament, and getting to play against your home school is obviously an amazing experience.

But this tournament as a whole, it's been a great experience. This is our first stop, but we've obviously got plenty more stops to go. It's been a great experience. It's been a lot of fun playing with my guys, and winning is the most fun. So definitely enjoying it.

Q. For all you guys have accomplished, especially the



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last two years, do you still feel like you're a little underappreciated? And if so, why do you think that is?

JORDAN MILLER: I wouldn't say underappreciated, but at the end of the day, all we can do is just come out and win basketball games. I feel like winning a game in itself is a way to get recognition. We're going to the Sweet 16. That's a lot of recognition.

We don't necessarily care about what the media says. We're all focused on just inner-locker room stuff, coming together, pulling together, and just playing our best basketball every night.

Q. If you guys collectively could just talk about the preparation for this game. I mean, from the opening whistle, it's shown through on both sides of the floor. I know they took a lead for a few minutes there at the beginning of the second half, but just the effort that you guys put into the last couple days getting ready for this game.

NORCHAD OMIER: I would say that nothing is given. We've got to come out and play. Preparing for this game, we know that IU was a really good team. Like they're a really good team. So we had to come with our A-game.

I think all my teammates knew that. We were on the same page, and we bring our A-game from the beginning.

Q. Norchad, I noticed when Indiana made that run in the second half, you kind of motioned the team together and went in the huddle. Just what was said in that huddle? Talk about the run you guys made in the second half.

NORCHAD OMIER: I think we pulled together, and we talked about that runs happen in a game like this. They're a great team. We're a great team too. We just have to pull together.

I think we did just what we had to do in that moment. We didn't fall under pressure. We just stick together and keep bringing the basketball we had in the first half, we bring in the second half also.

Q. Norchad, you had a great offensive rebounding performance. Against a team like IU, how did you do that? What led to your success tonight on the offensive glass?

NORCHAD OMIER: I don't know. If I'm being honest, I really don't know. I just like playing with my teammates. They always motivate me to go do what I love to do, and I

love rebounding.

I just went out, Isaiah, Nijel, Jordan was scoring, and I just went to do my job. I rebound, and that's what I did.

Q. It seemed like you guys spread them out and beat them off the dribble quite a bit. Did you feel like you had an overall advantage in quickness that you could do that?

NIJEL PACK: I feel like we've got a lot of versatile guards on the floor. It makes it really hard for them to guard us, especially when guys are making shots from the outside. It kind of makes them expand their defense a little bit. Once they do that, they've got a principle of trying to pack the paint. Once they spread out, our foot speed is really fast, and it's hard to keep us in front. We've got a lot of different guys on the floor that can do that at once.

THE MODERATOR: Now we'll open it up for questions for the Coach.

Q. Just wondering how Wooga's doing. He hit the deck pretty hard. How's he doing?

JIM LARRANAGA: He landed on his bone on his back, back side. So I told him he has to spend the next week nursing that. I don't know how -- what you do with that. I don't know if you ice it or you get a massage therapist.

But we're going to give him some tender loving care, and hopefully he'll be back before too long.

Q. Can you just talk about the opening of that game, the start of that game. Compared to obviously the other day was a completely different story. Just from the opening whistle, it seemed like your team was just flying and playing with so much confidence and joy. Why do you think that is?

JIM LARRANAGA: I mentioned earlier they were not happy, the team was not happy with the way they played Friday. Now you see like Isaiah just exploded, 27 points, and was just terrific the whole game.

But the two guys that got us going to start with was Nijel and Wooga. Those guys got us some key baskets early. And sometimes when you just get a couple of early buckets, it loosens up your team.

I thought tonight the way we defended and kept them from scoring early gave our guys a lot of confidence because we were up ten in the first five minutes or six minutes of the game. And when you do that as a player, you feel like, oh, we're playing well. Then we just kept it going.

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If you noticed, one thing -- I don't know if anybody picked up on it -- I never called a timeout, not in the first half, not in the second half. Even when we fell behind, I felt like, no, our guys are playing hard and playing smart. They'll figure it out.

Q. What does it say about your program at this point that it's made back-to-back Sweet 16s for the first time in the history of it?

JIM LARRANAGA: I think so much credit belongs to my assistant coaches for the job they've done in recruiting these players to Miami and to the players themselves who work so hard. We have two transfers and four freshmen. Last summer I saw them bond so quickly, get along so well, on the court, off the court. We just have really enjoyed each other's company.

The coaches have the players over to their house. They hang out together. Coach Courtney is in the gym rebounding with Isaiah Wong in the gym six or seven days. Isaiah wants to shoot on his own in a quiet gym. So he's there. When you have an associate coach like Bill Courtney, you really appreciate all the little things that he does.

He was responsible for recruiting Nijel and Norchad and Jordan Miller and Charlie Moore. So got to give credit where credit is due. Great staff. Great players who really bonded. It makes my job very, very enjoyable.

Q. Same question I asked the players: Did you feel like you guys had an advantage in quickness and speed and you could beat them in straight line drives off the dribble?

JIM LARRANAGA: Here's what I told the team long before the season started: We're not the biggest team. We're not the tallest team. We're not the heaviest team. So if we're going to be successful, we've got to be the fastest team on the court.

Maybe even if we're not, we've got to believe we are, and we've got to always use our speed to create opportunities. Most of that means you've got to be able to utilize your skills. So you're fast, but if you're out of control, it doesn't work. But if you're fast and skilled and can shoot a jumper -- like you see Nijel making some long-distance threes. Someone asked me, do I ever get mad at him for taking those shots? I said, no, he can make them. I see him every day in practice make them.

So you've always got to shoot the shots you can make, and these guys are very good at shot selection.

Q. Your team scored 85 points. This is the most Miami has ever scored in a tournament game. What are some of the things you did offensively that helped this type of performance?

JIM LARRANAGA: We shot the ball really well. I tell the players all the time, the game is pretty simple. We've got to put the ball in the basket, and we've got to keep the other team from putting the ball in the basket.

The way you do that is you play great defense. You run back and don't give them any fast breaks because when you don't get back, they get a layup or an open three. So we got to get back and set the defense, and tonight we needed to pack the lane. Against Drake, we had to come out and guard the three.

At the other end we want to use our speed. Get a stop and try to beat them down the court before they set their defense. If we don't, we've got to share the ball and get everybody involved.

The job that Jordan Miller did -- how many points did he end up with? 19? Did you see him go to the basket and just take two guys right to the rim and score right on them? Guys who are phenomenal athletes, 6'10", jump out of the gym, and he's fearless. I love coaching him. I call him the most underrated player in the country, but he should not be underrated anymore. The guy is like an All-American.

Q. Jim, congratulations. To expound on that, how does he compare to Houston? You have Houston next. What challenges does their backcourt present with Sasser and Shead?

JIM LARRANAGA: My answer to that is pretty simple: I'm just going to enjoy tonight. I can't worry about our next opponent. I want to get back with my team, my family, and really have some fun tonight.

We've got to be up early in the morning and fly back to Miami, and then we'll figure out what our plan is. But we only had one day to prepare for Indiana. And last night we made a decision, and this morning we changed it after reviewing them more. After researching them offensively, we had to make an adjustment before we ever even played the game.

So we'll get ready for Houston when the time comes.

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