

**March 29, 2012**



## STANFORD CARDINAL

JOHNNY DAWKINS: Just really proud of our guys. This season has been a little bit of a roller coaster ride for us. We started off, you know, so strong, battled through some adversity in the middle and then we ended as strong as we ever could have imagined.

But our kids, you know, saved their best for last. I thought they played a terrific game from start to finish tonight, and I'm just very proud of them. We beat a very good Minnesota team; physical, amazing coach that I admire, and I'm just happy that we were fortunate that we were able to come out with the win.

**Q. The second half, as good a second half, especially that first ten minutes or so, that you've seen this year or since you've been here?**

JOHNNY DAWKINS: It really is. And especially when you think about the moment, that these guys are playing for a championship.

We have had good runs before, but never on a stage of this magnitude where you're playing for a championship, and things start clicking on all cylinders like they did for us during that ten-minute stretch. It says a lot about our kids, their belief and them being able to share in those experiences.

**Q. You held them without a field goal the last nine minutes of the first half, first couple minutes of the second half. Was there any defensive change that you made towards the end of the first half?**

JOHNNY DAWKINS: It was important for us -- they're a terrific team. And we talked for the last few days about how we well we needed to defend if we wanted to slow them down. I thought we did a good job of making them a halfcourt team, and all year long, just being able to defend, defend, defend. And we approached it so much,

just happy to see the kids have success and see that that's the formula for winning games, and just really proud of their effort for 40 minutes.

**Q. What about the play of the underclassmen, seems like they were really behind?**

JOHNNY DAWKINS: We have a lot of confidence in our young players. We have a really good, core group of young kids that really stepped up throughout this tournament.

Like I said, it was no surprise, whether it's Aaron or Chasson or Dwight; I can go down the list, Anthony, these kids have all given us something throughout this run and they did again tonight, making a run as you mentioned. Those kids were making plays defensively, taking charges, blocking shots, rebounding, and that's what you have to have, and I think that they have grown up this year, and that's exciting for our future.

**Q. How did your players step up like that?**

JOHNNY DAWKINS: I thought our kids were focused the entire weekend. We were here before in the preseason and we fell short. And so we talked about this experience as how much have we grown. You know, to show we have grown, we'd have to win this tournament, and our kids, I think they rallied around that. They want to finish the season on a strong note. They want to send our seniors off the right way. They want to send Coach Dick Davey off the right way, and they did, and I'm just very proud of them.

**Q. What does it mean to have this kind of team performance on this kind of stage?**

AARON BRIGHT: It's great, I've been telling everybody it's great for next year, too. It's great for our seniors to go out like that and

hopefully it carries into the off-season for us and we'll just continue to work hard. We know what it takes to win the tournament now. We won five in a row, and I think we are going to use this experience for next year and making a run at the March Madness.

**Q. Do you feel like your team is playing the best basketball it has all year in these last couple of games?**

AARON BRIGHT: I do. I think defensively we are looking good. Our guys were doing a great job. We did a pretty good job tonight, and offensively, we are just making connecting plays. I think all of us are just playing our games, and you know, we are just aggressive. Coach is always talking about being the aggressor, and we did that this tournament. So it was good.

**Q. Can you talk about comparison of Aaron starting and bringing him off the bench, and the decision; that gives you energy coming off the bench.**

JOHNNY DAWKINS: That's always a difficult decision. Aaron is a terrific player, and you know, for us, it became a situation where we felt like getting a spark would be good. We were not getting that in our rotations early on.

So we kept seeing it and we kept debating on how would we handle it. I give him all the credit, because it takes a player buying into something like that before it works, and he bought into his role. When he comes in, he brings us energy. Of course he's a terrific shooter. He changes the complexity of the game, and I think it's hard for teams to prepare for them because he's not out there right away. When he comes in, it gives us a big lift and it gives our kids confidence in what they can do.

For the other team, he comes in after the game has gotten settled a little bit and I think he just gives us a terrific momentum.

**Q. Chasson, you had a couple of big 3s immediately after Minnesota's big buckets; talk about that.**

CHASSON RANDLE: I was fortunate to get the shots but I have to give credit to my teammates, they found me and I just shot the basketball and was lucky to make the shot.

**Q. The first half, did you really feel the momentum shift from that foul?**

AARON BRIGHT: Yeah, personally it got me going, you know, when you get a play like that early in the game that, gets you going offensively.

So after that went in and then I hit the free throw, I felt very comfortable out there, and I was able to just play my game.

**Q. Were you concerned that at halftime that could slow the momentum down and not carry it over, that good run that you had at the end of the first half?**

JOHNNY DAWKINS: We talked about that at halftime, how important it would be to start the second half based on how we finished. I thought our guys bought into that and got off to a good start and was able to carry that momentum pretty much throughout the second half.

**Q. What are you the most proud of, just watching you take down the net, the pride and joy was obvious; when you look back on the past season what stands out the most to you?**

JOHNNY DAWKINS: When we look back at the season, I just think we have grown together. We have grown up. All of the experiences that we have had, we talked about this journey starting last April at the end of last season, and you know, into the summer, we went to Spain. And then preseason; then across the regular season.

You look back and think about the experiences that we shared, and the team just got closer and closer. I'm just happy to see the relationships that are built in situations like this. These guys are going to be friends for the rest of their lives, and they are champions forever. They are NIT champions and that's something no one ever will be able to take away from them. That's something they can tell their kids, when they walk into Maples, they can see the banner up there and say that they were a part of that. I'm just happy for them.

**Q. How were you able to sustain the intensity?**

JOHNNY DAWKINS: Well, they realize the value of playing defense, and they really -- you know, we take it to heart. We always say it has to hurt you to be scored on. That's kind of our motto.

And I think our kids, as the season has gone on, has realized the value of that, and they really do. They are alert defensively and try to make plays. Does it always work out for us? No.

But the effort and the energy is there every night,  
and the competitiveness is there every night.  
When it works out like it did this evening, they are  
able to make plays and force turnovers.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports