

NCAA Men's Regional Semifinals and Finals: Louisville

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Louisville, Kentucky

Matt Painter Carsen Edwards Ryan Cline Purdue Boilermakers

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement and go to questions. Coach, welcome to Louisville.

COACH PAINTER: Thank you. It's an honor to be here. Our guys are really excited about advancing to the Sweet 16, and we have a great opportunity here in Louisville.

Getting ready to play a very tough Tennessee team and we know we've got our hands full. Very well coached, very tough, very disciplined. Play with a lot of passion. And I know your guys are really looking forward to it and getting out there tomorrow night and competing.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Coach. Questions?

Q. With Tennessee's physicality, what's the main thing that stands out when you see that on film? What's the hardest part about slowing that down?

COACH PAINTER: I think their physicality definitely comes out when you get behind players. If you're going to get in transition a lot, if you're going to get behind plays, so you're not containing the dribble, if you're going to get in rotations because you're doubling the ball screen or doubling the post.

Now you have to over-help. It's very important against them to give yourself a good chance, is to stay out of those rotations and not playing catch-up. It seems like when you're playing catch-up against them, they make the shot or get the miss and score. It's not always that way, but as a coach on the other bench, it seems that way.

I think that's going to be an important -- no matter who plays Tennessee, I think that's a very important place. When you get behind plays, they normally make you pay, and they get to the free throw line that way too. And, you know, they're very, very physical in that 3-4



spot. But a guy like Alexander, if you give too much attention to those guys, he's going to get put-backs, like he did against us in the Bahamas.

Q. Matt, could you talk a little bit about Matt Haarms, his improvement from last season to this season and, specifically, what has he gotten better in?

COACH PAINTER: Well, obviously, when you have guys that are talented and long like he is, getting an opportunity and playing more, you're going to have some improvements. Last year he was a backup, played 17 minutes a game. This year, he obviously plays more, even though he started most of the year and came off the bench other times. He still had starter-type minutes. But just in every facet of the game, he really plays off of our guards and has a kind of an uncanny ability to be around the basketball, whether that's playing in the post, catch and shooting on the perimeter, getting put-backs. Just being around the basketball.

So defensively, he takes different matchups on for us. He does a good job not only blocking shots but changing shots. Then he's made an improvement rebounding the basketball. I think it's always tough for those tall, narrow, skinny guys to get that good base and, especially, go against physical players and be able to handle that and then still affect the game. Matt's been able to do that, make improvements there, and affect the game on both ends.

Q. Coach, I know you're concentrating on Tennessee right now. Can you talk about how tough this weekend is in general?

COACH PAINTER: Obviously, as a coach, you get locked in on that team in front of you and the work that happens for the other teams in the Regional that you're not playing right now, that you have a chance to play, is kind of dealt by your GAs and your assistants.

But the focus is on Tennessee. But, you know, obviously, the resume that Tennessee has speaks for itself. I always talk about being in the NCAA tournament, everybody earned their way here. But the people that have 1 and 2 seeds, like Virginia and Tennessee, they've had phenomenal years to put themselves in that position.

Then a team like Oregon is what it's all about. This was a Final Four team a couple of years ago. They've changed their roster a lot and were struggling midway through the season, turned it around. They won their tournament and, obviously, won two games to put themselves in this position.

So that's that hot team that is playing very well that might have a different number next to their name, but they're pretty equivalent to anybody they play or better than everybody they play because of the way they've been playing here the past month. And that's what it's all about is how you play on Saturday and -- excuse me, how you play on Thursday and how you play on Saturday.

So this is -- like every other region, this is obviously a lot of teams that have had really good years and they've earned the right to be here.

Q. What's the main thing about your team here lately that -- and maybe even these past two tournament games, that has emerged that maybe something you just didn't see, maybe a surprise?

COACH PAINTER: Right. I don't think anything is a surprise of how we've played. As a coach, you like to be more consistent. We had a couple of losses in the last two weeks of the season, one in the conference tournament and one in our last -- second to last road game verse the same team in Minnesota.

So, you know, you just like to be more consistent. We've gotten to the conference tournament before and won a game or won two games and then got to the NCAA tournament and played well. We've gone that, got to the NCAA tournament and not played well.

So if you're fortunate enough to stay in it long enough, you kind of run the gamut about, you know, some of the things that you do at the end of the year and how it affects your tournament play in conference and also the NCAA tournament.

But we really got into it a good zone against Villanova and shot the ball extremely well. But we also out-rebounded them by 18, and I thought our effort was really good. We didn't play as well offensively in our first round game against Old Dominion, but I think that had a lot to do with Old Dominion. They were good defensively. But once again, we played well on the defensive end and held them under 50 points.

You always worry, as a coach, you know, can you beat a really good team if you don't shoot the ball well. I think anybody that's still in the tournament if they're hot and they shoot the ball well, they feel good about their chances. That's not the way the game's played. The ball doesn't always go in. So I think that's what each

coach is trying to put themselves in a position to do. Give yourself a chance. But if the ball doesn't go in for us and it's not our night, can we still grind it out and get victories. That's how you normally win a conference championship, because conference championship is so long. For us, it's 20 games. It's a real, kind of, test that we have some intestinal fortitude there and we have some toughness about us.

But when you look at teams like Virginia and Tennessee, they have those same qualities too. You just don't do what Oregon did at the end of the year unless you have some mental toughness. They really showed some mental toughness and some resolve.

So that's what you want. You want to be able to shoot the ball well and play well on the defensive end. If that doesn't work out, you've got to be able to grind it out. I think we've done a pretty good job with that.

Q. After the University of Louisville offered Jeff Brohm, did you have any conversations with him? And if so, what were they like?

COACH PAINTER: I did not have conversations with him. I texted him and thanked him for staying. I don't know the exact text, but we were excited that he stayed in Purdue. He's been unbelievable. He's been fabulous. He's a really good coach and brought some fire to our athletic department.

But he's a good guy too. He's a big basketball fan so he comes around a lot and watches a lot of games. Him and his son. I think that's cool. It's exciting. I think the one thing that the sport of football will do for your school is it ties all your sports together, because that's an event that you can always bring recruits to. And so, you know, to play that exciting brand of football and move the ball around and obviously Rondale Moore helps with a little bit of that too. You got to have the guys to throw it to.

But it was, you know, it's very similar to the buzz that we had at Purdue when Joe Tiller had it going with Drew Brees. It's pretty exciting, but obviously, as an institution and as someone who works at Purdue, we were thrilled that he stayed.

Q. Matt, obviously, Grant, Admiral got a lot of attention from Tennessee. With someone like Kyle Alexander down low, can he be a factor?

COACH PAINTER: No question. You give so much attention. Schofield is a good all-around scorer. With a guy who can move that way with a lot of body, it's a great matchup. Grant has the same qualities in terms of having the power forward body but small forward game because he can move, he can shoot, he can rebound, he can play in the mid-post, he can score

around the basket, he can drive the ball. Just two really good physical, versatile players.

Now, it leaves somebody open, normally. That's where Kyle Alexander can be an impact. He played well, when they beat us in the Bahamas. If you look at miss numbers, he played well in that game and did some good things.

You've got to be able to keep them off the glass. Jordan Bone is a guy who kind of somehow gets lost in the shuffle, but he's really good. Like if Jordan Bone is living in the paint, scoring in transition, getting everybody involved, it's normally a long night for the opponent.

You have to be able to understand all those guys are capable of having career nights and ending your season.

Q. You know the Purdue fan base as well as anybody, player, assistant, head coach. Can you describe the fan base, the passion for basketball and what a Final Four would mean to them?

COACH PAINTER: The fan base at Purdue, I'm not saying it's totally this way, but it's a very educated fan base. You have a lot of people. If you're a Purdue fan, you're normally a Purdue grad. That's not always the case, especially with a state school.

You get some people that it's different. You have different sections of your fan base. We really have just a great overall fan base that understands the game and it would be huge for them. They've obviously, you know, been very consistent through the years and supported our basketball program. We've been very good through the years, but we obviously haven't been to a Final Four.

I think that would be great, not just for our fans but also our former players. We have a lot of guys who have sacrificed through the years and had really, really good seasons, but you haven't been able to put that cherry on the top and get to a Final Four. I think that would be great for a lot of people that have Purdue blood in them.

Q. Coach, Tennessee had a 25-point lead against Iowa and Iowa came back and tied it, took it to overtime. Are there any lessons you can take from the stretch when Iowa was coming back, dominating that game?

COACH PAINTER: I think it's a couple things. Obviously, you really look -- when you scout teams, you look at their best. Like you always expect a team to play you and prepare for them at their highest level. Like you don't see somebody play and they struggle

and you think that's who we're going to see. We're going to see that team. You'd like to see that team. That's not the way you prepare as a coach.

You really try to dive into them playing on all cylinders. And that's what, when Tennessee is going to have runs in a game, they have huge runs in games. You have to be able to limit those runs. That's hard to do.

So instead of, like, reflecting back on a game and saying Tennessee had a 22-4 run in this game, if you can minimize that to where it's like an 11-4 run or a 13-4 run and that's their biggest one for the game, you've really helped yourself.

Now, you don't look at it when it's happening like that, during the course of the game. That's always in reflection. But Iowa's a good team. When Iowa gets it going and they're clicking on all cylinders, they can score the basketball.

But so can Tennessee. So you saw a tale of two halves. It was the beginning of the second half where Tennessee could have made a couple plays and had a couple of open shots that didn't go in, a couple plays, a couple of casual turnovers that allowed Iowa to get their head up. When you allow a good team to get their head up, they're going to make that run.

But Tennessee really showed their mental toughness once that game got tied at 67. I think Lamonte Turner was the one who hit the 3 to get the lead back. That's huge. That's a timely player. When you have great players like that, like Lamonte Turner's interviews went 20 minutes or 15 minutes and his name just came up. He's a really good player. He can defend, he can make good shots. So you throw guys like him and Bowden, sometimes they don't even get mentioned and they're key players. They've had games this year where they've been their best player. But it really just showed their resolve and their mental toughness to be able to make that shot, make that play, get it going.

But still, Iowa made a couple more plays, got it into overtime, and obviously Tennessee played better than Iowa in that overtime.

Q. Matt, when Carsen has struggled this year, how much has it had to do with his defender or the defense?

COACH PAINTER: You're obviously asking me a general question about a lot of individual games. It just depends. Sometimes it's been a better defender. Sometimes it's been him getting some pretty good looks and some pretty good shots. There's no question that he went through a tough stretch there for us in terms of shooting the basketball. I've always believed with him it's not his ability to make a shot. It's

his decision making. When he makes good decisions, if they want to put two people on the ball, get the ball out of your hands. It's as simple as that, whether that's ball screen defense or some different actions that we use to try to get him the basketball.

But I think it's been a combination of things. I think there's also a lot, when you get in positions like a Grant Williams or a Carsen Edwards, where you're one of the best players in your league, if not the best player in your league one season, normally those guys don't stay in college basketball.

So for Purdue and Tennessee to be able to reap the benefits of having quality, experienced players is a little bit rare sometimes. Those guys get a lot of things thrown at them and defenses do different things to them.

When he misses shots, to me, I just think we have a bunch of makes coming our way. I kind of look at it like a hitter in baseball. You take a .300 hitter that is struggling, and the percentages are going to weigh out. He's got some hits coming his way.

Obviously, the Villanova game, we had some mistakes there. He didn't shoot well for about a month there. He had a tough stretch. But he's tough, and he's got a short memory, which is great for a guy that scores the ball a lot.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thanks for your time. Good luck.

COACH PAINTER: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: We have Carsen Edwards, Ryan Cline with us. We'll go immediately to questions from the floor.

Q. Carsen, the other night after the game, you said you didn't realize you were having a career night until the game was over. Now that you've had some time, can you reflect on what that was like as a player?

CARSEN EDWARDS: I mean, it's just a cool experience. Just being able to play, be able to be with some good guys. I mean, I honestly don't want to reflect on it now. I just want to focus on the next game coming up and doing the right things to help my team win. So it was a good experience, and had some shots fall for me. But most importantly, we were able to get the win. And not just me, a lot of guys on the team played well and we did good things.

Q. Carsen, over these last ten games or so, what's really emerged from this team in terms of

physicality, resolve, any little intangible that you can see that's really helped the squad?

CARSEN EDWARDS: I would say first off, we just have so much to work on. Never do I feel like we're at a spot where we want to be. We want to continue to work and we have a lot of things to work on details-wise.

These last ten games, working on being able to find ways to win, even if our offense is off, even if we're not making shots, grind the game out, get stops and trusting our defense. Being consistent on the defensive end and let the offense come to us.

Finding ways to win if our offense isn't -- if we're not making shots. That's what we mainly try to continually do better.

Q. Carsen, is there a particular type of defender who is more effective against you?

CARSEN EDWARDS: I don't know. I mean, I just -- I just approach every game just being patiently aggressive and trying to make the right decisions for my team. I wouldn't say I know a defender who -- I don't know. I just know that I just try to do the right things for my team, just help my team win it, put ourselves in the best position. That's mainly what I focus on, and just continue to approach every game the same way.

Q. Ryan, for the readers of the Big Ten, how does it feel when you get to this point in the season? I mean, how does it prepare you for this point? I don't want to say this is a relief because it's different, but how does that prepare you for March like this?

RYAN CLINE: Obviously, talking about the Big Ten, one of the best conferences in the country, and being able to have that preparation is big for us. But you get in the tournament and you're kind of relieved to play someone else because you've been playing the same teams for 20 games, been watching the same teams for 20 games. You kind of get in this tournament and you're, like, relieved that you get to play somebody different. It's obviously big preparation for us, being in the Big Ten.

Q. Ryan, obviously, the first two games were pretty tough. Can you talk about how much tougher it's going to get with the Region and how stacked it is?

RYAN CLINE: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, you know, everyone is obviously fighting for their lives in the tournament. There's so much stake in the Sweet 16, Elite Eight. Everyone is playing for a Final Four spot. Everybody is going to come out hungry and excited. We've got to do the same, come out and compete. And mostly just have fun out there.

Q. When you see the way Tennessee was able to kind of grind out the Iowa game and struggled in the first game against Colgate, what kind of team do you expect to see tomorrow night in terms of how they come out?

CARSEN EDWARDS: I'd say I just expect a really talented, really athletic team with a lot of depth and play very physical.

I mean, regardless of those last two games, it's a new game, and like he said, fighting for their lives and plan is just competing at a high level. I expect them to come out and compete at a high level. We have to. I'm excited. It's a game I love. I'm happy to be playing a very talented team and competing with my guys.

RYAN CLINE: Obviously, I agree with what Carsen is saying. At a decent stretch of the year, they were the No. 1 team in the country. And that's the team that I'm expecting to come out on Thursday.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks for your time today. Good luck.